

Demonology (from [Greek](#) [δαίμων](#), *daimōn*, "demon"; and [-λογία](#), *-logia*) is the systematic [study](#) of [demons](#) or beliefs about demons.^[1] Insofar as it involves [exegesis](#), demonology is an orthodox branch of [theology](#).^[2] It is the branch of [theology](#) relating to [superhuman](#) beings who are not [gods](#).^[3] It deals both with benevolent beings that have no circle of worshippers or so limited a circle as to be below the rank of gods, and with malevolent beings of all kinds. The original sense of "demon," from the time of [Homer](#) onward, was a benevolent being;^[4] but in English the name now holds connotations of malevolence.

Demons, when regarded as [spirits](#), may belong to either of the classes of spirits recognized by primitive [animism](#);^[5] that is to say, they may be human, or non-human, separable souls, or discarnate spirits which have never inhabited a body. A sharp distinction is often drawn between these two classes, notably by the Melanesians, the West Africans, and others; the Arab [djinn](#), for example, are not reducible to modified human souls; at the same time these classes are frequently conceived as producing identical results, e.g. diseases.^{[3][4]} Demonology, though often referred to with negative connotation, was not always seen as evil or devilish as the term would have one believe.

Prevalence of demons



"[Nightmare](#)", 1880, by [Nikolaj Abraham Abildgaard](#)

According to some societies, all the affairs of life are supposed to be under the control of spirits, each ruling a certain "[element](#)" or even object, and themselves in subjection to a greater spirit.^[6] For example, the [Inuit](#) are said to believe in spirits of the sea, earth and sky, the winds, the clouds and everything in nature. Every cove of the seashore, every point, every island and prominent rock has its guardian spirit. All are potentially of the malignant type, to be propitiated by an appeal to knowledge of the supernatural.^[7] In [Korea](#), countless demons inhabit the natural world; they fill household objects and are present in all locations. By the thousands they accompany travelers, seeking them out from their places in the elements.^[8]

In ancient [Babylon](#), demonology had an influence on even the most mundane elements of life, from petty annoyances to the emotions of love and hatred. The numerous demonic spirits were given charge over various parts of the human body, one for the head, one for the neck, and so on. In present-day [Egypt](#), the ubiquitous jinn are believed to be so densely distributed that acts such as pouring water unto the ground are accompanied by seeking the permission of a potentially dampened spirit.^[8]

Greek philosophers such as [Porphyry](#), who claimed influence from [Platonism](#),^[9] and the [fathers of the Christian Church](#), held that the world was pervaded with spirits,^[8] the latter of whom advanced the belief that demons received the worship directed at pagan gods.^[10]

Character of the spiritual world

The ascription of malevolence to the world of spirits is by no means universal. In [West Africa](#), the [Mpongwe](#) believe in local spirits, just as do the Inuit; but they are regarded as inoffensive in the main. Passers-by must make some trifling offering as they near the spirits' place of abode; but it is only occasionally that mischievous acts, such as the throwing down of a tree on a passer-by, are, in the view of the natives, perpetuated by the class of spirits known as *Ombuiri*.^[11] So too, many of the spirits especially concerned with the operations of nature are conceived as neutral or even benevolent; the European peasant fears the corn-spirit only when he irritates him by trenching on his domain and taking his property by cutting the corn;^[12] similarly, there is no reason why the more insignificant personages of the [pantheon](#) should be conceived as malevolent, and we find that the Petara of the [Dyaks](#) are far from indiscriminating and malignant, being viewed as invisible guardians of mankind.^[13]

Types

See also: [Classification of demons](#)

Under the head of demons are classified only such spirits as are believed to enter into relations with the human race; the term therefore includes:

1. angels in the [Judeo-Christian](#) tradition that fell from grace,^[4]
2. human [souls](#) regarded as genii or [familiaris](#),^[14]
3. such as receive a cult (e.g., [ancestor worship](#)),^[4]
4. [ghosts](#) or other malevolent [revenants](#).^[15]

Excluded are souls conceived as inhabiting another world. Yet just as gods are not necessarily spiritual, demons may also be regarded as corporeal; [vampires](#) for example are sometimes described as human heads with appended entrails, which issue from the tomb to attack the living during the night watches. The so-called Spectre Huntsman of the Malay Peninsula is said to be a man who scours the firmament with his dogs, vainly seeking for what he could not find on Earth - a buck mouse-deer pregnant with male offspring; but he seems to be a living man; there is no statement that he ever died, nor yet

that he is a spirit. The [incubi](#) and [Succubi](#) of the [Middle Ages](#) are sometimes regarded as spiritual beings; but they were held to give proof of their bodily existence, such as offspring (though often deformed).^[16] Belief in demons goes back many millennia. The [Zoroastrian](#) faith teaches that there are 3,333 Demons, some with specific dark responsibilities such as war, starvation, sickness, etc.

Jewish demonology

While historical [Judaism](#) never "officially" recognized a rigid set of doctrines about demons,^[17] many scholars believe that its [post-exilic](#) concepts of [eschatology](#), angelology, and demonology were influenced by [Zoroastrianism](#).^{[18][19]} Some, however, believe that these concepts were received as part of the [Kabbalistic](#) tradition^[20] passed down from [Adam](#), [Noah](#), and the Hebrew patriarchs.^[21] See [Sefer Yetzirah](#).

The [Talmud](#) declares that there are 7,405,926 demons, divided in 72 companies.^[22] Indeed, some commentators hold that [Satan](#) was a prosecutor for God in early Judaism, and a somewhat minor angel at that.^[23] While most people believe that [Lucifer](#) and *Satan* are different names for the same being, not all scholars subscribe to this view.^[24]

There is more than one instance where demons are said to have come to be, as seen by the sins of the Watchers and the [Grigori](#), of [Lilith](#) leaving [Adam](#), of demons such as [vampires](#), impure spirits in [Jewish folklore](#) such as the [dybbuk](#), and of wicked humans that have become demons as well.^{[25][26]}

Christian demonology

Main article: [Christian demonology](#)

In Christianity, a demon is traditionally an evil spirit, not human in origin, and bent towards the destruction of mankind using every guile imaginable.

Certain denominations^[citation needed] believe that a demon can get access simply by acknowledging or accepting its presence. Acceptance often means committing sin; eg. demons gradually gain control of the eyes when the eyes sin by looking at things vile, gain control of the tongue when it is used for slander or [blasphemy](#), and can make it slip, etc, and this can spread to other parts of the body, regardless of whether the sinner calls himself Christian or not. This is called possession. In more extreme cases, the demon gains an actual entrance into the bodily frame, leading to disastrous results, often hideous and antagonistic. There are examples of such in the [Gospels](#).

However, religious demonologists such as [Dave Considine](#) and [Ed and Lorraine Warren](#) state that a demon can usually only enter into your life if you open a "door" via a [Ouija board](#), a black magic ritual, or if you reside in a location where a demon has gained access through a "portal." They also say that a demon will often take the form of a child, or a child ghost, to trick a family member into taking it into the home.

They say that a Ouija board itself is not dangerous, but that merely using it to attempt contact with the dead constitutes an invitation to enter. They say that spirits contacted with this method are very rarely human (let alone deceased family members or loved ones), capable of reading your memories to fake their identity, and generally willing to lie about anything you ask them.

Some Christians believe that symptoms of [demon possession](#) include voices in one's mind or a horror of mind, especially when there are no signs of insanity or mental damage/unhealthiness, a stubbornness of mind- holding fast to a particular belief and refusing to listen to reason, a split personality as if two separate personalities share the same body. However, most Christian demonologists assert the importance of a medical and psychiatric evaluation before assuming that the person in question may be possessed by a demon. [Schizophrenia](#), for example, can exhibit many symptoms commonly attributed to possession.

Most Christian traditions also state that for protection against demon possession, faith in God is needed, an alert watchfulness, a guarding of one's own mind (i.e. analyzing one's thoughts and actions often) and an aggressive, often spoken refusal of all evil spirits and all things of evil spirits over every aspect of one's being, or over specific aspects of one's being (where possession is suspected or known to be manifest) in the Name of [Jesus](#), and done in cooperation with God. Prayer against the evil spirit or spirits, prayer to shed light on what action(s) was done, or word(s) said that allowed them ground for possession so that this too can be refused are also often necessary.

Demonic infestation or demonic encounters have been claimed by many notable people throughout history, such as James Gall, Dr J.L. Nevius, Sir Robert Anderson, and Pastor Ernst Lohmann. Some Christians also believe the same evil spirits existed in the time of Jesus that exist today in everyday society. These traditions are generally not common in the modern [Roman Catholic Church](#), nor in many other Christian denominations. Demons and demonic possession are often considered to be a Medieval belief, however the Roman Catholic Church, to this day, teaches of their existence and the defenses against them.

In many forms of Christian demonology, the only reliable way to rid oneself of a demon is through an [exorcism](#), which is typically performed by a Catholic priest (but some Protestants claim it can be performed by laypeople). Sometimes a blessing of the home can remove or deter the presence, as long as this blessing is properly performed. There are several levels of exorcism, the "lightest" of which is [baptism](#). A Catholic priest can perform a "minor" exorcism in the home, but a "major" exorcism requires the consent of the local bishop.

Catholic exorcism requires a medical and psychiatric evaluation of every family member by licensed professionals, and the gathering of tape recorded and photographic evidence. It can take weeks or even months before a major exorcism may be approved. In the mean time, the family is usually instructed to ignore the perceived presence and to pray regularly, as it is believed that responding to it with fear or anger makes it stronger.

According to some forms of Christian demonology, sometimes more than one demon can be present within the home, but only one family member is really targeted for possession. The demon(s) will make an effort to divide family members against each other and cultivate an oppressive atmosphere. According to demonologists like Dave Considine, you cannot solve the problem by moving to a new home, because demons haunt a person, rather than haunting a home, unlike a [ghost](#). Furthermore, numerous exorcisms may be required before the home and family are "cleansed," and the family will probably need psychological therapy for some time afterward.

According to protestant exorcist and author Pastor G. P. Haggart, demons dwell or hide in vacant areas such as abandoned buildings, tombs, [graveyards](#) and the wilderness. There they feed off the sinful residue of man's carnal knowledge (Galatians 5:16-24).

Many may claim to be "religious demonologists" -- i.e., capable of evaluating a family for approval of an exorcism or other method of removal—but there is only a small handful of them operating in North America, and it is unknown how many do so with the certified approval of the Catholic church. Certification within the Catholic church requires extensive knowledge of Catholicism, as well as years of mentoring. Since demons and demonic possession are often perceived as a mix of quaint superstition and urban legend, the role of the exorcist and the Christian demonologist has waned dramatically in the wake of the [Age of Enlightenment](#). Since the [Second Great Awakening](#) and the [Satanic Panic](#), protestant exorcists have risen in some communities.

Islamic demonology

In [Islam](#), the devil [Iblis](#) (Satan and/or Lucifer in Christianity) was a [Jinn](#).^[27] (humans are created from Earth, Angels from light, and jinn from 'smokeless fire'). The jinn though, are not necessarily evil; they could be good doers or sinners just like humans. Since the jinn and humans are the only kinds of creation who have the will to choose, the followers of Iblis could be jinn or human. The angels, on the other hand, are sinless and only obey the will of God.^[28] In the [Qur'an](#), when God ordered those witnessing the creation of Adam to kneel before him (before Adam), Iblis refused to do so and was therefore damned for refusal to obey God's will.^[29]

Demonology in Buddhism and Hinduism

Traditionally [Buddhism](#) affirms the existence of [Hells](#)^[30] peopled by demons who torment sinners and tempt mortals to sin, or who seek to thwart their [enlightenment](#), with a demon named [Mara](#) as chief tempter.^[31] Most of these "demons" are considered to be representations of mental obstructions.^[32] [Hinduism](#) contains traditions of combats between its gods and various adversaries, such as the combat of the lord of the Gods [Indra](#) and the major [asura](#), [Vritra](#).^[33]

Occult demonology

Practitioners of [ceremonial magic](#) sometimes attempt to constrain and command [demons](#) to do their bidding, using methods such as the [Goetia](#) and [The Book of Abramelin](#). The demons are often those mentioned in Christian demonology. These practitioners do not necessarily worship demons, but seek to deploy them to obtain their goals. Other followers of the occult do worship demons, and some refer to their religion as "demonolatry."^[34] Demonolators consider methods such as the [Goetia](#) very disrespectful towards the demons, and possibly dangerous for the operator. They instead use forms of [prayer](#), [magic](#), and [ritual](#) which petition the demons, asking for their aid rather than commanding them.

Demonolators are not identical to practitioners of [Theistic Satanism](#). They worship other demons (such as [Belial](#) and [Leviathan](#)) either alongside, or instead of Satan. Some demonolators say that their form of demonolatry is a tradition, often familial, that is not related to the modern religious and philosophical movements collectively referred to as Satanism.^[35] Not all of the occultists who worship demons use the word "demonolator" to describe themselves, nor do all belong to the specific group mentioned above.

Zoroastrian demonology

In the Zoroastrian tradition, [Ahura Mazda](#), as the force of good [Spenta Mainyu](#), will eventually be victorious in a cosmic battle with an evil force known as [Angra Mainyu](#) or Ahriman.