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# The Satanic Phenomenon: Medieval Representations of Satan

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# **The Satanic Phenomenon: Medieval Representations of Satan**

**A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment**

*Of the Requirements for the Degree of*

**Master of Liberal Studies**

*By*

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# **The Satanic Phenomenon: Medieval Representations of Satan**

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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents	i
Table of Illustrations	ii
Introduction	1
1. Historical Development of Satan	4
2. Liturgical Drama	24
3. The Corpus Christi Cycle Plays	32
4. The Morality Play	53
5. Dante, Marlowe, and Milton: Lasting Satanic Impressions	71
Conclusion	95
Works Consulted	98

## Table of Illustrations

1.	<i>Azazel</i> from Collin de Plancy's <i>Dictionnaire Infernal</i> , 1825	11
2.	<i>Jesus Tempted in the Wilderness</i> , James Tissot, 1886-1894	13
3.	<i>Jesus Carried Up to a Pinnacle of the Temple</i> , James Tissot, 1886-1894	15
4.	Representation of apocalyptic spiritual warfare against Satan  from Hildegard von Bingen's <i>Scivias</i> , 1151	28
5.	The Fall of Satan from Hildegard von Bingen's <i>Scivias</i> , 1151	28
6.	<i>Creation and the Fall of the Angels</i> , Medieval Miniatures, 1410	33
7.	<i>Fall of the Angels</i> from <i>The Art of Illumination</i> , 1186	34
8.	Guilio Clovio's <i>The Fall of Man</i> Illumination from  <i>The Book of Hours</i> , 1546	37
9.	The N-Town <i>Passion Play</i> stage diagram from Bevington's  <i>Medieval Drama</i>	42
10.	<i>The Harrowing of Hell</i> . Lincoln Cathedral, 1141-1160	47

11. Mantegna's *Christ's Descent into Limbo*.  
     Frick Museum, 1470-75 49
12. *Medieval Morality Play* illustration from *A Dissertation of the  
     Pageants*, 1865 56
13. *Everyman* Illustration from Richard Pynson's *The Summoning of  
     Everyman*, 1510-1524 57
14. Staging for *The Castle of Perseverance* from Bevington's  
     *Medieval Drama* 60
15. *Tutivillus "The Patron Demon of Scribes"* from Pereira's  
     "Titivillus, Demonio, El Gran Aliado De Los Copistas," 2010 69
16. Dante's Cosmology from *Studies in the History and Method of Science  
     by Charles Singer*, 1917 74
17. Dante's Circles of Hell from *Lapham's Quarterly*, 2011 75
18. Dante's Satan, Illustration 34 of *Divine Comedy: Inferno*, 1832-1883 77
19. *Crucifixion* and *The Last Judgment*, Jan van Eyck, 1420-25 82
20. *Depiction of Satan* in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, 1866 90

## Introduction

When one begins to research medieval drama, art, and culture a familiar figure begins to pop up in multiple places. He can be seen in Hildegard's *Scivias*, a series of painted tiles that portray apocalyptic scenes, along with other religious art adorning cathedral walls. His names can be heard in folklore, urban legends, and superstitions passed down through generations and spread from one town to the next. The medieval era brings us a character catapulted from the position of a familiar name to complete phenomenon, stealing scenes, causing mayhem in the streets, and making sin something to laugh about, while in the same breath making folks fearful for their soul. This project deals with the one and only character of Satan, revealing him through the eyes of the medieval world.

The ever-evolving, interconnectedness of culture, religion, and superstition make for a truly unique theatrical experience in the middle ages. With limited understanding and access to scripture, medieval Christians generated a blended belief system, in order to make sense of the metaphysical world, which manifests itself in medieval drama's representations of Satan. While the medieval character of Satan upholds many of the Church's teachings about his nature and purpose, he takes on a new persona when left to the dramatic interpretation of the laity, as opposed to the interpretation of the monastic writer, scholar, or prophetic poet. The literary work of Dante and Milton deliver valuable satanic representations, arguably trumping all others, but something essential is lacking there, when compared to the Satan found on the medieval stage, who now resides not in hell, but in the shadow of Dante and Milton's Satan.

Chapter one explores the origins of Satan and the issue of evil, tracing its rise from Jewish apocrypha to an integral pillar of the Christian religious tradition. When Satan is eliminated from the traditional orthodox narrative of creation, original sin, and the necessity of salvation, the structure is completely altered; but when did this tradition begin and why is it so crucial to Christianity? Chapter one provides a critical contextual foundation for a later understanding of Satan in medieval drama. In the early formation of the church, visible in the writings of the early Church Fathers, a clear distinction is made separating the notion of Satan as a mythological being and Satan as a metaphysical force and main adversary of God.

In Chapter One, I also introduce Elaine Pagels's idea of Satan as a "surrogate," which can be seen throughout the history of Christianity. Basically, anyone outside of the inner circle of the church would be considered "not of God." If one is not of God, then naturally one is of the devil. In the act of placing Satan as a "surrogate" the church views all qualities and practices associated with the outsider as demonic. I find this interesting, however, because in later medieval drama Satan takes on behavior and characterizations that are undeniably human, placing the idea of the Satanic as something not outside the circle, but right in the center and at the forefront of the medieval mind. Milton's *Paradise Lost* also contrasts the "surrogate" Satan presented by Pagels, placing him on a level where readers sympathize with his human qualities.

Chapter two discusses early liturgical drama and the portrayal of Satan preparing for a later juxtaposition of the characterizations found in plays such as *Mankind* and *Everyman*. I also include the writings of William Durandus, who wrote for a clerical audience regarding the sacred nature of church art. His instruction on how to interpret



religious art shaped the church's attitude towards representations of the divine and also the demonic, possibly creating a residual effect on theatrical audiences for decades to come. He eloquently expresses the power of art arguing that visual representations of the gospel are a more effective tool to inform the illiterate laity compared to sermons alone.

In the following two chapters I provide detailed analyses for many popular medieval plays drawing from the Wakefield, York, and N-Town cycles, paying close attention to the representations of Satan, his integration into the biblical narrative, and his role in the delivery of Church doctrine. This discussion will then transition into an analysis on the morality plays *Mankind* and *Castle of Perseverance*. Each play reveals a little more about the unique medieval perception of Satan, truly setting the medieval characterization apart from representations preceding (Hildegard) and following it (Milton.)

In chapter five, Dante's *Inferno* takes us on a journey through the underworld into the fiery pits of Hell where Satan resides. In addition to Dante, we will look at Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*, which has all the components of a medieval morality play, but is also revered as a classic piece of literature, bridging the gap between the medieval and the renaissance period. The thematic quest for knowledge found in *Dr. Faustus* can also be seen in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which I will argue has made the most significant contribution to our present day idea of Satan.

## Chapter 1

### Historical Development of Satan

In order to obtain a fuller understanding of Satan in the medieval world one must begin at the early stages of Christianity. One can find Satan or devils prior to Christianity, outside of Judaism as well, but not until the development of a concrete Christian theology do we see such strong emphasis placed on Satan or the Devil. So while Christianity developed over time, growing in size and in a specific set of doctrinal beliefs, so did Satan. As Jeffrey Burton Russell writes, “What history shows is the concept of the Devil, a coherent historical development growing from pre-biblical roots through Hebrew and Christian thought into the present” (25). He continues by stating that although Satan can be seen in Jewish apocryphal texts such as *The Book of Enoch*, influencing early Christians, “The concept of the Devil has been much less significant in Judaism than in Christianity” (26). Eliminating Satan from Christianity, denying his central role of importance would be contradictory to the teachings of the apostles and to the overall development of Christianity throughout history. So, ultimately Russell poses the argument that Satan, unlike God, is in a constant state of flux being shaped and altered by historical, societal, and cultural changes. This reoccurring theme of a Satan in flux will be seen throughout my analyses of the medieval dramatic representations of Satan.

Questions and problems consistently emerge when discussing the issue of evil, the role and history of Satan, and his relationship with God. A variety of narratives touch on these elaborate specific issues, but few provide explanations that satisfy more than one area of concern. Questions such as the following arise: When did Satan fall? Did he fall

prior to the creation of Adam and Eve? Did he fall as a result of envy and lust of mankind? Is Satan merely a fallen angel or is he unique in power and position? Where does Satan dwell now? Does he have a body? Is Satan male, female, or androgynous? What is the connection between Satan and the other angels? Do demons have a ranking system? And if so, is Satan the chief demon? What are his powers? Is he the cause of human immorality? Is he the cause of natural disasters? Was it he in serpent form that tempted Adam and Eve? Or did he use a serpent as a tool of sorts to tempt Adam and Eve? Has God given him the task of punishing sinners? These questions appear to be endless, demonstrating the vague and foggy terrain leading up to the larger question at hand: Is Satan real or is he a myth used to teach religious ideas?

In an interview Dr. John Dominic Crossan has referenced Old Testament accounts of Satan to argue his opposition that Satan is not a critical or even literal character in Judaism. Using the scriptural reference from the book of Job which we will view shortly, he ascribes more of an “inspector general” character to Satan with negative connotations similar to that of a tax collector. Along these lines, Satan, as a messenger, reported things back to God. A shift occurs when Satan no longer reports, but takes on the role of tempter emphasized in the New Testament.

Additionally, Dr. Crossan finds a great illustration in Genesis 4:1-8 within the story of Cain and Abel. The New International Version is preferred for this particular passage for its use of the word “crouching,” personifying a hungry animal ready to attack:

- <sup>1</sup> Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.”
- <sup>2</sup> Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.
- <sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.

- 4 And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn  
of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,  
5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very  
angry, and his face was downcast.  
6 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face  
downcast?  
7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what  
is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must  
rule over it.”  
8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they  
were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. (*New  
International Version*, 4.1-8)

Using Dr. Crossan’s idea of a shift over time from messenger to tempter, we can see how this scripture could be used to substitute the sin lurking at the door with a personified Satan lurking at the door, which brings up the argument of whether Cain was merely tempted to do evil or possessed by evil, Satan. This idea of the human will and our ability to do good things as well as bad will resurface when we look at the Jewish excerpt regarding “yester.”

Scholars are in agreement with Dr. Crossan regarding the overall understanding of the Old Testament Satan and other evil spirits such Azazel (figure 1). The Israelites feared these types of spirits and often referred to them as entities living in far off areas away from their habitations. According to William Caldwell:

The word *Satan* is often used in the Old Testament as a verb, meaning to act as an adversary. *Satan* as a noun means a human adversary as in I Sam...or a superhuman adversary as in Num. 22:22. *Satan* as a proper name occurs in not more than three passages in the Old Testament, and they are all late and probably not independent of each other. (32)

At this juncture the serpent in Genesis might appear to be the first stop, but actually there is no Old Testament mention of Satan in connection with the serpent found in the

Garden of Eden, which we will discuss at great length in later chapters. The first two passages referencing Satan can be found in Job: “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them... Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord” (*NKJ*, Job 1.6; 2.1). In addition to the verses found in Job one can also see the term Satan in Zechariah. The following passage illustrates the use of the word *Satan* in place of *adversary* and is regarded as nothing more than a name used for the accusers speaking against God’s people or “adversaries of Judah” as mentioned in Ezra 4:4. The people of the land, referred to as the Satan, complained to God that Joshua was not fit to be the new Jewish high priest because he lacked the proper clothing. The scripture continues, “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?” (Zech 3.1-2).

The last scripture of reference, the only one containing what is strictly considered a proper name, is found in I Chronicles, “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.” (21.1) In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew bible, this verse’s proper title “Satan” would be translated as *diabolos*. (Caldwell 32) It is important to make the distinction between the I Chronicles’ “Satan” and the others; its translation into *diabolos* is the only Old Testament instance of the New Testament “Satan” which is also translated as *diabolos*. “God is benevolent,” Russell comments on this passage, “but another spiritual power exists that opposed evil to the Lord’s goodness

and darkness to his light. The spirit is in the New Testament Greek *diabolos*, “adversary,” a translation of the Hebrew *Satan*, “obstructor,” and the origin of the English word *devil* (27).

With limited Old Testament references to Satan it becomes clear that his origins must have derived from alternative sources. Present day Christians would most likely deny this claim, arguing that every reference is biblically derived, but the creation account and fall of Satan often recited sounds peculiarly familiar to readers of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, which narrates a dramatic supernatural battle between Satan and God ending in his expulsion from heaven, the establishment of hell, and the temptation of man. Early Christians and Church Fathers such as Justin Martyr cite creation and fall accounts closely paralleling Jewish apocryphal texts such as *The Book of Enoch*. In reference to a Judaic understanding of evil and the influence on Christian theology regarding Satan Russell writes:

According to Rabbinic teaching, two antagonistic spirits inhabit each individual: one a tendency to good (*yester-ba-toh*), the other a tendency to evil (*yester ba-ra*). The rabbis ordinarily argued that the Lord had created both tendencies but gave humanity the Torah so that we might overcome the evil *yester* by following the law. The Devil was perceived as personifying the *yester*: Rabbi Simon ben Lakish wrote that “Satan and the *yester* and the angel of death are one.” The rabbis discarded the tradition of the rebellion of the angels, since the angels have no evil *yester* and cannot sin, and they did not identify Satan with the serpent of Genesis or foretell his destruction and punishment. Some of the old traditions [like *Enoch*] persisted in the *aggadah* (moral stories, legends, maxims, and sermons) where the Devil, known as Sammael more often than as Satan, is a high angel that falls, uses the serpent to tempt Adam and Eve, and acts as tempter, accuser, destroyer, and the angel of death. Many Christian demon tales have their origins in the *aggadah*. (28)

*The Book of Enoch* is a Jewish apocryphal text not included in Christian theology by Church Fathers. It is comparable, therefore, to the Gnostic scriptures. The exact reason for the exclusion of this text is debatable, but I would argue that the exclusion primarily

rests in the fact that this account contradicts the explanation of evil and the origin of Satan needed to promote the Church's doctrine of salvation. Historians and scholars alike say that these scriptures were penned sometime in the second century before Christ. They have found an overlap of history and mythology in the text, and its presence in the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran proves that it definitely predates the life of Jesus. So, in other words *The Book of Enoch* is really old and provides an interesting narrative involving Satan and the fall of the angels. The following summary of *Enoch's* fall of Satan and the events thereafter provide a great example of the variety of satanic narratives and legends residually affecting Christianity and fueling the disunity of early Christian theology, which would later be subject to reform at the hands of the Church Fathers.

According to the scriptures found in *Enoch* the wayward angels were not necessarily cast out of heaven, but instead exercising their free will, fell to the earth after growing envious of human sexuality, longing to take wives with earthly women and procreate. *Enoch* refers to angels as the "Watchers," the Aramaic translation of angels. This narrative of the fallen angels or Watchers takes some very interesting turns, delivering a radically different interpretation of what transpired in the spiritual and earthly realm involving Satan and other fallen angels.

Here we see several dark angels led by Satan who in *Enoch* is referred to as Samyaza. In chapter six we read that the earth has become abundant with children, specifically beautiful daughters. Lusting after the earthly women, Samyaza devises a plan and presents it to the other angels who are under his authority, "Come, let us choose wives from among the children of men and beget us children" (*Enoch* 6.2). He continues

by admitting that these actions will not sit well with God and that he is prepared to accept the ultimate penalty of this great sin. After making a pact with two hundred other angels to fall from heaven and execute Samyaza's plan, they descend and proceed. Their evil deeds on the earth breed utter chaos.

The women impregnated give birth to giants. These evil giants grow to become the leaders of wicked groups such as the Philistines and other persecutors of God's people. The offspring of the fallen angels have unusual appetites and their inhumane, brutal actions grieve the archangels remaining in heaven. According to *Enoch* the Watchers instructed humans in demonic practices such as charms, enchantments, and sorcery. The dark leader named Azazel (see figure 1) instilled among mankind "every species of iniquity," including the means for making swords, knives, shields, breastplates...all the instruments of war (*Enoch* 8.1-9).

In chapter nine of *Enoch*, after witnessing the destruction and the unnatural practices that the fallen angels have brought to the earth, archangels Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Suryal, and Uriel plead with God the Most High to intervene. God gives each archangel specific instructions to defeat the leaders of this dark force known as the Watchers, and then completes this wiping out of evil with the flood. But, even after the flood which was sent to destroy the offspring of the fallen angels and destroy the race of giants, they returned once again to pervert mankind.

*The Book of Enoch* promotes the Watcher theory which appears in a variety of versions throughout history. It creates the division between the people of God and everyone else, labeling outsiders, or anyone who persecutes God's people as evil and basically a derivative of Satan. This idea is captured in the idea of Satan as a surrogate, a



representative of anything or anyone deemed outside of the Judeo-Christian circle, and occasionally even those in the circle.



Figure 1. Plancy, Collin De. *Azazel*. 1825. Paris. *New World Encyclopedia*.  
A depiction of Azazel in his familiar form of a goat-like demon.

In *The Origin of Satan* Elaine Pagels repeatedly returns to *Enoch* and other Jewish texts positioning it as catalyst for the character of Satan that will emerge and rise to the forefront in Christendom. She also raises an extremely relevant point regarding the nature of Satan in these stories that tell of his origin. Although there are many different Judeo-Christian Satan stories that at first glance appear to have nothing in common, they all agree on one thing: “this greatest and most dangerous enemy did not originate, as one might expect, as an outsider, an alien, or stranger. Satan is not the distant enemy but the intimate enemy” (Pagels 49). The intimate enemy also reflects the rabbinic teachings of the *yester-ba-ra*, the tendency towards evil that every human possesses within himself.

Whichever origin of Satan you choose, and you have many to choose from, you will find him depicted as an intimate enemy, “the attribute that qualifies him so well to express conflict among Jewish groups” (Pagels 49).

Similar to Russell’s concept of a Satan in flux, adapting to a particular culture, place, and time, Pagels identifies Satan as a representative of the socio-political tension found between Jews and those who became Jewish Christians.

Those who asked, “How could God’s own angel become his enemy?” were thus asking, in effect, “How could one of us become one of them?” Stories of Satan and other fallen angels proliferated in these troubled times, especially within those radical groups that had turned against the rest of the Jewish community and, consequently, concluded that others had turned against them-or (as they put it) against God. (49)

The New Testament certainly introduces a new, improved, and more intimate Satan than the Old Testament. In the New Testament we find the “Devil,” the most common synonym for Satan used 30 times. Other New Testament references to Satan include: “Beelzebul” who has an implied connection to Satan (Luke 11:18-19), “The Wicked One” (Matthew 13:19), “Prince of this World” (John 12:31), “The Dragon” (Revelation 20:2) “The Ancient Serpent” (Revelation 20:2), “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) “The Prince of the Power of the Air” (Ephesians 2:2), “The Tempter” (Matthew 4:3), “Liar” (John 8:4), “Belial” (2 Corinthians 6:15), “your adversary” (1 Peter 5:8). 1 Peter 5:8 reads, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” This verse effectively captures the New Testament characterization of Satan, where he works vigorously against God by preying on humanity.

The temptations of Christ contain the most relevant New Testament account of Satan in conversation with Jesus. All three synoptic gospels contain the temptations of Christ.

Modern gospel scholarship has generally postulated a text referred to as the Q Source that was used in the writing of both the Gospel of Matthew and Luke. Scholars have claimed that the book of Mark and the Q Source were both references in the writing of Matthew and Luke, because the texts present overlapping material. The ancient Q Source supposedly contains long quotations from Jesus which were included in Matthew and Luke, but not in Mark.

According to the gospels, after being baptized Jesus went to the Judean desert to fast for forty days and forty nights. In the midst of fasting Satan appears to Jesus and begins to tempt him. After refusing three temptations, the devil and his demons flee. Angels swiftly enter the scene to minister to Jesus. Nineteenth-century painter, James Tissot, offers exquisite artistic representations of the First and Second temptations of Christ (see figure 2 and 3) outlined in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13.

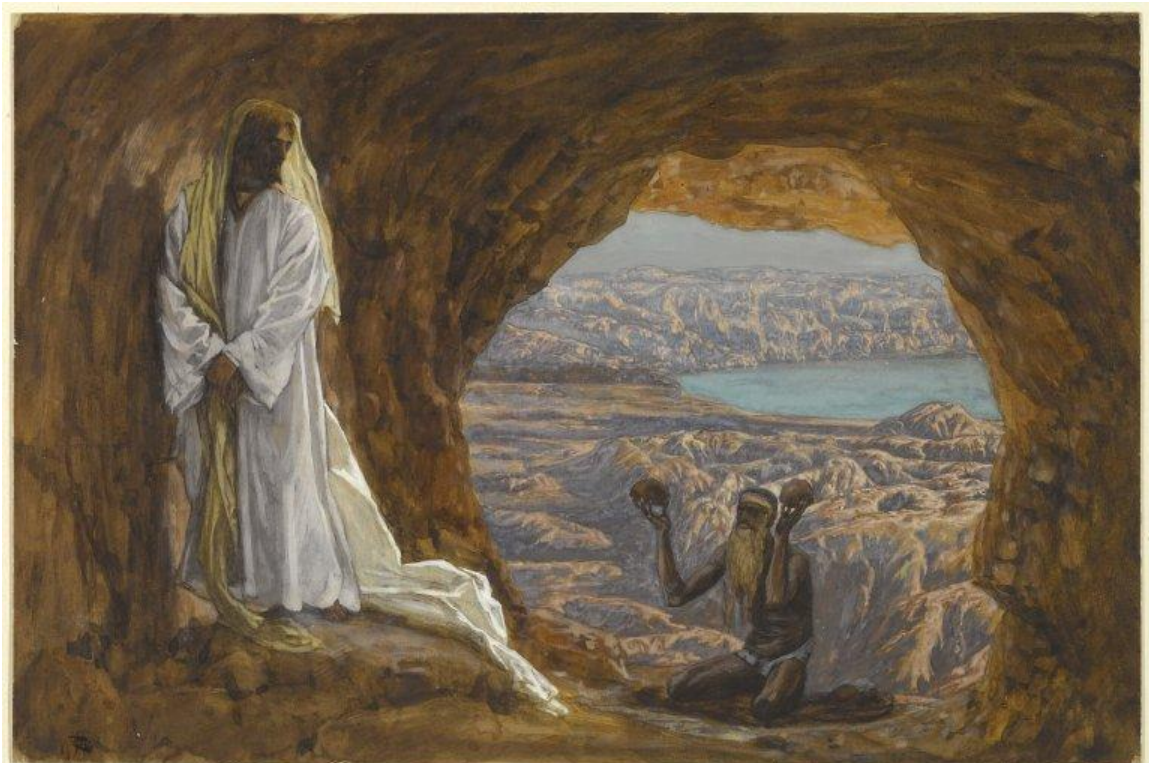


Figure 2. Tissot, James Joseph Jacques. *Jesus Tempted in the Wilderness*. 1886-1894. Brooklyn Museum.

Matthew 4:1-11 reads:

- 1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
- 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.
- 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."
- 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, '*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*'"
- 5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple [Figure 4],
- 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: '*He shall give His angels charge over you,*' and '*In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.*'"
- 7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, '*You shall not tempt the LORD your God.*'"
- 8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.
- 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."
- 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, '*You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.*'"
- 11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

The New Testament accounts of Satan are critical to Christian doctrine. Justin Martyr, considered the first apologetic father, was enormously influential on early Christianity. Born in Samaria around 100 A.D., he found Greek philosophy and every area of secular thought insufficient on his quest for truth. Justin converted to Christianity, writing the "First Apology" between 152 and 154. The "First Apology" and the "Second Apology" defended Christianity, criticizing Greek and Jewish thought. In the "Second Apology" he writes in response to the unjust killing of Christians at the hands of pagans. After writing his third work "Dialogue with Trypho the Jew," Justin was martyred by the Romans between 163 and 167.

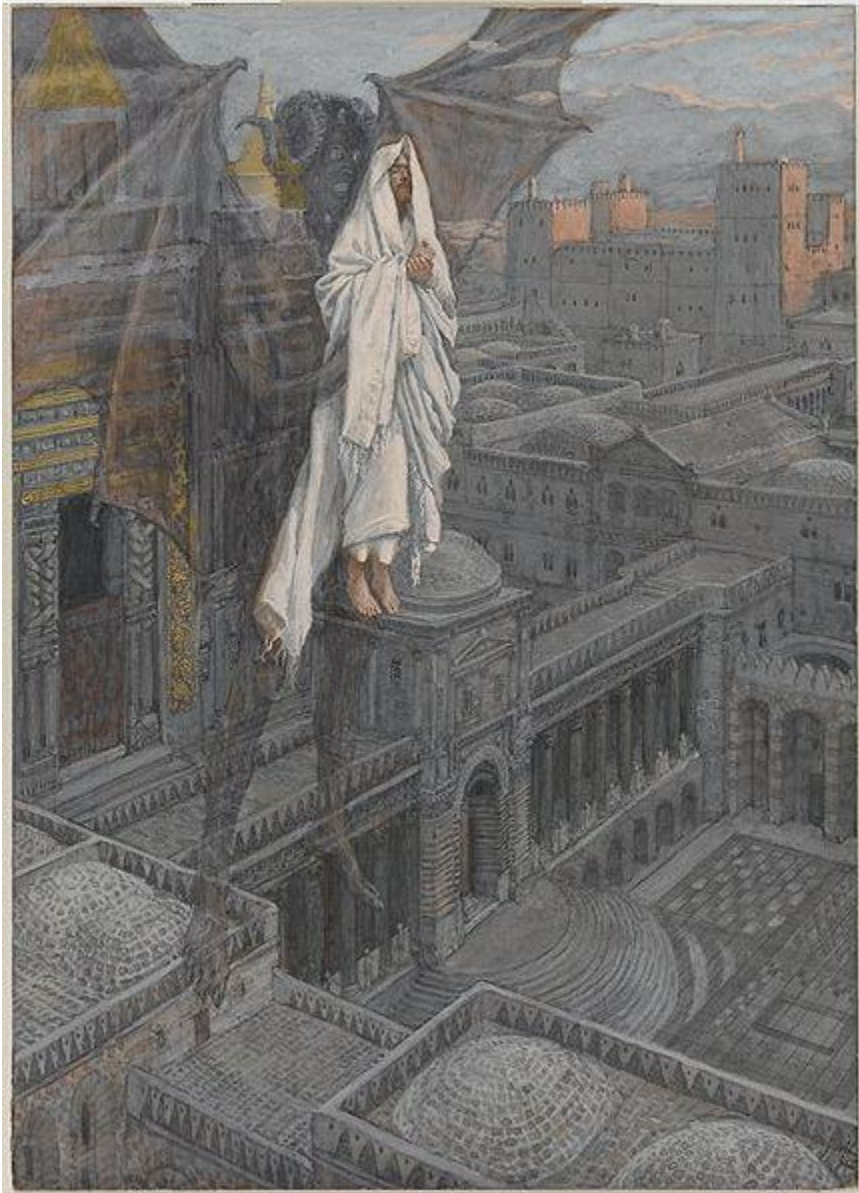


Figure 3. Tissot, James Joseph Jacques. *Jesus Carried Up to a Pinnacle of the Temple*. 1886-1894. Brooklyn Museum.

Justin Martyr believed strongly in the presence of a demonic force and the idea of Christ and His people engaged in a cosmic battle between God and Satan. According to Russell, Justin was unclear on the exact nature of the sin of the fallen angels, but “leaned strongly to the theory of the lustful Watchers” (66). In addition to these open questions,

Justin remained uncertain as to whether the other angels sinned on their own accord or if Satan had induced the sin. Russell summarizes Justinian diabolology:

Though he failed to account coherently for the Devil's origin, nature, or sin, Justin confirmed that Satan is the tempter of Jesus, the serpent, and the prince of demons. Christ's power is pitted against that of the Devil, and for Justin a primary function of Christ's work is the destruction of that power. The Devil held full power in the world for a time, but Christ has broken that power through his Incarnation and Passion" (67).

Many influential Church Fathers followed Justin Martyr making significant contributions towards Satan promotion in Christianity. Tertullian argued that Christ's main objective was to conquer Satan through the Passion influencing other Church Fathers such as Minucious Felix and Cyprian. Clement of Alexandria surpassed many of his predecessors with his ontological explanation of evil. Clement integrated the narrative of Christ's dissension into Hell after the crucifixion. This addition became widely accepted and sparked new questions and controversies. By the third century theology and legend mixed to created several different versions of this event personifying both death and hell. Gnosticism also influenced and provoked many of these early Christian writers such as Origen. The Gnostic rejection of the material world and metaphorical interpretation of scripture also generated challenges in the explanation of Satan's existence and the nature of evil.

The next few centuries proved to be a very crucial time in the early years of the Church. The ideas presented by the early Apologetic writers evolved rapidly into complex versions of theology and folklore catapulting Satan from mythical mystery to literal being becoming the center of Christianity's purpose. St. Augustine references the "Devil" well over "2,300 times, and many more if cognates and synonyms are included"

(Fitzgerald 268). Mention of the devil is found throughout much of his work, but primarily in his *Sermones* and *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, the anti-Manichaen works, and the anti-Pelegian works. St. Augustine's theology regarding Satan set the precedent for Christianity becoming the most influential work leading us into the middle ages.

According to St. Augustine, Satan was a good and happy angel who had foreknowledge of his future. Satan was the first sinner, but did not fall because he was ontologically evil, but by his own free will. St. Augustine references all the scriptural accounts of Satan using most of the names mentioned earlier. He recognizes Satan as the tempter of Job and also as being symbolized by the serpent in the Garden of Eden. The serpent was not wise on his own, but instead by the power possessed by the devil. St. Augustine confirms that Satan introduced the first sin to man by persuading Adam and Eve. Eve was seduced into sin which resulted in all of humanity being "betrayed into the power of the devil" (Fitzgerald 269):

The Devil also has the power of death over humankind because of his powers of persuasion. Christ overcame the devil by justice, not by power. Death entered into the world by mean of the devil, in the sense that human sin imitates diabolic sin. Augustine carefully distinguishes between the sin of Adam which is passed on to us by inheritance and the sin of the devil which human imitate. (269)

Centuries after the influential writings of St. Augustine, another intellectual theologian emerged making significant contributions to Catholic theology. St. Thomas Aquinas, a thirteenth-century Dominican friar, wrote the *Summa Theologica* paying homage to Aristotelian thought while responding to many theological issues such as the nature of Jesus Christ as well as the nature of evil. For the purposes of our study let us examine his ideas on the sin and the state of the fallen angels, specifically Satan.

The following excerpt is taken directly from *A Tour of the Summa*:

Lucifer who became Satan, leader of the fallen angels, wished to be as God. This prideful desire was not a wish to be equal to God, for Satan knew by his natural knowledge that equality of creature with creator is utterly impossible. Besides, no creature actually desires to destroy itself, even to become something greater. On this point man sometimes deceives himself by a trick of imagination; he imagines himself to be another and greater being, and yet it is himself that is somehow this other being. But an angel has no sense-faculty of imagination to abuse in this fashion. The angelic intellect, with clear knowledge, makes such self-deception impossible. Lucifer knew that to be equal with God, he would have to *be* God, and he knew perfectly that this could not be. What he wanted was to be *as* God; he wished to be to be like God in a way that suited to his nature, such as to create things by his own power, or to achieve final beatitude without God's help, or to have command over others in a way proper to God alone. (Glenn 54-55)

Centuries prior to Aquinas in the early middle ages a cultural shift began to take place in Western Europe. Literacy grew and scholasticism dominated in monasteries, cathedral schools, and universities. Prior to this shift Christian thought was based on tradition and scripture alone, but after the advent of scholasticism justification through reason was deemed as necessary. This dialectic methodology can be seen in Aquinas's theological work which directly influenced medieval theology. Aquinas's dialectic poses a question and drawing upon scripture, tradition, and logic summarizes a resolution to the question. Modern philosophers would also draw upon the work of St. Thomas Aquinas centuries later.

A separation must be made between medieval monasticism, the Roman Catholic Church (both church and state), and the laity in what history shows as a turbulent time. Art work, architecture, and writings provide a window into the medieval religious culture, but the laity often remains a mystery for most men and women were completely illiterate. Medieval drama transcends many of the other art forms as a method of understanding the culture, for many of the plays (especially later cycle plays) directly



correlate with the laity and reveal a great deal about their interpretation of the Bible, view of Satan, and the issue of evil.

Christian prayers such as The Apostles' Creed, The Hail Mary, and The Our Father are important to examine for they set up the fundamentals of Christianity, instilling a fear of God and a reverence for the sacred figures of Catholicism. In plays such as Wakefield's *Creation and Fall of the Angels* the character of God is not involved in the dramatic action of the play. God speaks in such a manner that it cannot be seen as dialogue, but more as a proclamation of his sovereignty and omnipotence. The categorizations made in these prayers concerning what is sacred and holy would have repetitiously been spoken by all; but unless the prayers were accompanied with instruction and a translation by a pastor, common folks would not have understood what they were actually saying as it was often passed down in the father tongue (i.e. latin). Assuming that people grasped the basic tenets of these prayers (One God, the deity of Christ, the sacredness of Mary the mother of Jesus, and the Saints...) they would have been spoken continuously, becoming an act of repetition and superstition rather than one of heart-felt prayer. Prayers such as The Our Father became such a common practice that it was often referred to as a measure for time, "let it sit for five 'Our Fathers'." Also the word *patter* is used to describe the sound made by someone mechanically reciting the prayer.

In addition to the basic prayers and instruction on what exactly to believe, lessons on symbolism and church art might have also trickled down to the laity as well. William Durandus wrote for a clerical audience regarding the sacred nature of church art, however, this might have been passed down in its simplest form to church-goers. The

writings provide a deep, eloquent explanation, but laity might have received something along these lines: “Don’t worship these paintings, recognize and worship whom they represent.” He knew that church art, anything visual, was a far more effective medium, as opposed to preaching and verbal instruction alone. Seeing a painting of a crucified Jesus would have a lasting effect compared to hearing the New Testament depiction of the crucifixion read aloud. Obviously, drama takes this concept even one step further giving not only a visual experience, but literally making the Bible story come to life right in front of their very eyes.

In addition to doctrinal basics that Catholics would have learned in church, if they went to church and if their church offered regular services, many superstitions and non-biblical theories circulated through sermons and folklore. The Christian idea of Satan in the middle ages would have been influenced mostly by folklore deriving from Mediterranean cultures as well as Celtic and Teutonic religions in northern regions. Pagan religions would have also influenced Christianity, just as Christianity would also influence different pagan practices. According to Russell in *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages*:

Folklore shades into popular religion, but the latter is more self-conscious, deliberate, and coherent. Popular religion consists of the beliefs and practices of people of simple or no education, and it appears most clearly in homiletic literature, the sermons, *exempla* (or formulas for sermons) of such writers as Gregory the Great, Aelfric, and Caesarius of Heisterbach. Popular Christianity tended to present a vivid, frightening Devil...Folklore on the other hand tended to make the devil ridiculous or impotent, probably in order to tame him or relieve the tension of fear...Because of the contradictory nature of these traditions, popular opinion about the Devil oscillated between seeing him as a terrible lord and seeing him as a fool. (*Lucifer* 63)

As seen in *Enoch*, which refers to Satan as *Samyaza*, and throughout the New Testament and Early Christian writings, Satan is called by many names. Medieval plays often present a definite Satan character, but he is referred to as someone else or an extension of Satan. Russell observes, “Folklore also sometimes split the Devil himself into one or more personalities. From the time of apocalyptic literature the Devil had many names, such as Satan, Belial, and Beelzebub, and the apocalyptic stories sometimes made them independent characters” (*Lucifer* 66). This dramatic device is sometimes used in medieval literature as well. Many of the popular nicknames given to Satan by the superstitious medieval laity are quite humorous. The names were often inserted into daily conversational phrases making them even funnier. These nicknames usher in the humorous connotation that eventually becomes associated with Satan in the medieval world:

He is Old Horny, Old Hairy, Black Bogey, Lusty Dick, Dickon or Dickens, Gentleman Jack, the Good Fellow, Old Nick, and Old Scrath, with comparable sobriquets in French, German, and other languages. Such names shade off into those of minor demons, themselves identified with the sprites or “little people” of paganism. Hundreds of such names exist...Such nicknames were popular not only because of their association with the “little people” but also because to give the Devil an absurd name is to offer an antidote to the fear he engendered.  
(*Lucifer* 67)

Satan may have a long list of titles and nicknames, but the variations of his appearance are even greater than that of his names. His frequent depiction in animal form comes from the Judeo-Christian tradition, but also derives from pagan practices. Of all his animal portrayals, he is most frequently personified by a serpent, goat, or dog. He often takes human form as well. “His proper form,” Russell says, “is invisible or amorphous, but he can shift his shape to suit his purpose” (*Lucifer* 68). Sometimes his

appearance is like that of a monster, deformed and disgusting, and his skin is usually black “in conformity with Christian tradition and almost worldwide symbolism” (*Lucifer* 68). Red skin would be the second most common hue for Satan, symbolically representing blood and fire.

Throughout history, beginning in ancient Judaism and catapulting into Christianity, Satan grew in stature and importance so rapidly that by the Middle Ages he had generated his very own phenomenon. In this opening chapter the idea of Satan has been presented as a concept representing a certain time and place, thus remaining in a constant state of flux. After examination of Old Testament scriptures and Jewish apocryphal texts I have concluded that many Christian Satan narratives have definite ties to older Jewish sources. I have also introduced the idea of Satan as a surrogate who represents those that are outside of the inner circle of Christianity, expanding on the description of Satan by Pagels as the “intimate enemy.” I have also included the transition from Satan’s bleak presence in the Old Testament to his dramatic appearances and crucial importance in the New Testament.

The purpose of this chapter is to transport the reader into the Middle Ages with enough context and historical background to identify Satan’s drastic evolution from diminutive character to ultimate enemy of God and humanity. In addition to this, I wanted to identify the outside influences that were instrumental in the development of Christian thought towards Satan, which never really exits the scene. In the medieval world we find a blended belief system among the laity, composed of folklore, mythology, superstition, and Christian tradition. In our discussion of the Church’s implementation of doctrine and the formulation of medieval popular religion, a unique version of Satan

emerges which is the primary focus of this project. This Satan, which is exclusively medieval, is portrayed as the fool. So, as we end this first chapter we can already see a polarized view of Satan forming in the medieval world. This theme will be a constant throughout our discussion on the Satanic Phenomenon.

## Chapter 2

### Liturgical Drama

The first liturgical dramatic presentations did not feature the character of Satan, but are important to mention for they illustrate the progression of plays from celebratory in nature to dramatic, from divine proclamation to the representation of a cosmic conflict. Satan's appearance in medieval art precedes his stage entrance, as we will see in Hildegard von Bingen's art and manuscripts titled *Scivias* followed by her dramatic opera *Ordo Virtutum*, where we will begin our primary discussion on the representation of Satan in early liturgical drama for comparison to later medieval drama.

In E.K. Chambers's *The Medieval Stage*, which was published over a hundred years ago, the history of drama starts "with the decay of the ancient world and its dramatic traditions. He blamed the disappearance of the classical dramatic tradition on Christianity and barbarism" (Reynolds 128). He began his historical analysis in the liturgical beginnings illustrating the "slow evolution" (Reynolds 128) of drama from the simple dramatic dialogue of the *Quem Quaritis* to the complex drama of the Corpus Christi cycle plays. Roger E. Reynolds does an incredible job surveying the history of dramatic liturgical processions. In the following excerpt he critiques Chambers' argument that liturgical drama was a suppressed form of drama that only broke loose once the "pagan instincts triumphed":

Notably in his construction of the evolution of medieval drama was Chambers's hostility to Christianity and religion in general. The clergy is consistently cast in the role of the villain who opposed the "mimetic" instinct of human beings. Christianity attacked the theatre, but thanks to the secular minstrels who braved the wrath of the Church, the mimetic instinct lived on. Chambers conceded that there was such a thing as liturgical drama, but he argued that the bonds of

ecclesiastical control in this drama were eventually broken and pagan instincts triumphed in the 'spectacula of mirth, wonder, and delight'. In these spectacles Chambers emphasized especially the popularity and elaboration of scenes featuring devils, comic scenes, and the like. Purely religious Christian scenes had no part in true drama. (129)

According to Karl Young, a play is any story that involves action. A play must also include that act of impersonation. Therefore, Young would argue that Mass cannot be considered dramatic for it does not include this. In contrast to Chambers, Young argued that liturgical drama was not just an early form of medieval drama, but a form of drama in its own right. O.B. Hardison continues the trend of opposition by criticizing Young, arguing that he "ignored in his work the aesthetic of drama. Why, asks Hardison, was drama so popular in the Middle Ages? Nor did Young place drama in its historical context and speak to the fact that medieval authors did think of Mass as drama with actors and the like" (Reynolds 130). Hardison also disagreed with Young's view that dialogue was an essential criterion for something to be considered drama. Hardison brings up a very valid point here when one considers monologues and other non-dialogue stage action that might take place. So as evidence shows, scholars have not always agreed on the details surrounding liturgical drama, but my research has confirmed that most scholars point to the *Quem Quaritis* as one of the earliest Easter plays.

No doubt the development of the liturgy into something dramatic was a slow one. It would be foolish to believe that something shifted over night and drama exploded onto the scene, or altar in this case. Similar to most things that develop over history, medieval drama was a process, and a slow one at that. Early Easter and Christmas plays began as very short exchanges of dialogue. The following line is the angel's opening question to

the three Mary's as they approach the open tomb of Jesus, "*Quem quaeritis in sepulchro?*" (*Whom do you seek in the sepulchre?*"). The shortened form of this Latin phrase would become the title of this dramatic ceremony of the three Mary's entering the tomb of Jesus. In his introduction to the text David M. Bevington writes, "This episode, representing the extremely important moment in which mankind learns of Christ's resurrection, appears in a number of texts owned by various religious communities in tenth-century Europe. All are quite short and involve a dialogue between an angel (sometimes two angels) and the three Mary's" (21).

The early tropes involving the three Mary's, often called *Visitatio*, expanded slowly into more elaborate plays. Eventually additional scenes were added and detailed costumes and props became a necessity. These plays expanded because they were centered on an event where dramatic action could be built upon. Visiting the empty tomb of Jesus, receiving the message from the Angel, the nativity scene, and the birth of Jesus are all events where action and celebratory praise could be embellished and understood by all. The idea of expanding upon an event would act as catalyst for the later liturgical dramas involving the lives of the Saints. After the development of the *Quem Quaeritis*, and as it became a regular and anticipated segment of the liturgy, cycles of play would be presented covering the history of creation to the last judgment. Passion plays, Easter plays, and Miracle Plays (based on the Saints) would flourish inside of churches throughout Europe, specifically in England, where I predominantly focus my attention with the exception of the German Benedictine Abbess Hildegard von Bingen, who founded monasteries in Rupertsberg and Eibingen in 1150 and 1161. This extraordinary woman deserves our attention; for her apocalyptic artwork, manuscripts, and dramatic



plays provide an early representation of Satan, significantly predating the widespread popularity of the Saint or Miracle play.

In the early twelfth-century Hildegard von Bingen interpreted her ecstatic spiritual encounters into a three volume book titled *Scito vias Domini* (Know the ways of the Lord), often referred to as *Scivias*. To accompany her detailed written interpretations which mostly portray Christ conquering evil, apocalyptic visions of hell, and the Antichrist, she painted, or directed someone else to paint the *Scivias* miniatures (see figure 4 and 5). According to Richard Emmerson, “*Scivias* is the source of one of the most startling images of Antichrist [also interpreted as Satan] in medieval art...an apocalyptic nightmare” (2).

Personifying the narrative found in the third volume of *Scivias*, Hildegard wrote and composed the *Ordo Virtutum* (Order of Virtues), one of the earliest liturgical morality plays. This morality play, Theresa B. Maguire writes, “in true Medieval style personifies vice and virtue at war, with virtue always the victor and master over sin” (5). Bruce William Hozeski, a Hildegard scholar, writes: “In Scene One, he [Satan] addresses the Soul and tries to convince her that if she embraces the world she will receive great honor. He then tries to tempt the Soul, and all the virtues in general [which have been divided into different choruses] with a temptation similar to the one he tempted Christ with on the top of the mountain” (Hozeski 104). A dramatic battle continues until the Virtues come to the Soul’s rescue and Satan is defeated.

The *Ordo* is an absolutely beautiful, lyrical dramatic opera that captures the essence of dedication and intimacy with God. Hildegard wrote *Scivias* with the intention of



Figure 4. Hildegard von Bingen. *Scivias*. Rupertsberg, 1151.  
Representation of apocalyptic spiritual warfare against Satan., the Soul's battle against evil.



Figure 5. Hildegard von Bingen. *Scivias*. Rupertsberg, 1151.  
Allegorical representation of Satan's fall and the subsequent fall of humanity.

educating the ignorant clergy she found herself surrounded by. Her deep series of writings instruct all in the ways of the Lord, focusing on Satan, who crouches like a lion, ready to steal the Soul away from the Virtues of God. The twenty one virtues found in the *Ordo* are divided into three different choruses, in addition to a chorus for the patriarchs and prophets. Throughout the three different scenes we see the character of humanity personified through "Soul" interact with the Virtues, all words being sung beautifully, but Satan who tries to lead Soul astray does not sing. He is restricted solely to

speaking the text. Maguire elaborates, “since music, according to Hildegard’s vision was the language of Heaven, the devil was not permitted to sing” (5). Maguire continues, “the heart of a person is tuned to music. When music no longer affected the soul, it portended the presence of evil” (5). As we look deeper into Hildegard’s representation of Satan, her deep understanding of scripture and spirituality can be seen, creating a very different theatrical experience than what we will encounter later in the medieval cycle plays and morality plays.

Similarities can be found between the *Ordo* and other early liturgical dramas such as the *Quem Quaeritis*, but the *Ordo* stands out for its inclusion of Satan. Satan not only appears, but has a distinct entrance and is portrayed in such a manner as to personify Hildegard’s paintings. He is described as being costumed in a leather ensemble in order to portray “a reddish brown leathery skinned beast which is similar to a dragon” (Hozeski 104). The devil speaks once in Scene One of the *Ordo*, twice in Scene Two, and does not speak in the final scene. In the first scene he has the following lines which closely emulate Christ’s temptation on the mountain: “Whoever wishes to follow me and my will, I will give him all things. Thou, indeed, hast nothing among thy possessions, which though canst give, because none of you know what ye are” (Hozeski 104). In Scene Two he chastises the Soul and the Virtues for their belief in God and questions God’s existence, threatening them with physical violence if they do not follow him. Physical violence will surface time and time again in many of the morality plays with Dante’s hell portraying the most vivid and disturbing scenario of demonic violence. The Virtues come to the Soul’s rescue and proceed to bind Satan proclaiming and rejoicing “because the Devil has been trampled under foot by the coming of Christ” (Hozeski 105). Satan’s final

scornful remark in the drama is as follows: “Thou knowest not what thou bringest forth, because thy womb is empty of any fair form taken from man, wherein thou transgressest the command of pleasant intercourse which God commanded; wherefore thou knowest not what thou art” (Hozeski 105). This remark directed towards the Virtue of Chastity and the Soul is something that we will also see again in representations of Satan. He is reminding the Virtues and the Soul of the pleasures of human existence, and that chastity and virtuosity are ridiculous, unachievable things to strive for.

Hildegard’s Satan is manipulative, he strives to create confusion and disbelief, and in order to match the tone of the play in its entirety he is serious and very dramatic. Medieval representations of Satan differ quite a bit from that found in the *Ordo*; however, certain themes emerge in this early drama that will continue throughout much of medieval drama. The most prominent theme that we will see consistently throughout this work is the tension between good and evil, virtue and vice, and ultimately God and Satan. With that being said, we find humanity in the middle, arms stretched out, being tugged from one side to the other. Another reoccurring theme that will be seen is the use of allegory in story and character. In *Mankind* the characters are an embodiment of different virtues and vices and humanity is represented by one character, Soul. As we move to other medieval plays that portray Satan, let us not forget Hildegard’s *Ordo Virtutum*. Written for an audience of nuns who had vowed a life celibacy and contemplation, this play’s structure and thematic qualities help us to understand medieval drama better in the centuries to come.

The *Ordo* demonstrates the great dramatic effect takes place in staging the battle between good and evil, but the dramatist’s intent would not be recognized without a basic

understanding of Christianity. The duality of humanity (one's soul in opposition to one's flesh) opens the door for Satan to enter with temptation. Our soul may desire the things of God, but our flesh is weak and our desires can succumb to the temptations of the enemy leading us away from God, a central theme in Pauline theology. In order to understand this constant struggle, which seems to be the theme throughout much of medieval religious drama, one must go back to the very beginning of the Bible in order to learn the foundations of Catholicism, becoming familiar with concepts such as original sin and redemption only through the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. These basic doctrinal teachings would be delivered to the laity through a variety of media, drama being the most prevalent. As we will see in chapter three, the Wakefield Cycle plays served as a wonderful guide through the bible in its entirety, building a theological foundation for the laity, introducing Satan and sending him to his rightful place in the fiery pits of hell.

## Chapter 3

### The Corpus Christi Cycle Plays

The exact transition (if there is one) from Latin liturgical drama held in church services to cycle plays, such as those found in Wakefield and Chester, cannot clearly be identified, but eventually in the evolution of medieval drama plays began to be performed in town squares aside from the liturgy. Controversy continues in the discussion of liturgical drama and the emergence of the Corpus Christi cycles. Many scholars disagree with the previous notion of liturgical drama growing into something so large that it could no longer be contained inside of the church walls. They argue instead that each type of drama should be seen as its own entity, cyclical in nature, keeping in mind that while a new form may have begun, the older still continued to exist and effectively produce new material. The cycle plays would begin with Genesis and proceed all the way through Revelations, giving medieval audiences a heavy dose of Biblical teachings mostly didactic in nature, but also entertaining. They had to be somewhat entertaining for people to continue to attend and for its popularity to become so widespread. If the cycle plays were going to dramatize the entire Bible from beginning to end, it is no surprise that Satan would be making quite a few appearances.

The Corpus Christi cycles were performed in England from about 1378 until the second half of the sixteenth-century. The Wakefield cycle in Yorkshire would employ up to 243 actors to perform the procession of plays on pageant wagons. Let us begin with *The Creation and the Fall of the Angels* from the Wakefield Cycle. The Bible actually says very little about the fall of Satan, as we discussed in chapter one, giving us few



scriptures to draw reference from. As mentioned before, one scripture medieval scholars tend to use as a reference can be found in Isaiah 14:12: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!” An explanation for evil had to be constructed and through this narrative of Satan’s fall from heaven it was. In this dramatized version of the creation and Satan’s fall we see God in all of his glory (see figure 6 and 7). It is important to note that God is not portrayed as a dramatic character involved in dialogue on the same level as the others. We will return to this idea of portraying God and explore why it becomes problematic in a moment.



Figure 6 *Creation and the Fall of the Angels*. Medieval Miniatures, Historiated Bible of Guiard des Moulins. Department of Manuscripts, Royal Library of Belgium 1410.

After the creation of all things God exits the stage leaving his throne empty. Lucifer begins a lengthy monologue describing himself as “fare and bright” and declares himself

worthy of lordship. He receives confirmation from other angels that because of his beauty he should have the right to sit on God's throne. He says, "My sete shall be theras was His" and "I trow me seme as well as His," which Bevington translates as "I believe it suits me" (262). Here we see the audacity of Lucifer in its purest form, the audacity to sit on the throne of God. This would most likely have shocked audience members. He not only sits on God's throne, but also attempts to mimic God in voice and action. This first act of mimesis leads one to believe that Satan was indeed the first actor.

There are many inconsistencies in the timeline of Satan's fall and the creation of man, but in this particular play man is created after Lucifer's expulsion from heaven. After Adam and Eve have been created and share a short dialogue with each other, the play ends with one last remark from a fallen Lucifer. As he has witnessed the creation of man and sees the interaction between Adam and Eve he says, "God has maide man with his hend, to have that blis withoutten end, the neyn ordre to fulfill that after us left-sich is His will. And now art hay in paradise. Bot thens thay shall, if we be wise." (Bevington 266) In Bevington's footnotes he translates the last line as "But Adam and Eve will soon be expelled from paradise, if we devils proceed craftily" (266).

In this dramatization of the creation and the fall we meet a Satan who is somewhat comical. His arrogance and audacity would have certainly caused medieval heads to shake in disbelief. His fate would have most likely been known. Audiences were aware of the fact that you do not cross God, but medieval audiences loved to see Satan try. In the end of the play Satan's last line is somewhat of a cliff hanger. Although the text is incomplete, it almost adds a more dramatic effect ending the scene with Satan's last remark "if we devils proceed craftily." Satan's threat leaves an open ending to the play



announcing to the audience that they have not seen the last of him. He will indeed return and he will be successful in achieving his promise that Adam and Eve will also be expelled from paradise, as we will see this dramatized in *The Fall of Man*.



Figure 7 *Fall of the Angels*. The Art of Illumination, 1186.

Returning to the issue of mimicking God, we can see a dilemma emerging in religious drama with the representation of figures of divinity and of evil. How does one play God, or in a crucifixion play, how does one play Jesus? Many scholars argue that medieval audiences interpreted religious drama on a very simplistic level. The allegorical connections made in a present day reading would not have been made by the medieval

laity. R.W. Hanning's essay regarding dramatic mimesis in medieval drama can be applied specifically to the Wakefield's *Creation and Fall of the Angels*, allowing one to understand better the audience's interpretation of the dramatic action. He brings clarity to many issues that we, as contemporary readers, might find problematic and blasphemous.

Hanning begins with a discussion on the nature of drama, which he refers to as a "peculiar feature of the fallen universe" (147). A hierarchy must be established in order to obtain an understanding of the medieval mind and its reaction to drama. Most of the playwrights clearly knew their boundaries. Therefore, plays were constructed in such a way where God is always given the glory and remains inimitable and supreme. It is only the created ones that engage in dramatic dialogue and action (Lucifer and the angels). God's speech in the first scene sets a precedent for his appearances; they are outward in nature, directly to the audience proclaiming his power and omnipotence. By doing this an understanding with the audience is created, and we can see that God is not on the dramatic playing field as the other characters. Hanning argues for a distinction then, between the creator and the created: "Drama, then, as a form, peculiarly belongs to God's creatures, not to their creator" (147). There is no dramatic content with God alone. It is in the "created" that conflict emerges, which leads to the will and the turning of one's will from the things of God to the things of evil. This is first established with Lucifer and the angels.

Hanning makes another interesting point when he brings up the issue of God's throne. God must exit the stage, leaving his throne, in order for Lucifer to sit on it. A literal view would see God as absent, negligently abandoning his throne, which could be conveyed as weakness, placing Satan in a position where he has outsmarted God.

Hanning points out that the audience would have understood that God's throne (the dramatic space) must be vacant for the dramatic action to continue. By removing God from the scene, the playwright would have given audiences the opportunity to imagine the world without his rule and order. The dramatist uses each of these tools in order to create the dramatic dialogue and action while maintaining mindfulness in consistently placing God in a superior position. Now that we have discussed in detail Wakefield's *Creation and Fall of The Angels*, taking time to explore the concept of dramatic mimesis and how it pertains to religious drama, let us take a look at several other plays found in the Wakefield, York, and N-Town cycles including *The Fall of Man*, *The Passion Play*, and *The Harrowing of Hell*. These have been assembled from different playbooks for each has missing sections found in the different manuscripts. Each regional playbook in its entirety would have most likely included all of the plays, even if they are not presently intact. There is an ongoing debate among scholars as to the inconsistencies of the plays throughout the different regions. Some argue that the different manuscripts are comparable and others argue that certain details missing or added supersede the similarities and make them completely different. We are examining each play through the same lens, focusing on the character of Satan and exploring what this tells us about the medieval world, which means we are naturally leaning towards the position that the playbooks are similar enough to be somewhat interchangeable.

York's *The Fall of Man*, which was produced as early as 1373, but was adapted constantly throughout its performance life, is a crucial play to examine in one's search for a medieval understanding of Satan. Once again, we will return to the Book of Genesis (this won't be the last time). According to Bevington, "The ultimate source for the story

of Adam's and Eve's temptation is, of course the Book of Genesis (see figure 8). Yet the presence of Satan within the wily serpent can only be inferred from that biblical account. Satan's role is based on an exegetical tradition of the Church Fathers" (267).



Figure 8. Giulio Clovio. *The Fall of Man* Illumination, *The Hours of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese*, 1546. New York, The Morgan Library, MS 69, f. 28. Harthan, John. *The Book of Hours*. New York: Park Lane, 1977. p. 163

Tradition places heavy emphasis on the consequences of Satan and the other angels after their fall from heaven. Bevington states that Satan's fall would set the precedent for the fall of man: "Satan, having been cast out of heaven for his presumption, resolves to avenge himself by tempting into disobedience those earthly creatures whom God has created in his own image" (267). The York manuscript of *The Fall of Man* captures the traditional interpretation of the Genesis narrative, and similarly to Hildegard's tempter

Satan, we see Satan as the serpent that tempts Eve into disobeying God's direct commandment.

Satan enters the garden as the serpent and promises Eve that if she and Adam eat the forbidden fruit that they will "be goddis and knawe al thing" (Bevington 271). Satan appears extremely intelligent and witty in this portrayal. His crafty manipulation is highly effective. He speaks the following lines to Eve, convincing her that she must heed his instruction and eat of the fruit. Bevington provides translations for several words and phrases that are more difficult to understand:

SATANAS. Yha, Eve, to me take tente (*pay attention*)  
 Take hede, and thou shalte here (*hear*)  
 What that the matere mente (*matter, business*)  
 He moved on that manere (*He spoke of in*)  
 To ete therof He you defende (*forbade*)  
 I knawe it wele, this was His skille (*reason*)  
 By-cause He wolde non othir kende (*should know*)  
 Thes grete vertues that longes thertill. (*Belongs thereto*)  
 For, will thou see, (*Don't you understand*)  
 Who etis the frute, of goode and ille (*Whoever eats*)  
 Shalle have knowing as wele as Hee. (269)

Satan, as the manipulative tempter, convinces Eve that God has wronged her, and that she has the right to possess divine knowledge as well. This should sound very familiar because it runs parallel to the disobedience of Satan prior to his fall. His arrogance and audacity to place himself on God's level ultimately led to his demise, just as the disobedience of Adam and Eve will soon lead to theirs.

Another detail worth mentioning about the Corpus Christi Cycle is the use of foreshadowing. The plays are rich in allegorical content, symbolism, and foreshadowing that will unfold and resurface in plays that come later in the cycle. *The Fall of Man* sets

the stage for several major reoccurring themes found throughout the cycles. Just as the disobedience of Adam and Eve reflect the fall of Satan, they also foreshadow the coming of Jesus to correct what they have made wrong. Christ's resistance of Satan's temptation and his death on the cross can be seen symbolically in the staging of action around the "tree of knowledge." Bevington observes, "Iconographical tradition sometimes represented the tree in such a way as to suggest the cross of the Crucifixion" (267).

In the following passage Satan actually reveals that he is jealous of God's plan to take on the form of man, foreshadowing God's plan for redemption through Jesus.

Bevington summarizes Satan's lines 1-11:

My spirit is in turmoil because of woe! What particularly disturbs my mind is that I saw the Godhead so clearly, and perceived that he would take upon him the nature of one of the orders he had created; and I thought it impossible he would accept any being other than that of the angels. Since we were so fair and bright, I supposed he would have taken our nature, and [I, meaning Satan] was angry (that he did not). (268)

This passage, which is spoken at the beginning of *The Fall of Man*, reveals Satan's anger towards the coming of Christ and explores the psychology of the fallen angels, which leads us to *The Passion Play* from N-Town and Wakefield's *The Harrowing of Hell*.

My research began and continued throughout this process very chronologically, much like the cycles. After reading *The Creation and the Fall of the Angels*, I found myself wanting to continue on to the next story with *The Fall of Man*. This desire to press on and involve myself in the dramatic action captures the same desire medieval audiences would have had. The foreshadowing of future events and the build up of suspense would have had a lasting effect on audience members, keeping them actively

involved and interested in the dramatic action of the plays, much like a contemporary television series where audiences are hanging by a thread until the next installment. I would argue that the later success of morality plays can be attributed to the cycle plays and their long-term effect on audiences. The Corpus Christi Cycles were exciting and audience members waited in anticipation to see God's plan of salvation come to fruition. This is most prominent in *The Passion Play* as we witness the events leading up to the crucifixion of Christ. The cosmic battle between Satan and God continues as we see the ultimate event where God sacrifices his Son for the salvation of mankind.

The climactic action of this particular play sets itself apart from the others found in the Corpus Christi Cycle. The intensity escalates throughout, building into large, chaotic crowd scenes involving violence and the shouting of insults. Christ's suffering is amplified, dramatic, and brutal. Late medieval art, as with drama, detours from the earlier twelfth-century Romanesque, stylized depiction of the crucifixion. Late medieval or Gothic art places strong emphasis on Christ's suffering, as can clearly be seen in this play, which was written sometime in the early fifteenth century and thought to be performed in either Lincolnshire or Norfolk. The following excerpt was taken from Bevington's introduction to *The Passion Play* from N-Town:

From the moment of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, he is caught up in an incessant tumult of events; the conspiracy of the Jews with Judas, the Last Supper, Christ's agony on the night before he is taken, the betrayal and arrest, the trial before the chief priests Caiaphas and Annas (when Christ is subject to buffeting), Judas' suicide, the first trial before Pilate, the trial before Herrod, the resumption of the trial before Pilate (when Christ is subject to scourging), the torments on the road to Calvary, and so on. Unremittingly Christ must go undergo indignities, torturings, and insults. He alone says very little to his detractors. (477)

Another interesting feature is the use of the monologue or soliloquy to balance out the intense, disorderly, action-filled crowd scenes. These dramatic solos are sometimes quiet, emotional, and reflect the character's innermost feelings toward the events unfolding around them. The Last Supper involves a dramatic monologue from Jesus. Later, the grief stricken Virgin Mary emotionally confesses in a soliloquy that the death of her son is a tragedy, but she realizes that it is a necessary part of God's plan. After his denial of Jesus, Peter speaks alone and reflects on what he has done. The use of the soliloquy is especially relevant to our concentration for the play opens with a lengthy introduction from Satan himself.

It is no accident that this play was written with a lengthy, dramatic opening monologue by Satan. It sets the tone of the play and secures the underlying theme of a greater battle between God and Satan, demons and angels, heaven and hell. There is an element of extremely sharp irony in Satan's lines as he reveals his feelings of anger and disgust with Jesus. He finally realizes that trying to stop Jesus by crucifying him has actually caused Jesus to fulfill his destiny as the Risen Savior, victorious over death.

Bevington puts it this way:

Too late, however, the devil learns that he has been led into a trap by his own machinations: Christ is truly the Son of God, and accordingly the Crucifixion will bring about human salvation rather than Christ's downfall. Belatedly sensing his predicament, the devil desperately appears to Pilate's wife in a dream and threatens her husband with trouble unless the Crucifixion can be stopped. Nothing however can prevent what the devil himself has paradoxically helped set in motion. This cosmic irony gives perspective to the entire Passion sequence. (478)

The staging of the play is also important in understanding Satan's place and his involvement in the action. The play would have been performed in an arena theatre with



separate stages or scaffolding located around the periphery of the central acting space. The detailed stage directions reveal that there were scenes and action often going on simultaneously. This type of staging also allowed heaven and hell continuously to be present, aiding Satan in his involvement, and framing the events occurring in the physical realm with that of the spiritual realm. The diagram (see figure 9) illustrates the possible staging design for *The Passion Play*, which was divided into two parts to be presented on different years.

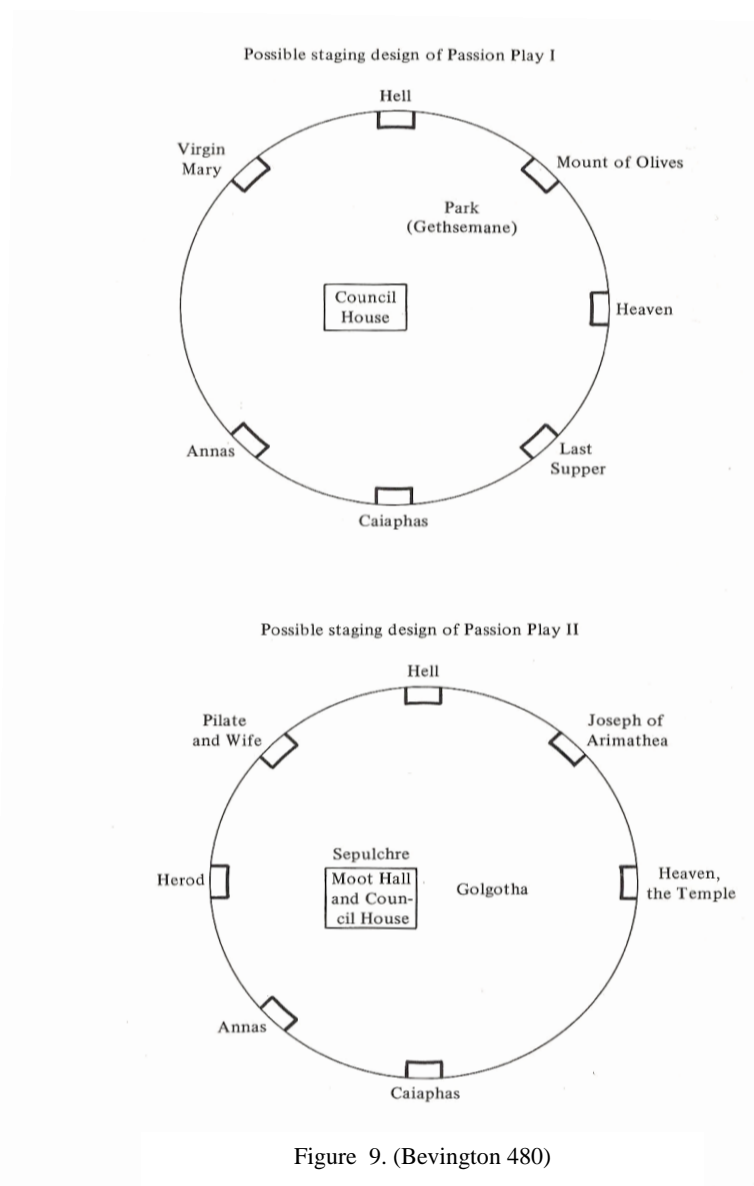


Figure 9. (Bevington 480)



24 Sith I wan Adam and Eve on the first day! (*Ever since*) (Bevington 481)

Satan is audacious and comical. Bevington translates line 19, regarding the angels Satan “left” in heaven with the following: “I left behind only two-thirds of the total number to abide there in the heavenly light” (481). Satan’s statement claims that the angels were left because he decided to leave them, not because of their own free will, presenting himself as a character so glorious that every angel would have followed him to hell if he had allowed them to. Bevington also translates line 23-24 as: “Ever since I began possessing souls on that first day when I won Adam and Eve, I think it a trifle to collect a thousand souls in one hour” (481). Satan’s speech continues with details regarding all of his failed attempts to trap Jesus into temptation. He lays out the plan for Jesus’ downfall, which of course will fail. Terms like “win” illustrate the competitive spirit of Satan and his actions against God, and interestingly enough the same terminology is often used on the side of righteousness as well.

In the last section of Satan’s speech before the dramatic action of the play begins, we find a satirical, stand-up comedy routine where Satan mimics the medieval court fashion of the time. In the opening of this section we discussed Satan’s display of pride and arrogance in his gaudy, extravagant clothing. In the last few paragraphs of his speech he sports his new clothes and humorously shows the audience what material they are made out of and which countries they were designed and imported from, boasting of the very expensive prices he paid. Bevington’s translation of lines 70-88 is as follows:

Satan: Hose of breeches made of or enveloped in the most costly crimson cloth (thus a mere boy, or knave, can rival a gentleman) with two dozen

laces of kid-leather for securing the hose to the doublet, having tags or points of pure silver; a shirt of fine Holland cloth (but don't you worry about paying for it); a waistcoat of pure cloth of Rennes, the best that may be bought (yet, although poverty may prevail because you're spending so much, don't let Pride be forgotten, and disdain all those who reprove Pride...[things a person must wear] A gown or cloak three yards long (see to it that you rival all classes of persons who surpass you in rank); a purse (even if it is empty); a dagger with which to perform service (and wherever there is reproof of sin, see to it that you argue back); your hair with long locks, I swear, hanging down to your collar, to give shelter to live animals such as fleas that tickle men a-nights, a high little hat for curing or hiding a bald spot (and despise all beggars and poor people.) (483)

In a contemporary setting it is difficult to imagine this hilarious routine performed prior to the events leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus. The play quickly shifts into something very dramatic and intense in nature, yet it opened up with this very hysterical monologue from Satan. Bevington's translation closely follows the format of the original text. I imagine the lines that are in parenthesis spoken as a sarcastic side note, or under the actor's breath, sort of a "wink, wink" statement if you will.

Following The Passion Play I-II, audiences would have seen the *The Buffeting of Christ*, *The Scourging of Christ*, *The Crucifixion of Christ*, *Christ's Death and Burial*, and *The Harrowing of Hell*. Our attention shall move towards the latter for its depiction of Satan is of great importance. The Harrowing of Hell is an event that is not found anywhere in the Bible, but is an essential part of all the Corpus Christi cycles. The narrative of Jesus' "harrowing of hell" shares a similar shroud of mystery with that of the creation narrative not found so concisely elaborated upon in the Bible. As we discussed in chapter one, certain creation accounts and the fall of Satan can be linked to other apocryphal texts and ancient mythology. *The Harrowing of Hell* is no different and many scholars have found similarities between Jesus's descent into hell and other mythological

heroes who have descended into the under world to save souls who have been trapped there.

In an article discussing *The Harrowing of Hell* and other mythological folklore Sona Rosa Burstein argues that the medieval narrative follows the traditional folklore involving the “harrowing” of an underworld of some kind, linking it to ancient texts such as Homer’s *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, and many other cultural myths from primitive and tribal groups. Three significant qualities of the medieval *Harrowing of Hell* ring true with other mythological narratives like it. Burstein argues that these essential elements are found in many “other world” journeys:

- (1), An other-world under the earth, people principally by spirits of the dead.
- (2), A ruler or rulers of this ghost-world, presenting at last an evolved dualism, with the power or powers of evil ruling in the underworld as opposed to the power of good presiding over the happier spirits of heaven. (It is possible also that the Devil is fused with a leftover specialized high God from earlier belief.
- (3), A redeemer-hero, whose power is of the transcendental kind. His *mana* is that of the introvert rather than the extrovert,-the priest rather than the soldier. Finally, the salvation which he brings is dependent on his own moral purity. It may even involve a vicarious sacrifice of atonement. The evil which his holiness is strong to vanquish is that of the underworld Powers, not of the souls in which he saves. (131)

Burstein’s writing, as a folklorist, focuses primarily on the mythological stream of *The Harrowing of Hell*; however, she also references in passing its theological stream which is more relevant to our discussion of Satan in medieval Christianity. Although the mythological tradition is very interesting to take into consideration, we must look at the content keeping in mind its context as it relates to Corpus Christi Cycle and ultimately the cosmic battle between Satan and God, for this is somewhat of a finale to the ongoing

duel we have seen thus far (see figure 10). If anything, this article brings to the forefront (again) the idea that these figures, characters, and stories are not exclusively Christian, but can be found in the ancient world, especially in apocryphal texts such as the *Book of Nicodemus*, the origin of the *Harrowing*, as referenced in the writings of Church Father Clement of Alexandria (Russell, *Satan* 116).

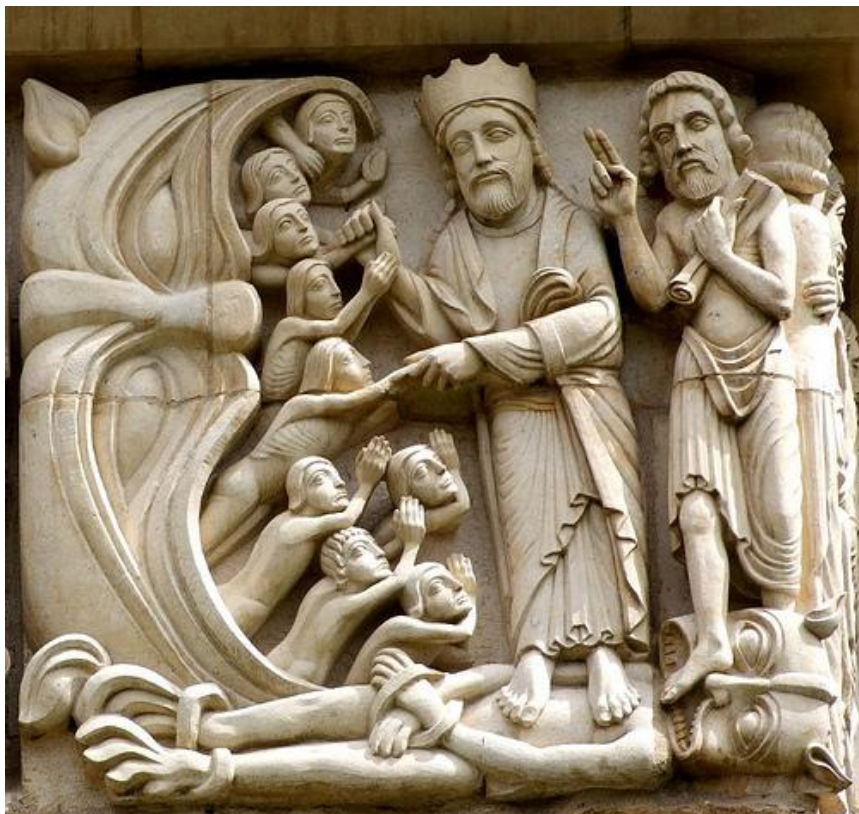


Figure 10. *The Harrowing of Hell*. Lincoln Cathedral, 1141-1160. The crown on Christ's head shows he is victorious, a point made even more clear by his feet atop a defeated Satan.

This narrative also derives from scripture found in Psalms 24: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.” The apocryphal account of Christ’s entering into Hell to retrieve the souls of the lost had

become universally accepted throughout Christendom for it answered a very important theological question: What happened to the souls of the righteous (saints included) who lived and died during the long period of time from Adam to the advent of Christ? The Righteous who died prior the advent of Christ were placed in a state of limbo where they were indeed absent of God's presence, but were not subject to the tortures of the damned. We will also discuss the *Harrowing* further in chapter five when we examine Dante's *Inferno*. It is mentioned in Canto IV by Dante's guide Virgil. Virgil remains in Hell because he was not exposed to Christianity in his lifetime. He refers to Christ as the one who rescued the Hebrews, the forefathers of Christianity, but also remarks how the pact was left behind to reside in his assigned circle.

In *The Harrowing of Hell* from the Wakefield Cycle, Christ stands outside of Hell and hears the patriarchs of the past prophetically proclaiming his soon-to-come entrance (see figure 11). Obviously, Jesus is the victor in this scenario and Satan has been defeated. His overthrow is comical and completely absurd. Bevington remarks: "Satan's followers are comic in much the same ludicrous vein as their master: they raise the alarm in noisy panic, shore up useless defenses against Christ's entry, and turn on one another in an orgy of mutual recriminations" (594).

The character of Jesus, having died on the cross and gone through the burial process, begins with the following lines and stage directions:

*Incipit Extracto Animarum, etc. (Here begins the Deliverance of Souls, etc.)*

[The soul of Jesus, outside hell gates, prepares to confront Satan]

Jhesus: My Fader me from blis has send (*sent*)

Till erth for mankinde sake, (*To*)

Adam mis for to amend- (*Adam's sin*)



- My deth nede must I take.  
 I dwelled ther thirty yeres and two,  
 And somdele more, the sothe to say (*somewhat*)  
 7 In anger, pyne, and meckyll wo, (*pain, suffering/much*)  
 I dyde on the cros the day.  
 Therefore till hell no I go (*to*)  
 To chalange that is mine. (*claim that which*)  
 Adam, Eve, and othere mo, (*more*)  
 Thay shall no longer dwell in pine. (*suffering*) (Bevington 595)



Figure 11. Mantegna, Andrea. *Christ's Descent into Limbo*. oil on panel, 1470-75.



The show down begins upon the arrival of Jesus. In great alarm, Ribald, the porter of hell, screams out to the demon Belzabub (Beelzebub) to prepare to resist Christ's advances.

90       “Sen first that hell was mayde and I was put therein,  
           Sich sorrow never ere I had, nor hard I sich a din!  
           My hart beginnys to brade, my witt waxys thin;  
           Idrede we cannot be glad—thise saules mon fro us twin!  
           How, Belzabub! Binde thise boys! Sich harrow was never hard in hell.”  
           (Bevington 597)

The terror quickly escalates, and several demons gather together to inform Satan and Lucifer of Christ's arrival. Satan threatens to beat out Belzabub's brains for disturbing him. The devils refuse to open the gate, as Christ exclaims, “*Attolite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini portae aeternales, et introibit rex gloriae. (Lift up your gates, you princes, and be lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the king of glory will come in.)*” (Bevington 598) Ribald responds to Christ's proclamation in the following lines, “Out harro, out! What devil is he that callys him king over us all?” (Bevington 598).

Satan ascends from the pit of hell, and Christ tells him that he has come to claim the souls of those that belong to him, and that he has been sent by his Father. Satan answers, “Thy fader knew I well by sight,” (Bevington 602) while reasoning with Christ on the injustice of releasing those already damned. Once Satan realizes his argument is failing, he entreats Christ to take him out of hell as well. Jesus responds by saying that he will leave the following people in hell to keep him company: Cain, Judas, Achitophel (counselor to Absalom who joined him in rebellion against David), Cato, and others who had also destroyed themselves. Jesus continues on by saying that those who do not

follow the laws that he has set before them will end up in hell. This causes Satan to rejoice, as he congratulates himself, for hell will soon be fuller than ever before.

347 Sathanas: Thies laws that thou has late here laide, (*lately/set down*)  
 348 I shall theym lere not to alow; (*teach*)  
     If thay min[e] take, thay ar betraide!  
     And I shall turne theym tytt, I trow. (*mislead/quickly*)  
     I shall walk eest, I shall walk west,  
 352 And gar theym wirk well war. (*cause them*) (Bevington 605)

Lines 347-348 and 352 are translated as, “I shall teach the people to refuse to obey these laws (of the New Testament) which have lately set down on earth...And cause the people to act much worse (than ever).” (605) Jesus replies, “Devill, I commaunde the[e] to do downe into thy sete where thou shall sit!” (606) Satan is then cast down into the hell pit. Jesus frees Adam, Eve, Moses, David, and Isaiah who leave rejoicing and singing “*Te Deum laudamus (We praise you, O God)*” (Bevington 607)

The battle of wits between Satan and Jesus in *The Harrowing of Hell* is legendary and although Satan does throw out several sharp threats and his following of demon buffoons make a mess of things, Jesus ultimately wins the battle. Satan’s threats cannot be considered empty, though. He tells Jesus that he intends to walk east and west in order to seduce mankind away from obedience and righteousness. This threat resonates in the medieval mind for, as we will see in the medieval morality play, Satan is always there waiting to trip up mankind. He lurks behind every corner, and although he may be comical and sin might appear fun for a season, it will catch up with you in the end and there will be hell to pay.

Satan’s transformation is far from being complete in our exploration of his presence in the medieval world. As his role in Christianity is ingrained into the medieval psyche

through the Corpus Christi cycles, eventually his character is released from the restraints of pure biblical based narrative, which already liberally granted him “VIP” participation, to promote his crucial involvement in the history of salvation. As the reigns of creative freedom and interpretation shift into the hands of the medieval laity, Satan transcends biblical history and enters into the realm of the individual’s reality reshaping the view of temptation, sin, and evil into something much more relevant and personal.

## Chapter 4

### The Morality Play

The surviving medieval morality plays, often referred to as moral interludes, consist of five main texts that were produced from the late fourteenth century to the early sixteenth. Among them are *The Pride of Life*, *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and, *Everyman*. Although these are often referred to as the most significant plays of this genre, it is important to mention that after the turn of fifteenth century the morality play became so popular and such a staple of dramatic entertainment that numerous plays were written and produced. The history of the morality play differs significantly from that of the Corpus Christi Cycle plays and the saint's play. First, there is little or no connection between early liturgical drama and the morality play; it really is a genre in its own right. Secondly, the morality play is independent of other medieval drama because of its adaptability to new ideologies and secular socio-cultural conditions which played a huge role in the developmental stages of renaissance drama. By the late fourteenth century the cycles and the saint's plays faced heavy scrutiny from the churches of the reformation, but the morality play transcended the criticism and continued to gain popularity becoming a significant force to be reckoned with.

The morality play represents a shift in focus. It “tells the story of a representative individual Christian rather than the collective history of all men...the morality play chooses a central figure even more universal than the saint's play” (Bevington 792). These plays were written to be understood by all regardless of social status, biblical background, and comprehension. As seen in figure 12, the central character in the

morality play is the character of Mankind, Everyman, or a similar title that represents all living men and women. Abstract representations of the human state of mind accompany the Everyman character: Despair, Courage, and Patience etc... Throughout this universal character's journey he is torn between a battle of virtue and vice, as seen earlier in Hildegard's *Ordo Virtutum*.

The early history of the morality play is somewhat vague, but there are definite influences that can be traced to the development in the later years. As seen in the saint plays, the Corpus Christi plays, and medieval art and literature, allegory manifested itself in every way imaginable, which undoubtedly spilled over into the medieval morality play. Sermons frequently allegorized the Seven Deadly Sins and the Cardinal Virtues, which is a tradition that dates back to the fourth-century Christian poet Prudentius who wrote the latin poem *Psychomachia The Contest of the Soul*. This epic poem allegorizes the battle of virtue and vice as a chivalric tournament of strength and wit. Other important writings are thought to have influenced the morality play including the late thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose*, where a woman is seduced by abstract personifications of virtues such as Pity and Fair Welcome. The thirteenth-century *Chateau d'Amour Castle of Love* metaphorically tells the story of a castle being besieged in the name of virtue, as well the late fourteenth-century *Piers Plowman* where the Seven Deadly Sins are portrayed in an allegorical attack on a castle. You may not find direct connections between any of these poems and the morality play, but together they paint the picture of a world where the extended metaphor was in frequent use, and was relied heavily upon to portray the spiritual battle between good and evil.

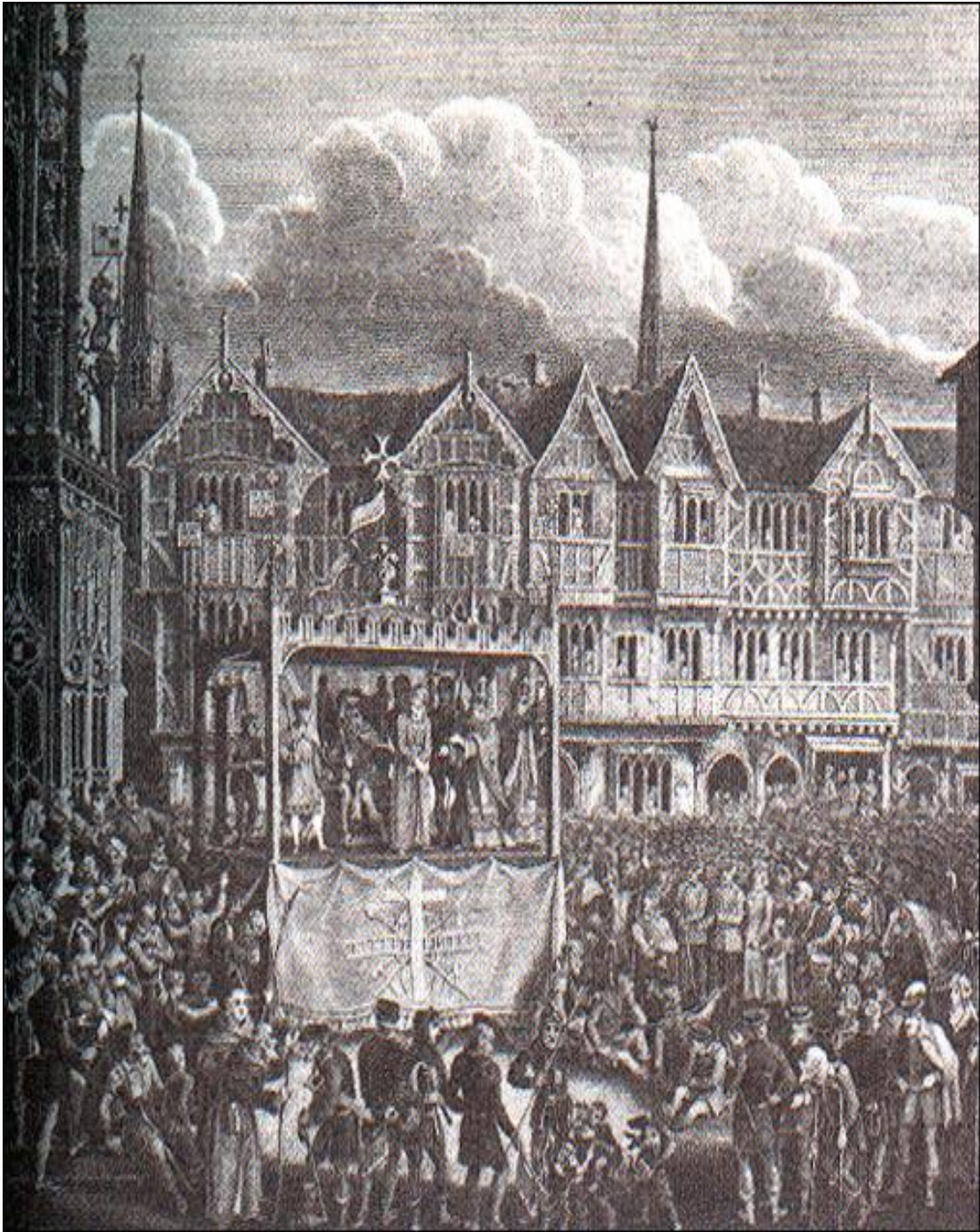


Figure 12. Medieval morality play. Sharp's *A Dissertation of the Pageants*, 1865.

This illustration of a medieval morality play performance captures the massive crowd of spectators. It effectively depicts an audience captivated by the dramatic action taking place on stage. It also helps us to understand how space and movement contribute to the audience's theatrical experience. People are close to the action and to the other spectators creating a unique relationship between drama and real life, unlike a contemporary theatrical experience where there is a dividing line between actor and audience member.



Figure 13. Pynson, Richard. *The Summoning of Everyman*. Ed. John S. Farmer. London: Gibbings & for the Early English Drama Society, 1906.

This illustration of the Everyman character has become an iconographical symbol of the morality play. It shows humanity on one side and the Angel of Death on the other making a deal or bargain, a reoccurring theme in medieval drama and literature. The following lines from the play often accompany the illustration.

*Everyman: O Death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind; In thy power it lieth me to save, Yet of my good will I give thee, if ye will be kind, Yea, a thousand pound shalt thou have, And defer this matter till another day.*

David Klausner's introduction to *The Castle of Perseverance* illustrates the effectiveness of these abstract representations on the medieval understanding of morality as well its influence on the themes found in late medieval and Renaissance theatre.

The frequent use in morality plays of a "Vice" figure distinguished from the allegorized sins, such as Backbiter in *The Castle of Perseverance*, Mischief and the three Worldlings in *Mankind*, and Lucifer in *Wisdom*, has been seen as influencing Shakespeare's Falstaff and Iago as well as Marlowe's Mephistopheles...and performances of all of these plays (with the exception of the fragmentary *Pride of Life*) have shown them to be highly effective vehicles for moral thought based on a keen understanding of the potential of allegory as a technique for the concrete representation of abstract ideas. (*The Castle of Perseverance*)

*The Castle of Perseverance* is not only the earliest morality play to be found, but it is also the most comprehensive. The play dates from the early fifteenth century (1405-1420) and was performed in the area of England called the East Midlands, made up of Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Cambridge. The story begins before the birth of "Mankind" who is referred to as Humanum Genus and is completed after his death where he is ultimately granted salvation. The opening speeches are given by Humanum's three enemies: the World, the Flesh, and the Devil<sup>1</sup>. Each of these characters speaks from his own platform or scaffold and introduces his followers which are the Seven Deadly Sins. World introduces Greed (Avarice and Covetousness), his chief henchman. Flesh, who oversees the sins committed by the flesh, stands accompanied by Sloth, Lechery, and Gluttony. According to Bevington, "Lechery is often the starting point of a life in sin; and Covetousness is the sin of old age, when all others fail" (797). The Devil oversees the spiritual sins of Pride, Wrath, and Envy.

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<sup>1</sup> The personifications of virtue and vice appear capitalized for dramatic purposes.



The hierarchy of vices as seen in *Perseverance* accurately reflects the doctrinal teachings of the early Church Fathers. The characteristics of Satan and other fallen angels can be seen in the work of St. Augustine as well as Thomas Aquinas as discussed in chapter one. In *A Tour of the Summa*, Aquinas provides answers to many theological questions such as the nature of evil, Satan, and Fallen Angels. The Devil in *Perseverance* is personified by the vices Pride, Wrath, and Envy. Aquinas would agree with this assignment, for these are sins of the Spirit not of the Flesh. The Devil, being a fallen angel, bodiless, with a particular nature, would not be inclined to the sins of the flesh. They would not pertain to him. *Perseverance* is comprehensive in this regard for it provides a detailed reflection of Catholic theology and thought.

Throughout the play God must reconcile, through his atonement, the diverse impulses of the Cardinal Virtues. Every virtue has its own individual antithesis, but ultimately the battle is between God and Satan, in which the humility and meekness of Jesus will conquer the pride of Satan. Figure 14, found in the original *Perseverance* manuscript, provides a detailed staging diagram assigning each character to a particular playing space, which was a scaffold of some type.

According to the diagram one can see that along the periphery of the acting space five scaffolds with four main areas are assigned to the central characters and the fifth given to Greed, who is located in the north-east between God and Satan. Perhaps this was used to suggest that money itself is neutral (it can be given to God, i.e. the Church) or it can be used to overindulge ones self in the sinful ways of the world. God is located in the East, the World in the West, Flesh in the South, and the Devil in the North. The castle can be seen in the center of the acting space. Mankind's bed is located directly under the castle,

and while the exact structure of the castle is unclear, we know that it must be large enough to house at least nine characters: the seven Cardinal virtues, Mankind, and the Good Angel. The castle most likely had an upper and lower level as well, for the Devil and also the Four Daughters of God (Mercy, Righteousness, Truth, and Peace) must be seen on the lower level.

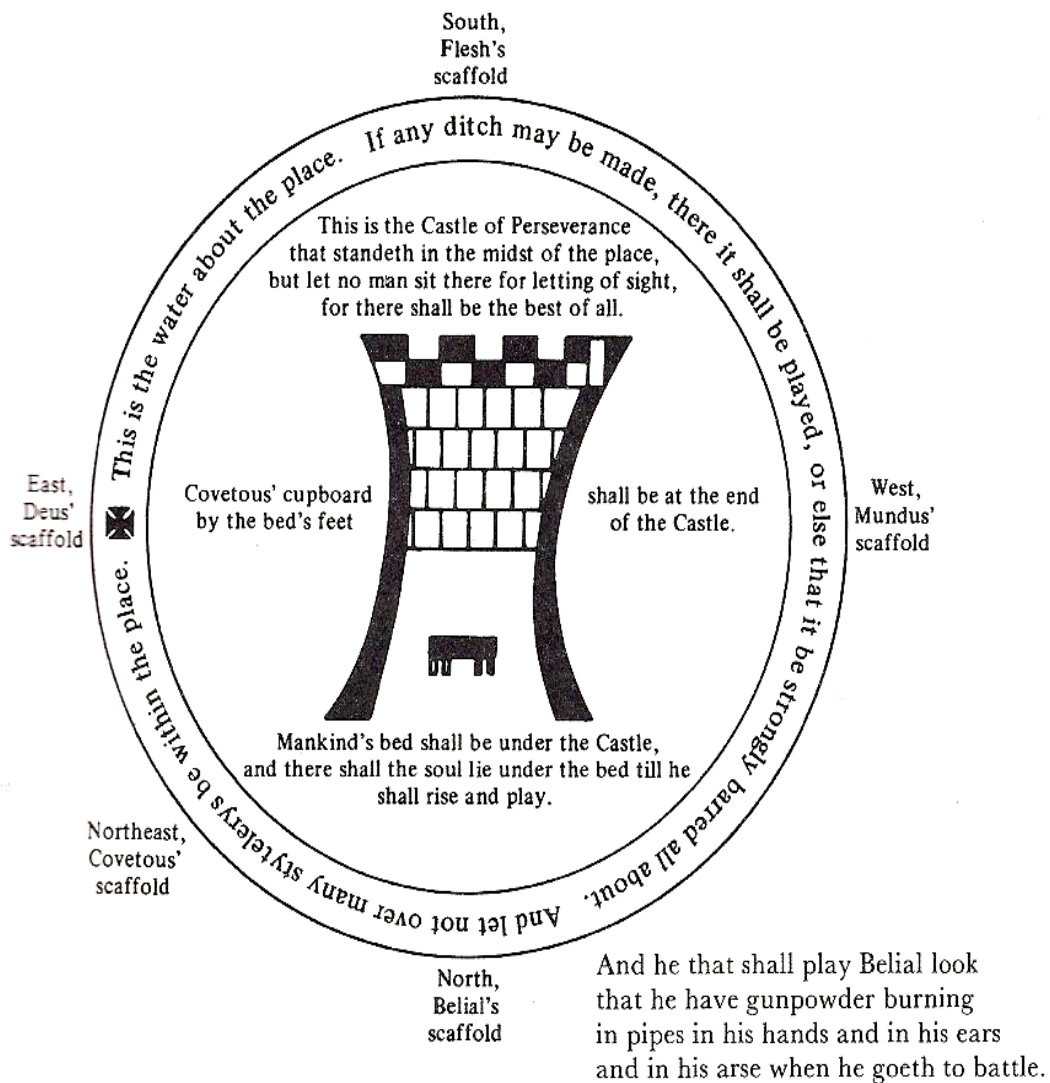


Figure 14 Staging for *The Castle of Perseverance*. Translated by Bevinton (797).

Bevington's translation reveals the original costume concept for both the Daughter's of God and also Belial: "The four daughters shall be clad in mantles: Mercy in white, Righteousness in red altogether, Truth in sad green, and Peace in all black; and they shall play in the place altogether till they bring up the soul" (797). He continues with the translation for Satan, which is extremely comedic to visualize: "And he that shall play Belial look that he have gun powder burning in pipes in his hands and in his ears and in his arse when he goeth to battle" (797). The very colorful stage directions for Belial make it very clear that we are going to find an interesting satanic representation in *Perseverance*. Let us first ask, who is Belial?

As seen in *The Harrowing of Hell*, even Satan and Lucifer can be distinguished as separate entities. The Catholic encyclopedia helps to clarify this figure of Belial:

Found frequently as a personal name in the Vulgate and various English translations of the Bible, is commonly used as a synonym of Satan, or the personification of evil. This sense is derived from 2 Corinthians 6:15, where Belial (or Beliar) as prince of darkness is contrasted with Christ, the light. It is clear in the Vulgate and Douay translations of 1 Kings 21:10 and 13, where the same Hebrew is rendered once as Belial and twice as "the devil." (Fenlon)

The name Belial is often used interchangeably with Satan or the Devil, not to be confused with 'a' devil, as Milton in *Paradise Lost* distinguishes between the two, referring to Belial as a demon of impurity. In *Perseverance*, Belial's introduction is quite memorable clearing up any confusion as to who he is, and what he is capable of doing:

Belial: Now I sitte, Satanas, in my sad sinne, (*steadfast*)  
 As devil dowty, in draf as a drake. (*doughty, filth like dragon*)  
 I champe and I chafe, I chocke my chinne, (*gnash my teeth/thrust out*)  
 I am boistows and bold, as Belial the blake. (*fierce/black*)  
 What folk that I grope, they gapyn and grenne. (*grasp/gnash teeth*)

Iwis, fro Carlylle into Kent my carping they take! (*they receive my  
censure*)  
 Bothe the bak and buttoke brestith al on brenne; (*burst all a-burning*)  
 With werkys of wreche I werke hem mikyl wrake; (*vengeance/them  
much harm*)  
 In woo is al my wenne. (*delight*)  
 In care I am cloyed, (*sorrow/burdened*)  
 And fowle I am annoyed (*fouly, grievously*)  
 But Mankinde be stroyed (*unless/destroyed*)  
 By dikys and by denne. (*valley, i.e. everywhere*) (Bevington 805)

The drama begins with a comical argument between Humanus Genus and the Bonus Angelus (Good Angel) and the Malus Angelus (Bad Angel.) The Good Angel remains pious and steadfast in righteousness, quoting scripture in the mother tongue trying to steer Humanus Genus in the right direction. The Bad Angel naturally opposes the pious ways of the good Angel, speaking freely and smoothly, promising fun in the present moment. Malus Angelus convincingly poses this thought, “Ya, on thy sowle thou shalt thinke al betime [soon enough]” (Bevington 811) but in the meantime, enjoy the pleasures of this world and take time to repent when “thou be sixty winter hold. W[h]anne thy nose waxit[h] cold, Thanne mayst thou drawe to good” (811). In other words, the Bad Angel convinces Humanus Genus to take advantage of sin now; for there will be time when he is sixty years old to repent and live righteously. Humanus Genus buys into the Bad Angel’s plan and agrees that he is young and has many years to turn his life around, so why not enjoy the freedom the World has to offer. He soon meets the Seven Deadly Sins, who manipulate him into believing that they are polite and kind, but behind his back they mock him and find his misfortune hilarious. Malus Angelus, of course, gloats of his victory in steering away Humanus Genus from the Bonus Angelus.

Humanus Genus's excuses and frustration continue to escalate until finally Paenitentia (Penance) has had enough and raises her lance of conscience and pierces his heart, essentially using violence to win him back over instead of ineffective dialogue. This sparks Humanus Genus's conversion and return to grace. He confesses his sin, is absolved, and returns to the Castle. This infuriates Malus Angelus and creates a violent uproar amongst Belial and the Vices. Belial chastises the Vices and begins to assault them:

Belial: Sey, gadelingys! Have ye harde grace, (*bad luck*)  
 And evil deth mote ye deye! (*may you die an evil death*)  
 Why lete ye Mankind fro you pase (*pass, escape*)  
 Into yene castel, fro us aweye?  
 With tene I schal you tey. (*pain/bind*)  
 Harlotys, at onys (*Rascals (get away) at once*)  
 Fro this wonys! (*From here*)  
 By Belials bonys,  
 Ye schul abeye! (*pay for it*)  
 [Stage Directions] *Et verberabit eos super terram. (And he will beat them on the ground)*

After they attack one another and regain their wits, Belial leads them in a siege against the castle to take back the soul of Humanum Genus. Just when audiences thought that all was well with mankind and Humanun Genus was safe in God's graces, things fall apart, promoting the worldview that nothing is stable and one must continue to keep one's guard up. A battle between the virtues and vices pursues as the castle is under attack. The virtues throw rose petal at the vices which represent the passion of Christ. As the battle continues, Superbia (Pride) shouts, "Out! My proude bak is bent!" (2199). Invidia (Envy) vulgarly cries out, "Al min[e] enmite is not worth a fart; I schite and schake al in my schete!" (*shit/underwear*) (2211). Ira also wails, "I am al betyn blak and blo. With a

rose that on rode was rent. (*rose torn off the cross*) My speche is almost spent” (2219-2221).

Although the Virtues fight victoriously, the Sins triumph a second time. Covetousness attacks with sweet words instead of violence and Avaritia deceives him by politely speaking to the Virtues as if they were friends. Avaritia eventually wins him over by making him fearful of being poor in his old age. Humanus Genus leaves the castle and spends the remaining years of his life with Avaritia and the World until the inevitable occurs, Death arrives. In a brilliant climatic scene Anima, the personification of Mankind’s soul, crawl’s out from under Humanum Genus’s bed and cries out to God for salvation. In this deathbed prayer he cries, “But God me graunte of his grace...I putte me in Goddys mercy!” (3002). Malus Angelus strikes Anima (soul) three times and drags him into Hell which is located on Belial’s scaffold. The four Daughters come forward and plead with God to redeem the soul. In the end, after considering the pleas from the Daughters Mercy, Justice, Truth, and Peace, God grants Humanus Genus salvation and he is saved.

*Pater Sedens in Juditio (The Father sitting in Judgement):*

My mercy, Mankind, geve I the[e]  
 Cum, sit at my ryth honde! (*right hand*)  
 Ful wel have I lovyd the[e]  
 Unkind thow[gh] I the[e] fonde. (*found*)  
 As a sparke of fire in the se, (*sea*)  
 My mercy is sinne-quenchand. (*quenching*)  
 Thou hast cause to love me  
 Abovyn al thinge in land,  
 And kepe my comaundement.  
 If thou me love and drede.  
 Hevene schal be thy mede;  
 My face the[e] schal fede-  
 This is min[e] judgement. (Bevington 898)

*The Castle of Perseverance*, as the earliest morality play, sets the precedent for others to come. Although the play ends with God as victorious and a message of love and grace, followed by a stern warning of the consequences of sin, we still cannot ignore the emphasis placed on the vices and the character of Belial throughout. As we will also run into in *Mankind*, the Seven Deadly Sins and Belial represent an element of humanity that makes them easy to relate to. Their physical humor and slang speech would have appealed to audiences, making the didactic portions of text easier to swallow. However, this is not a black and white concept to grasp. The play maintains a delicate balance between the humor and comedic value of Satan's minions, and the fear and violence involved with Satan himself. The vulgarity of the Vices also throws an interesting twist into the morality play experience as well. In *Mankind*, we will discuss the concept of "theatrical sin" further.

The character of Mercy begins the play *Mankind* with a warning. The audience is reminded of the importance of avoiding temptation, for in the end there will come a day when everyone will be judged by God, and each soul will answer for the sin that he has committed, "For certainly there shall be a straight/strict examination" (McDonald 2). Immediately after Mercy's lengthy disclaimer to the audience, we meet the character of Mischief who creates a parody of Mercy's lines, inviting the demons or vices New Guise, Nowadays, and Nought onto the stage. Mercy pleads with them to stop, but Mischief replies that he has come to "make you game" or to have fun at Mercy's expense. The vices display complete irreverence to Mercy, taking great amusement in their mockery of him.

With the entrance of the vices we see a dramatic shift in tone. Mercy's sermon is interrupted and the "three stooge-like" demons completely steal the show. Mercy has made a clear warning that these characters are dangerous, and that they should be avoided, but their humor and stage presence stimulates an opposite reaction, creating a desire to see more and hear more from them. The playwright very brilliantly weaves an experiment of morality into the very fiber of the play, involving the audience into the test of temptation. Will the audience heed Mercy's warning or will they, like the character Mankind, eventually succumb to the temptation of sin, which in this case sin means participating in the shenanigans and laughing at the crude jokes of the vices?

Mankind enters the stage after the first comical feud takes place between Mercy and the demons, supporting the notion mentioned earlier regarding the pre-existence of tension between good and evil before humanity, making man just a pawn in a continuous dual between God and Satan. Mankind enters and we find Mercy encouraging him to stay on the path of righteousness, but meanwhile the demonic characters are mocking Mercy and Mankind's devotion to God, creating twists and puns in the words that they have spoken. A very memorable exchange of lines can be seen here before Mankind enters. Mercy sternly recites the following lines and Mischief mockingly responds:

Mercy: For certainly there shall be a straight/strict examination. The corn shall be saved and the chaff shall be burnt. I beseech you heartily to keep these meditations in mind.

Mischief: I beseech you heartily to leave you flattering, leaver you chaff, leave your corn, leave your silliness. Your wit is little but your head is big. You are full of prediction. But sir I pray answer this one question. Mish-mash, driff-draff some was corn and some was chaff, some was corn and some was crap unshut your lock and take a half penny. (McDonald 2)



When Mankind enters the stage the vices pull out all of the stops. Mankind tells the vices that he prays for God to send him good fortune. They turn his heartfelt response into a crude song. They sing the following song loudly and encourage the audience to join in as well:

Let's all work at singing and having fun: 'It is written with a coal, it is written with a coal. It is written with a coal, it is written with a coal. He that shiteth with his hole, He that shiteth with his hole, He that shiteth with his hole...Unless he wipes his ass clean...on his pants it shall be seen...[All three sing together] Holely, hole lick! Holely, holy lick! Holely, hole lick!' (McDonald 13)

In singing this "Christmas song," the audience finds itself entrapped into what I like to call "theatrical sin." Their participation in the live performance shifts from something innocent to willful sin, as they laugh at Mankind and sing a funny, but distasteful tune. They have fallen into the trap of temptation that they were warned about from the beginning of the play, and by being involved in the dramatic action of the play they have sided with the dark side. In addition to the entrapment of singing a sinful song, the demons also build up anticipation for Tituvillus's entrance by collecting money from the audience, similar to a church offering. Audiences, desiring to see an appearance from Tituvillus, would have given money. Again this demonstrates the audience's desire to be entertained by the demons, showing their favor towards sinful humor rather than the virtuous dialogues found in Mercy and Mankind's scenes.

Naturally the good side prevails in *Mankind*, the moral to the story becomes clear, but the audience is lured into temptation along the way. Despite the constant reminders to be on the alert for the Devil and his tricks, the audience continues to buy into the play's humor, falling into the play's trap of theatrical sin which then leads to guilt, that powerful

tool of manipulation. Mercy ends the play with a monologue that could be considered a sermon. Just as Mankind experiences in the play, the audience is taught a valuable lesson that although something appears to be fun and comical, evil can quickly shift into something bad and destructive.

The story of *Mankind* might end on a high note, just as the epic *Castle of Perseverance*, turning the attention back to God, but the representations of evil seen in the vices and especially in the demon Titivillus reveals something of great importance in regards to the medieval mind and its attitude towards life and sin. Naturally, audiences are going to favor scenes that are funny and comical, and as the memorable characters found in these scenes grew in popularity, the demand for more and more appearances would soon follow. This demand would pave the way for Titivillus to have a whole new theatrical career.

According to Russell, the minor demon Tutivillus (see figure 15) would become a major one: “Tutivillus was usually a parody of the Recording Angel, a minor demon who carried about a sack containing lists of sins or verses skipped by careless monks during the office or omitted by bungling scribes in the scriptorium” (249). His popularity can be seen in *Mankind*, when the vices build up Tutivillus’s anticipated entrance, going so far as to take an offering from the audience in order to get him on stage. The fact that this demon was celebrated speaks volumes about the complex nature of medieval religion, culture, and the duality of the medieval morality play. While possessing didactic qualities, the play also allows for an unparalleled entertainment experience with Satan and his minions right in the center of the action.



Figure 15. *Tutivillus "The Patron Demon of Scribes"* from Pereira's "Tutivillus, Demonio, El Gran Aliado De Los Copistas," 2010.

This illustration shows Tutivillus interfering while a monk tries to write. Tutivillus is often associated with the phrase "The Devil made me do it!" Blaming the Devil for errors while

As suggested in chapter three's closing, the morality play demonstrates the medieval laity's influence on the play's dramatic content. While the plays themselves ultimately honor the medieval Catholic tradition, they also welcome a more secular element into the characterizations of both mankind and evil. From the perspective of the

theatrical producer, each production requires a level of audience satisfaction, even if it is achieved through the use of vulgarity and violence. Also by placing the audience into the very story itself, as seen in *Mankind's* crowd participation scene, the individual's theatrical experience is altered. If vulgarity and crude humor are a necessity in producing a crowd pleaser, then who other than Satan to carry out this task, for entertainment's sake of course. All of these components work together in a collaborative sense to formulate the medieval perspective of Satan, who has now become a two-fold character closely resembling the dual faces of drama, the masks of comedy and tragedy.

## Chapter 5

### Dante, Marlowe, and Milton: Lasting Satanic Impressions

After reading the *Castle of Perseverance* and *Mankind*, which represent just two of many other medieval morality plays, the fact that there was a vigorous appetite for allegory and legend in the medieval world cannot be denied. I am also convinced that with the influence of medieval drama, deep-seated superstition, and the blending of canonical teachings and residual apocryphal texts, the medieval audience did not know how to distinguish what was truly scriptural from that which we now consider myth or legend. When one connects all of these ideas together, with the surviving manuscripts serving as a guide, it paints the picture of a very different time and place, where the disparate views of individuals were wide ranging, and an interpretive freedom resides.

In a conversation with Dr. Greg Cavanaugh, a scholar who uses Bakhtin's philosophy to understand the medieval audience's theatrical experience, he explained that there are different types of possible mindsets that some medieval audiences might bring to a theatrical performance. His operating assumptions were that "although the audience certainly had a great deal of interpretive freedom, socio-cultural circumstances would have tended to limit the range of viable perceptions of the event." In Cavanaugh's work, he argues that a variety of mindsets were most certainly represented among audiences, especially given the presence of other religious, social, and political discourses. This applies to the medieval idea of Satan as well. Although recurring themes and representations

have been found, his value and the real meaning of his presence would have varied from person to person. While his character and his degree of involvement in a medieval person's life might have been in question, I am confident that Satan's existence was not in question at all. It was a certainty.

Many issues that we have discussed create a confusing or inconsistent depiction of medieval drama: the blending of the sacred and the grotesque; didactic methods mixed with pure entertainment; lofty, spiritual moments followed by slap-stick humor and buffoonery acted out by demons and devils dragging folks off to hell, crude humor and theatrical sin followed by what might even be considered a medieval "altar call." Each component mentioned falls under the umbrella of this vast thing we call medieval drama and eventually leads us into the realm of phenomenon.

The phenomenon known as medieval drama involved whole communities requiring the multitude to be present and actively involved in the planning and executing of such an event. The late morality play itself represents the people in more ways than one. It is the average of all of their intelligence and religious understanding, thus truly giving us a window into the medieval mind. This could be perhaps one of the reasons why many medieval plays created by the layman for the layman are considered deficient or lacking a master playwright, or a master poetic voice who eloquently pens on to the page the epic, medieval Christian experience. Such a voice might not be found in the medieval plays we have discussed thus far; however, it can be heard throughout the medieval world. This

influential voice belongs to Dante, who introduces us to a Satan who is powerful both throughout the circles hell and on the earth. In Dante's mystical cosmology one is either moving up and out towards God or is moving down into the core of darkness towards Satan.

The fourteenth-century, epic poem *Divine Comedy*, is an allegorical telling of the human soul's journey towards God. As he travels to the center of the earth, the concentric circles represent a gradual increase in wickedness culminating in the wickedest of all, Satan himself in the center.

In Dante's cosmology (see figure 16), "when we are filled with our true human nature, which is made in the image of God and buoyed by the action of the Holy Spirit within us, we rise naturally toward God, we spread out, widen our vision, open ourselves to light, truth, and love" (Russell 217). Likewise when we are steered away from the truth into an illusion of reality and driven by the pleasures of the flesh, we become bogged down by sin and ignorance. In this burdened state we sink downward, away from God, becoming "ever more narrowly confined and stuffy, our eyes gummed shut and our vision turned within ourselves, drawn down, heavy, closed off from reality, bound by ourselves to ourselves, shut in and shut off, shrouded in darkness and sightlessness, angry, hating, and isolated" (Russell 217). The medieval morality play depicted the consequences of sin, but Dante's Hell surpasses any other medieval attempt to show the tragic and gruesome consequences of succumbing to temptation. As seen in figure 17, Dante's journey through the circles of Hell gives one the

opportunity to experience Hell personally, in hopes that one will grasp its intensity, causing a change of heart and allowing God's transformation to take place.

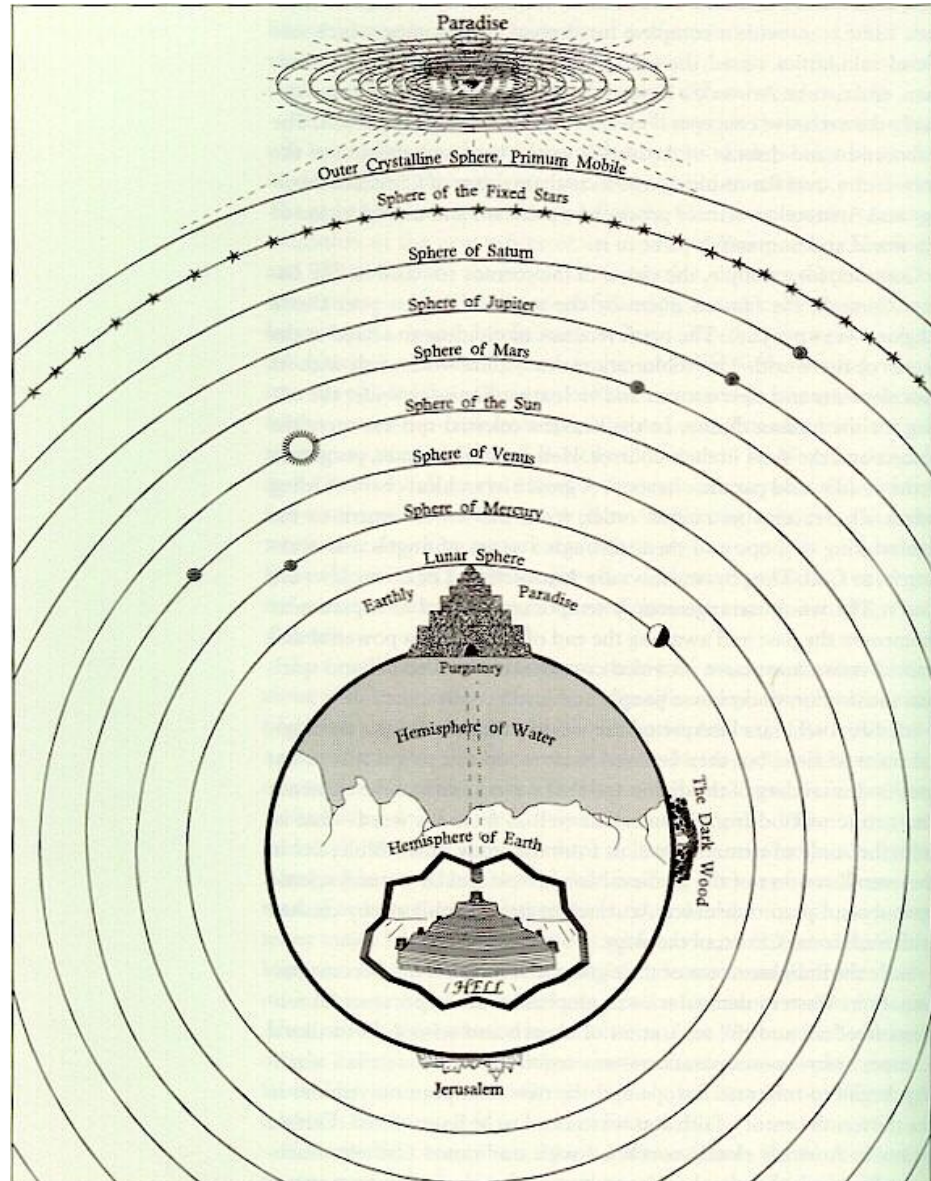
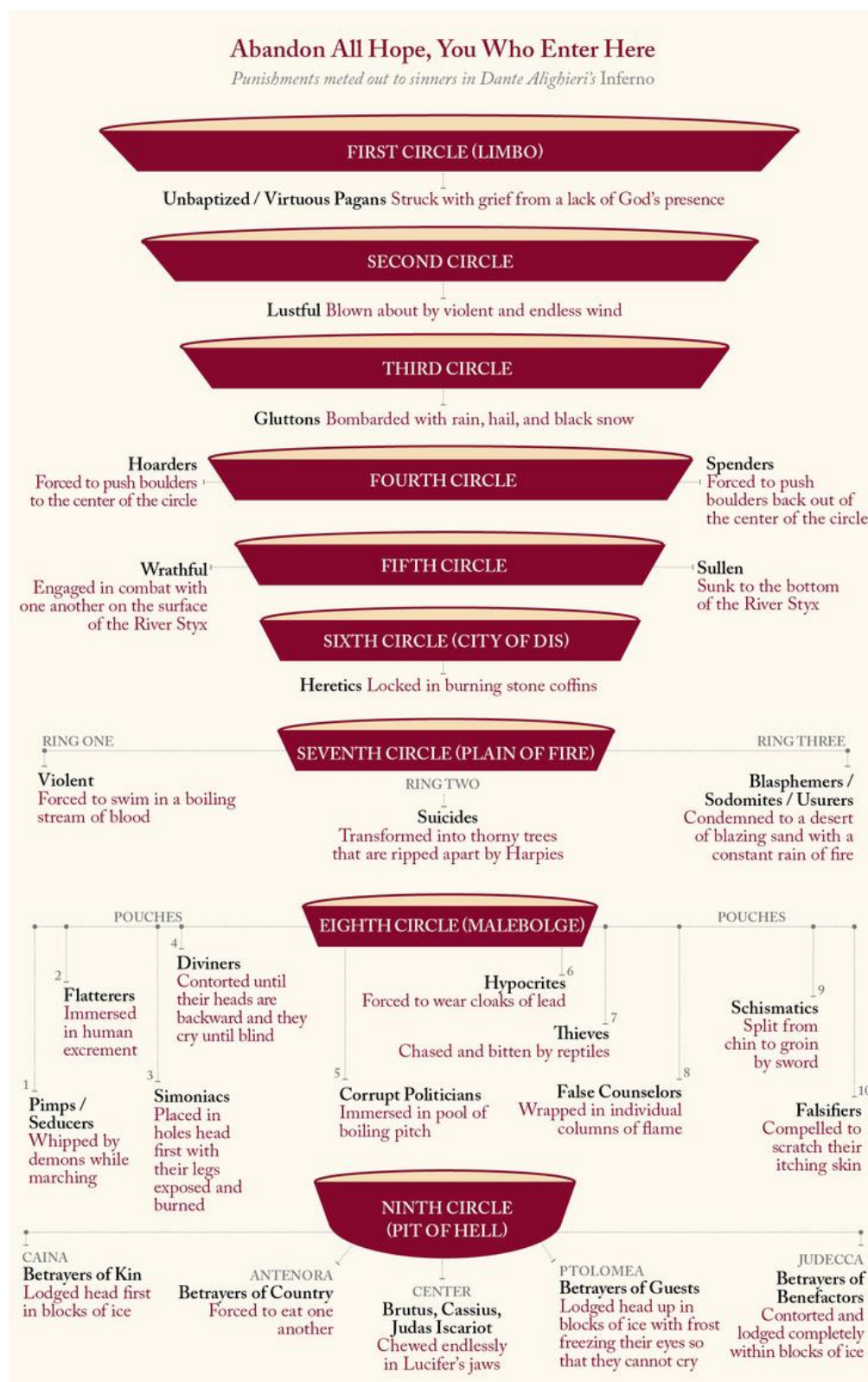


Figure 16. Dante's Cosmology from *Studies in the History and Method of Science* by Charles Singer, 1917.

Although Dante's intention was not to write a treatise on the Cosmos, *Divine Comedy* outlines a distinct structure of the universe where the physical world is only a manifestation of the moral reality.



Figure 17. Dante's Circles of Hell from *Lapham's Quarterly*, 2011.

Dante's Hell is terrifying, and the agony and torment the damned shall endure is vivid and disturbing. When Dante reaches the final circle of Hell, however, the Satan he finds is more grotesque and pathetic than the terrifying creature one would expect. Dante's Satan is empty. Russell writes, "The lack of dramatic action on the part of Dante's Lucifer is a deliberate statement about his essential lack of being" (225). As seen depicted in figure 18, Satan at the center of the earth, the final circle of Hell, is stuck with his buttocks in ice bearing the weight of the world. As one travels downward through each circle of Hell, the heaviness and burden of sin increases eventually leading to the lowest circle where in the dead center Satan resides. This place where the heaviest weights unite creates a stale environment where there can be no motion, an atmosphere of lifelessness and death. Russell muses:

If all things are drawn to God, what can be drawn to Lucifer? Only the nothingness and meaninglessness of sin. As we close upon ourselves when we turn away from God toward unreality, so the center of Hell is a dark mass turned infinitely in upon itself, cut completely and forever off from reality. Satan, the symbol of this nothingness, can have no real character except negation and so his futile immobility is precisely what Dante wished to portray. Satan's nothingness permeates everywhere, a cold counterpart to the warm presence of the Dove. (226)

The character of Satan in Dante's *Inferno* (see figure 18) is complex and worthy of scrupulous character analyses, but for the purpose of my research I would like to highlight a particular aspect of Dante's Satan connecting it to the reoccurring motif I found in the plays we have already discussed and the work of Marlowe and Milton. The issue that must be addressed is Satan's relentless desire for our souls. We have definitely seen this motif throughout the many plays we

have discussed and it surfaces again in Dante's cosmology as brilliantly articulated in Russell's research. In the *Inferno* the human soul is in a constant state of downward sinking into the depths of Hell with God's love and righteousness as the only preserver of life to draw one upward.



Figure 18. Illustration 34 of *Divine Comedy: Inferno* by Paul Gustave Dore (1832-1883). Dante's giant Satan stuck in ice opposes everything that is right, holy, and of God.

Satan's desire for our souls stems from a long tradition in theology, art, and literature. Satan's desire is expressed metaphorically and often as a literal

craving for our souls, referring to the act of ingestion. Peter 5:8 reads, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” Many unforgettable moments in Dante’s journey throughout the circles of Hell are haunting, but the depiction of Satan in Canto 34 is by far the most unforgettable image of Satan. As a three-faced demonic parody of the holy trinity, he remains in a constant state of mastication while each head tries to ingest the three greatest traitors of all time: Judas Iscariot, Cassius, and Brutus. The following excerpt captures the climactic moment as Dante lays eyes on Satan.

*Oh quanto parve a me gran meraviglia  
 quand' io vidi tre facce a la sua testa!  
 L'una dinanzi, e quella era vermiglia;  
 l'altr' eran due, che s'aggiugnieno a questa  
 sovresso 'l mezzo di ciascuna spalla,  
 e sé giugnieno al loco de la cresta:  
 e la destra pareva tra bianca e gialla;  
 la sinistra a vedere era tal, quali  
 veggion di là onde 'l Nilo s'avvala.  
 Sotto ciascuna uscivan due grand' ali,  
 quanto si convenia a tanto uccello:  
 vele di mar non vid' io mai cotali.  
 Non avean penne, ma di vispistrello  
 era lor modo; e quelle svolazzava,  
 sì che tre venti si movean da ello:  
 quindi Cocito tutto s'aggelava.  
 Con sei occhi piangëa, e per tre menti  
 gocciava 'l pianto e sanguinosa bava.  
 Da ogni bocca dirompea co' denti  
 un peccatore, a guisa di maciulla,  
 sì che tre ne facea così dolenti.  
 A quel dinanzi il mordere era nulla*

*verso 'l graffiar, che tal volta la schiena  
rimanea de la pelle tutta brulla.  
"Quell' anima là sù c'ha maggior pena,"  
disse 'l maestro, "è Giuda Scariotto,  
che 'l capo ha dentro e fuor le gambe mena.  
De li altri due c'hanno il capo di sotto,  
quel che pende dal nero ceffo è Bruto:  
vedi come si storce, e non fa motto!;  
e l'altro è Cassio, che par sì membruto.  
Ma la notte risurge, e oramai  
è da partir, ché tutto avem veduto."(37-69)*

O, what a marvel it appeared to me,  
When I beheld three faces on his head!  
The one in front, and that vermilion was;  
Two were the others, that were joined with this  
Above the middle part of either shoulder,  
And they were joined together at the crest;  
And the right-hand one seemed 'twixt white and yellow;  
The left was such to look upon as those  
Who come from where the Nile falls valley-ward.  
Underneath each came forth two mighty wings,  
Such as befitting were so great a bird;  
Sails of the sea I never saw so large.  
No feathers had they, but as of a bat  
Their fashion was; and he was waving them,  
So that three winds proceeded forth there from.  
Thereby Cocytus wholly was congealed.  
With six eyes did he weep, and down three chins  
Trickled the tear-drops and the bloody drivel.  
At every mouth he with his teeth was crunching  
A sinner, in the manner of a brake,  
So that he three of them tormented thus.  
To him in front the biting was as naught  
Unto the clawing, for sometimes the spine  
Utterly stripped of all the skin remained.  
"That soul up there which has the greatest pain,"  
The Master said, "is Judas Iscariot;  
With head inside, he plies his legs without.  
Of the two others, who head downward are,  
The one who hangs from the black jowl is Brutus;  
See how he writhes himself, and speaks no word.  
And the other, who so stalwart seems, is Cassius.

But night is reascending, and 'tis time  
That we depart, for we have seen the whole." (37-69)

The image of Satan with sinners in his mouth can also be seen in other areas of medieval art such as the *Harrowing of Hell* which is illustrated in figure 10. The Van Eyck oil painting titled *The Last Judgment* was transferred onto canvas from wood and usually sits adjacent to the *Crucifixion* painting. *The Last Judgment* (see figure 19) depicts demonic creatures and devils with sinners in their mouths torturing them for eternity following the motif shared by many other fifteenth-century artists. We will discuss Milton's *Paradise Lost* in detail later, but for the moment let me briefly mention that he also uses metaphorical expressions relating to digestion in Book 6 when Satan introduces gunpowder canons during the second day of the war between the angels in heaven.

The theme of satanic desire for our soul found in *The Castle of Perseverance* can also be seen in Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, which is considered a literary classic bridging the gap between the medieval era and the Renaissance. Using the same model that was used to reflect the medieval world and its perception of Satan, supporting Russell's idea of a Satan in flux, one can clearly see a shift in this era from an identity interconnected to one's community to that of an individual identity not connected to a larger body. This is a product of the post-reformation crisis of authority, which is a precursor for the Enlightenment. Around this time philosophers such as Descartes begin to doubt the existence of everything including God and Satan, leading to a narcissistic perception of reality, which in turn develops into what we now consider modern philosophy. Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* represents all of these concepts and his Satan (Mephistopheles) is a

sophisticated gentleman who manipulates, distracts, and twists Faustus into a series of phenomenological dilemmas while upholding the traditions of earlier medieval drama. John D. Cox writes:

Despite brilliant conformity to the tradition, *Dr Faustus* creates a skeptical and deconstructive context that effectively subverts the orthodox meaning of the tradition. Nonetheless, the tradition persisted in drama and elsewhere, virtually unchanged, long after *Dr. Faustus*, suggesting that Marlowe's play is an aberration where demonic desire for the soul is concerned, no matter how influential it was in other ways. Marlowe disguised his skepticism successfully beneath a veil of orthodox damnation, and assumptions were too deeply seated to recognize what he had done – much less to imitate it. (30)

Prior to the performance or publication of *Faustus* the notion of human autonomy (something that would appear so obvious in the Enlightenment) was completely foreign. Cox observes that no one had any real way of envisioning their soul as “belonging to one's self (though the soul was thought of as the true self and one was morally responsible for its destiny): it either belonged to God or the devil” (30).

When Mephistopheles exclaims in an aside “What will I not do to obtain his soul!” (71), he reveals the unexpressed desire within him to obtain complete power over Faustus's soul in the present and for eternity. Mephistopheles takes great joy in misdirecting Faustus. When Faustus cuts his arm in order to sign a pact with the devil in his own blood, the wound heals immediately. Faustus finds this odd, but Mephistopheles immediately creates a diversion. Right after this moment Faustus looks down and sees the phrase “*Homo fuge!*” appear on his arm, a Latin phrase that translates into “*Man Fly!*” In other words it is an act of divine intervention signaling Faustus to leave immediately. The following dialogue captures Mephistopheles's trickery well. After his



wound heals and he cannot write with his blood anymore, the following dialogue takes place:



Figure 19 *Crucifixion* and *The Last Judgment*, Jan van Eyck, 1420-25. Illustrates the medieval motif of ingestion used to express Satan's desire for our souls.



*Faustus.* Ay so I do: but Mephistopheles,  
 My blood congeals and I can write no more. 60  
*Mephistopheles.* I'll fetch thee fire to dissolve it straight.  
 (*He Exits*)  
*Faustus.* What might the staying of blood portend?  
 Is it unwilling I should write this bill? [He is starting to worry]  
 Why streams it not that I may write afresh?  
 "Faustus gives thee his soul": ah there it stayed.  
 Why shouldn't thou not? Is not thy soul thine own?  
 Then write it again: "Faustus gives to thee his soul."  
 (*Enter Mephistopheles with a chafer of fire*)  
*Mephistopheles.* See Faustus here is fire: set it on.  
*Faustus.* So, now the blood begins to clear again:  
 Now will I make an end immediately. 70  
*Mephistopheles.* What will not I do to obtain his soul!  
*Faustus.* Consummatum est: [It is finished] This bill is ended  
 And Faustus hath bequeathed his soul to Lucifer.  
 But what is this inscription on mine arm?  
*Homo fuge!* Whither should I fly?  
 If unto God, he'll throw me down to hell-  
 My senses are deceived, here's nothing writ.-  
 O yes, I see it plain; even here is writ  
*Homo fuge!* Yet shall not Faustus fly.  
*Mephistopheles.* I'll fetch him somewhat [created things] to delight his  
 Mind. (*He Exits*) 80  
 (*Enter devils giving crowns and rich apparel to Faustus: they dance and then they depart.*) (2.1.59-80)

Mephistopheles appeals to Faustus's desire to be rich and powerful which parallels the relationship between mankind and the vices found in many of the medieval plays we have looked at. Faustus desires "a world of profit and delight, of power, of honor, of omnipotence" (1.1.55–6). Mephistopheles uses Faustus's fleshly desires as diversion tactics. His double dealings do not end there, however, and are problematic throughout the entire play. Mephistopheles is complicated on many levels for we are not certain as to when he is telling the truth or lying. Obviously, Satan is considered a liar and rarely tells the truth, but there are several occasions where Mephistopheles actually reveals the truth which

leaves us a little puzzled. For instance, in the following scene Faustus asks an interesting question and Mephistopheles appears to answer it truthfully:

*Faustus.* Stay, Mephistopheles, and tell me, what good  
will my soul do thy lord?  
*Mephistopheles.* Enlarge his kingdom.  
*Faustus.* Is that the reason he tempts us thus?  
*Mephistopheles.* *Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris.* [Misery  
loves company] (2.1.38–42)

In an earlier scene Faustus questions the origins of Mephistopheles's master, Lucifer, and he responds truthfully following the traditional narrative:

*Faustus.* Tell me what is that Lucifer thy lord?  
*Mephistopheles.* Arch-regent and commander of all spirits.  
*Faustus.* Was not that Lucifer an angel once?  
*Mephistopheles.* Yes, Faustus, and dearly loved of God.  
*Faustus.* How comes it then that he is prince of devils?  
*Mephistopheles.* O, by aspiring pride and insolence,  
For which God threw him from the face of heaven. (1.3.64–70)

Cox explains, "In other words, Mephistopheles tells the truth occasionally as an exercise in reverse psychology, successfully manipulating his victim to reject traditional limitations, because that rejection puts Faustus's soul more firmly in the devil's grasp" (41). When Faustus begins to feel remorse and contemplates repentance, Mephistopheles changes his disposition completely reverting to "threats and lies" (Cox 41) regarding the authenticity of the pact he has made with the devil. This mixture of truth and dishonesty creates a satanic character truly unique from the medieval representations of Satan.

Throughout the play Mephistopheles refers to the pact as "irrevocable," but his desire to keep Faustus in his control makes it appear that even after the pact has been signed there is a chance Faustus could still turn to God. To support this

point let our attention shift to the memorable moment when the infernal trinity appears after Faustus has called out to Christ. When Faustus cries out, “Ah, Christ my Savior, seek to save distressed Fautus’ Soul!” (2.3.82–3) the stage directions call for Mephistopheles, Lucifer, and Beelzebub to immediately enter. Why do the devils take the stage? And more importantly why doesn’t God make an entrance? I would argue that in this moment Marlowe breaks the medieval tradition of portraying an intervening God who gives grace and mercy in abundance. Even in the *Castle of Perseverance* as Humanus Genus dies he cries out for mercy and God saves him. Marlowe’s Satan is arguably victorious for Faustus is “dominated and destroyed” (Cox 43). In the end Marlowe gives us a much more compelling character of Satan than of God.

Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus* is ambiguous and problematic when read in a traditional sense, such as medieval morality play reading, but perhaps Marlowe’s intention was not to question the issue of God or Satan and the destiny of our soul, but rather our own human autonomy. John Cox concludes, “The tragedy of Faustus is not that he damns himself, but that he is the only one in this play who intensely desires his soul and yet cannot obtain it” (44). Faustus cannot obtain his own soul because God and Satan are in a constant battle over it. There is also heated controversy that surrounds *Faustus* scholarship where one side argues that Marlowe is implying Calvinism and the other Anti-Calvinism, which dominated the writings of English scholars in the latter half of the sixteenth century. If repentance means nothing to Faustus and in the end he is not saved, perhaps God

had not predestined him to be saved explaining his line, "What doctrine call you this? Que sera, sera [What will be, shall be]" (1.1.46).

Milton's *Paradise Lost* is very different in nature than Marlowe's *Faustus*; however, a unifying theme binds them together. Both literary works not only deliver matchless Satan characters that have shaped our preconceived ideas of who Satan is (without us even knowing it), but each literary work emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge and the irrevocable consequences of obtaining such knowledge. These classic works are metaphorical critiques of a changing society where human autonomy and an elevation of self are sought after. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is the final work that will be discussed in this research paper. I have chosen to discuss Milton last not because of a chronological time line I have been following, although if I was he would indeed come next, but instead because I am convinced that his work has been the most influential narrative in regards to Satan, the dramatization of the battle between the archangels and the legions led by Satan, and the fall of Adam and Eve.

Many new readers of Milton's work might side with the sixteenth-century English writer Sir Walter Raleigh, who labeled *Paradise Lost* as a "monument to dead ideas" (Hawkes 14). *Paradise Lost* editor David Hawkes continues to say, "Milton believed that truth was historical" (14), and that it changed and evolved paralleling society. History is a narrative that is continuously revealing itself in a new way. In his *Areopagitica*, edited by Thomas Luxon, Milton writes, "The light which we have gain'd was giv'n us, not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge"(Luxon). In other

words, truth is a journey and more often than not is considered a destination. He continues, “Let Truth and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth puts to wors, in a free and open encounter” (Luxon, *Areopagitica*).

In *Paradise Lost*, the character that rebels against this historical and dialectical view of truth, boasting of his “mind not to be chang’d by place or time” (1.253) is Satan. Satan also denies the fact that he was created by a power beyond himself, instigates the idolatrous worship of signs, transmits his materialist approach to the world to human beings, and inculcates in them an empty, self-destructive hedonism. There is a good case to be made that the power Milton calls “Satan” has, in the twenty-first century, finally conquered the world. *Paradise Lost* is the prophetic story of how he achieved his triumph. There could be no idea less “dead” than that. (Hawkes 14)

*Paradise Lost* presents a complex conflict between good and evil which has been the central theme in most of our discussion of medieval drama. If one possesses a monotheist belief in God, it requires a belief also in an apparent evil that is a part of this divine plan, which if created by a benevolent must ultimately be good. Milton, however, adopts the Manichaeian view of evil as an independent force which can be seen in the character development of Satan, which is mostly told by archangels Raphael and Michael to Adam and Eve through a series of stories. When these characters begin to recount the events of the past such as the battle between the archangels and the rebel angels, a disclaimer is repeatedly given. Although the speaker is attempting to articulate the experience, he stresses that it is impossible to represent noumena in terms of phenomena. Take into consideration the following portion of text where Raphael struggles to help Adam understand something that cannot be understood by humanity:

Thus Adam made request; and Raphael,  
After short pause assenting, thus began:  
High matter thou enjoin’st me, O prime of men,

Sad task and hard; for how shall I relate  
 To human sense th'invisible exploits  
 Of warring spirits? How, without remorse,  
 The ruin of so many, glorious once,  
 And perfect while they stood? How, last, unfold  
 The secrets of another world, perhaps  
 Not lawful to reveal? Yet for thy good" (5.561-570)

Raphael concludes that the only way that Adam and Eve will understand these supernatural events is through an extended metaphorical narrative using imagery to aid in human comprehension. Throughout the story we are frequently warned that the action detailed is a figural representation of the spiritual realm. Hawkes remarks: "We can only understand those events if we take account of the fact that they are mediated for us through contingent human discourse" (31). This is clear in the following lines:

Immediate are the acts of God, more swift  
 Than time or motion but to human ears  
 Cannot without process of speech be told,  
 So told as earthy notion can receive (7.176-179)

Moreover, it is evident that one who reads Milton must be able to read with a literal understanding as well as a symbolic one. *Paradise Lost* is also considered a theological work requiring an element of hermeneutics or textual interpretation. Milton deals with spiritual warfare between metaphysical beings, the history of the world raising issues of government, warfare, and economics, while also exploring human psychological issues. The most interesting component in my opinion though is the personification of evil in the figure of Satan.

According to Hawkes, Milton defines sin as the refusal to recognize, "this is the sin of Satan, whose basic mistake is the failure to understand that the

difference between himself and God is qualitative, rather than quantitative” (36).

Satan does not recognize the difference between the created and the Creator leading to his fixation of the usurpation of God’s throne. Satan, refusing to recognize the truth of God’s superiority of him, believed that by obtaining strength in numbers he would grow to be stronger than God.

As seen before in medieval dramatic representations of the fall of Lucifer, an absurdity to Satan’s arrogance is captured in *Paradise Lost*, as well as a level of madness when Satan is trying to elevate himself to an equal platform with God. Satan believes himself to be self sufficient and autonomous, rejecting the notion that he was created by God. Throughout the poem Milton repeatedly reminds us that this is the root of satanic consciousness, the failure of a created being to accept the existence of their creator.

Although Satan’s devotion to evil throughout the poem cannot be overlooked, at moments one cannot help but feel sympathetic towards him, differentiating Milton’s Satan from all others. In the following excerpt Satan’s interior monologue is revealed as he confesses the pain and alienation he has felt, revealing an element of humanity and ambivalence that is not often associated with him:

O thou that with surpassing Glory crown’d,  
 Look'st from thy sole Dominion like the God  
 Of this new World; at whose sight all the Stars  
 Hide their diminish'd heads; to thee I call,  
 But with no friendly voice, and add thy name  
 O Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams  
 That bring to my remembrance from what state  
 I fell, how glorious once above thy Sphere;  
 Till Pride and worse Ambition threw me down      40  
 Warring in Heav'n against Heav'ns matchless King:

Ah wherefore! he deserv'd no such return  
 From me, whom he created what I was  
 In that bright eminence, and with his good  
 Upbraided none; nor was his service hard.  
 What could be less then to afford him praise,  
 The easiest recompense, and pay him thanks,

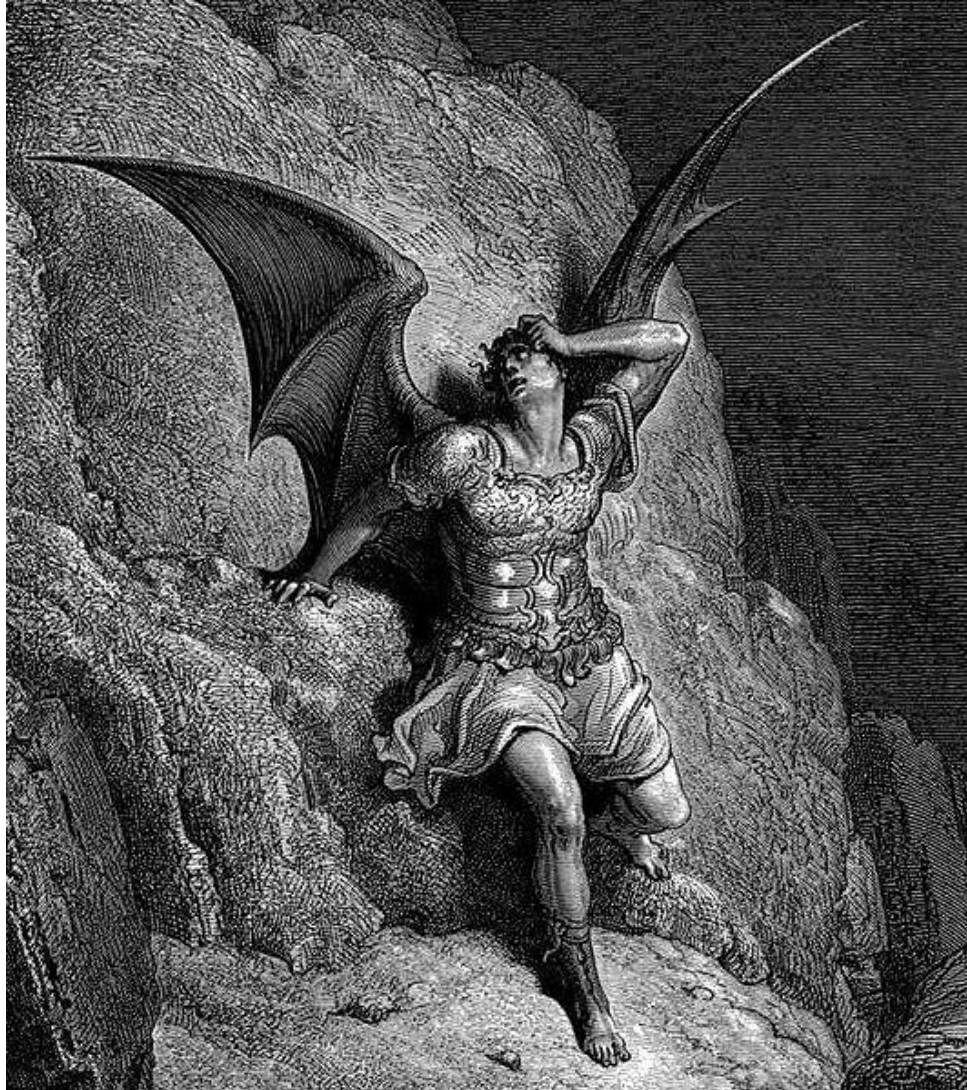


Figure 20. Gustave Doré. *Depiction of Satan*, the antagonist of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. 1866.

How due! yet all his good prov'd ill in me,  
 And wrought but malice; lifted up so high  
 I sdain'd subjection, and thought one step higher  
 Would set me highest, and in a moment quit  
 The debt immense of endless gratitude,  
 So burdensome, still paying, still to ow;  
 Forgetful what from him I still receiv'd,



And understood not that a grateful mind  
 By owing owes not, but still pays, at once  
 Indebted and discharg'd; what burden then?  
 O had his powerful Destiny ordain'd  
 Me some inferior Angel, I had stood  
 Then happy; no unbounded hope had rais'd 60  
 Ambition. Yet why not? som other Power  
 As great might have aspir'd, and me though mean  
 Drawn to his part; but other Powers as great  
 Fell not, but stand unshak'n, from within  
 Or from without, to all temptations arm'd.  
 Hadst thou the same free Will and Power to stand?  
 Thou hadst: whom hast thou then or what to accuse,  
 But Heav'ns free Love dealt equally to all?  
 Be then his Love accurst, since love or hate,  
 To me alike, it deals eternal woe. 70  
 Nay curs'd be thou; since against his thy will  
 Chose freely what it now so justly rues.  
 Me miserable! which way shall I fly  
 Infinite wrauth, and infinite despair?  
 Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell;  
 And in the lowest deep a lower deep  
 Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,  
 To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.  
 O then at last relent: is there no place  
 Left for Repentance, none for Pardon left? (4.32-80)

Satan's dramatic soliloquy uncovers his self-criticism and inner turmoil, naturally separating him from the other characters which arguably lack dimension. An interesting factor of this soliloquy is Satan's admission of his own rebellion and his responsibility for his own fall. He shows remorse while simultaneously displaying a sense of defiance. According to John Carey, "He confesses that his rebellion was completely unjustifiable, that he had the same 'free will and power to stand' as all God's creatures, and that he therefore has nothing to accuse 'but heaven's free love dealt equally to all'" (163). Heaven's love is the reason behind his eternal damnation causing him to curse it, but then in

doing so he also curses himself. When Satan admits that God was right, a redeeming quality surfaces, generating mixed feelings towards his character.

In this loaded speech Milton also brings up the very controversial issue of the redemption of Satan. Satan admits that even if he were allowed to go to heaven, he would just fall again ascertaining the idea that he is destined to fall and cannot function without becoming proud. Milton strategically builds upon the idea that God is merciful because he does not give mercy to Satan by letting him back into heaven, where he would risk falling again. Although this doctrinal issue of Satan possibly being forgiven was debated by many theologians during Milton's lifetime, one can clearly conclude that Milton did not buy into this logic. One might briefly entertain the idea of Satan being redeemable based on the teachings that God is omnipotent and that this would not be an impossible task for him, but Milton's response to this dilemma is simple. He makes perfectly clear that Satan's irredeemability is the fault of no one else, but solely of himself.

*Paradise Lost* is so comprehensive and epic in nature that one could spend years and years excavating the hidden details and layers of the fictitious world Milton has created finding a multitude of parallels throughout history, post-modern society, and beyond. The character of Satan is no exception. Milton's Satan has been the topic of debate for centuries now and it will not stop. Just as Milton defines truth as a journey not a destination, we see Satan in a similar light. Satan in this illuminated light becomes something far greater than what medieval audiences could ever have imagined. He is a reflection of humanity.

I find it very poignant that this journey through the satanic phenomenon temporally concludes with Milton's *Paradise Lost*. It is absolutely fascinating to see the vastness of Milton scholarship that is available at our finger tips. Scholars, theologians, and readers have not stopped the ongoing discussion of the transcendence of Milton's work. *Paradise Lost* can be haunting, and very easily overshadows the medieval representation of Satan. Once it has penetrated the surface of your mind, it sinks deep into your subconscious and suddenly everything is relatable to the narrative and the characters, especially Satan. Satan is portrayed in such a way where one cannot deny his courage, strength, and leadership qualities, but sadly this 'talent' is squandered because of pride and selfishness. Doesn't this sound like a person we all know in our lives? "They are just so darn talented, but they just threw it all away! What a waste!"

The work of Milton, Marlowe, and Dante has shaped the Christian and secular view of Satan, the issue of evil, the demonic, and Hell. These influential works are only a continuation of a long tradition of satanic representations in mythology, folklore, art, literature, and drama. Each literary work represents the ever evolving culture and religio-political climate of that particular time and the writer's experience in that world. Therefore, the issue of Satan's existence is not necessarily in question. Regardless of one's belief in Satan's existence or not, Satan undeniably appears as an historical concept as well as a theological one. From Jewish tradition to the work of Hildegard, throughout the medieval world, and into the Renaissance Satan is present and weaving himself into society. Is it

Satan weaving himself into the fabric of our daily lives, or instead is it our own hand that has included him in each scene as if we need him to be there?

## Conclusion

In the opening chapter, I introduced Satan (or the devil) as a figure not exclusive to Christianity, and through a variety of references illustrated the historical development of an evil force in the universe personified by Satan. Throughout each chapter the reoccurring theme of a Satan in flux has surfaced, beginning with the theories of scholars such as Jeffrey Burton Russell and of John Dominic Crossan, where Satan shifts from the persona of “inspector general” to that of the tempter.

The Judaic idea of the *yester-ba-toh* (tendencies toward good) and the *yester-ba-rah* (tendencies towards bad) that we all possess connected to the notion of free will, plays a critical role in our need to define evil. Every medieval play examined in this project including *Dr. Faustus* has in some way presented the conflict first introduced as yester; the conflict of our will, ultimately paralleled by the fall of Satan, when his own will towards evil, *yester-ba-rah*, was exercised. Satan then became the personification of only the *yester-ba-rah*, when he once was personified as both. Satan’s evolution from “adversary” to enemy in the early years of Christianity altered the perception of evil permanently placing him at the crux of the necessity for Salvation and Christ’s destruction of evil.

The origin of evil is a thought-provoking subject matter that deserves further research, but my original intention for this research project was to briefly touch on the origin of Satan in order to further explore the medieval fascination with Satan manifested in cycle and morality plays. As we discussed in chapter three, the Corpus Christi cycles present the entire history of salvation in a processional

manner, each one building upon the next, therefore building up Satan's role in salvation history to a higher stature through each play. Satan's inclusion in the cycle play transcends Biblical teaching, creating a fully involved character transposed into any Biblical scene needing a villain, evil master mind, or comic relief. Once the morality play became popular and an interpretive freedom began to emerge among the people, Satan returns to his roots in a modified personification of both forms of yester. The word *modified* may be a strong understatement, because Satan doesn't necessarily do anything good, as in moral, to be considered the *yester-ba-toh*, but he represents two contrasting world views simultaneously. He is the antagonist of the Biblical tradition, perceived from a distance, the quintessential opposite of God, but also viewed as the personification of things that inherently represent humanity, making him accessible, up close, and personal to the laity. Audience members knew Satan's role in salvation history. They knew his evil motives, his vigorous appetite for the soul, and his relentless efforts to overthrow God, and in spite of all of these things found an enjoyment in his presence and a desire to see more of him. Moreover, the character of Satan becomes an open vehicle ready for the insertion of any popular satire or social commentary. The bizarre dichotomy of good and evil, pain and pleasure, comedy and tragedy work together to create an understanding of Satan that is worthy of further research and scholarship.

Chapter five explores the literary genius of Dante, Marlowe, and Milton. Marlowe delivers a sophisticated, metaphysical play representing the skepticism of modern science, while also paying homage to the medieval morality play.

How would early medieval audiences have reacted to Mephistopheles? There is no doubt that the dramatic nature of *Faustus*, while even paralleling some medieval plays, would have been unsettling for many medieval audiences, which then raises the issue of Dante and Milton. *Inferno* and *Paradise Lost*, both literary masterpieces, reveal a vision of Satan and the underworld so incredible, so terrifying and intense, that readers, myself included, would have a hard time ever recovering from it. Fueling the imagination with detailed imagery of the unseen darkness of hell, with his gigantic representation of Satan, Dante created something unstageable, and so grotesque that audiences stand at distance in fear.

The epic nature of *Paradise Lost* has also placed it in the category of unstageable and unfilmable. Ambitious filmmakers have dreamt of creating a film based on *Paradise Lost*, screen plays have been written through the years, but once the magnitude of the project is realized, the whole operation is shut down due to its complexity, the character of Satan and the depiction of evil being one of these issues.

Too often we underestimate the unique representation of Satan found in the medieval world, using our contemporary understanding of evil and Christianity to decipher meaning. We inadvertently gauge satanic representations by the images that have been instilled in our minds through literature, art, and film. When viewed through the eyes of the medieval world a different perspective emerges, and Satan transcends the restraints of Biblical tradition, mythology, and our own creative limitations.

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