

Our Lord's and the Devil's Animals

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AFTER Our Lord had created all the animals, he chose the wolves to be his dogs, and he forgot all about the goats. So the devil puffed himself up and also went out creating; he gave the goats long tails.

Now when they went agrazing, the goats' long tails caught fast in the thorn bushes, and the devil had to go out to untangle them, which took him quite some time. At length he grew angry, and bit the tails off all the goats, leaving only the stumps that one may see even to this day. Now he could let them graze alone.

It happened, however, that Our Lord saw how the goats would gnaw on a growing tree and devour other delicate plants. He was moved by this, and so, in his grace and mercy, he set his wolves upon them, which soon tore the goats to pieces.

When the devil noticed this, he accused the Lord, saying: "Your creatures have torn mine apart."

The Lord replied: "Why have you created them to do harm?"

The devil replied: "I had to do so.

My mind can only conceive of harm, and so whatever I create cannot have any other nature. You must compensate me for what your creatures have done."

"I shall compensate you," said the Lord, "when the leaves have fallen from all the oak trees. Return to me then and you shall have your compensation."

When the leaves had fallen from the oak trees, the devil came and made his demand.

But Our Lord merely said, "A tall oak tree stands before the church in Constantinople and it still has all its leaves."

Furious, the devil flew off to seek out the oak, wandering the wilderness for six months until he found it. When he returned, all the other oak trees were again full of green leaves, and so he had to give up his compensation.

In his wrath, however, he put out the eyes of all the goats, and replaced them with his own. This then is why goats have devil's eyes and stumpy tails, and why the devil sometimes assumes their form.