

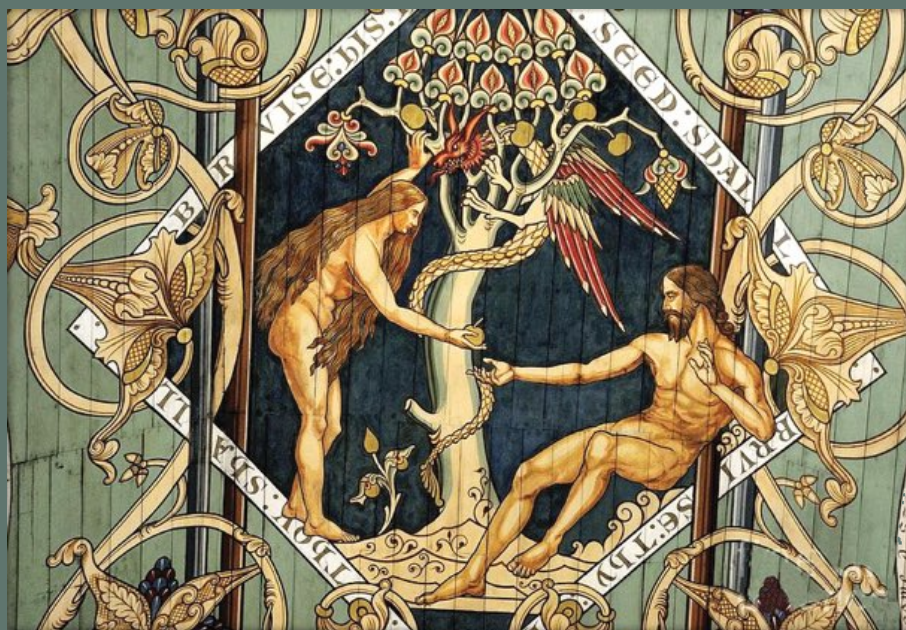
Evil and the Reality of Satan

By Tarcisio Beal

The millennial use of the terms “Satan,” “Devil,” “Beelzebul,” “Prince of Darkness,” and other expressions found in the Holy Scriptures has been an attempt to explain and even to justify flagrant abuses of human life, power, and freedom. The references to **Satan** as the evildoer and the creature behind the most horrible crimes committed by human beings, especially by those who hold full power and control over society, were already typical of the magicians of the ancient world, and were used by the writers of the Old Testament, then adopted by the authors of the New Testament as an explanation for major disobedience of God’s orders and commandments.

In **Genesis 3: 1**, the **serpent** tricking Eve to eat the forbidden fruit of the primeval garden is a symbol of the devil, of Satan, the “Prince of Darkness,” the all-powerful adversary of the Lord God. The Greek term “Satan” was adopted by the biblical authors of post-exilic Israel (since the mid -7th century), when evil and punishment were no longer attributed to the Creator. In

1 **Chronicles 21: - 1**, **Satan** is blamed for convincing David to order that a census of Israel should not include the tribes of Levi and Benjamin. The **Book of Job**, a didactic poem written by an anonymous author approximately seven centuries BC, imagines **God dialoguing with Satan**: One day when a number of the faithful presented themselves before the Lord, Protector of the Suffering and Persecuted, the Lord said to Satan: ‘Whence do you come?’ Satan said: ‘From roaming the earth and patrolling it. Then the Lord ordered Satan not to use his powers to harm Job, although recognizing he could do it: “All that he (Job) has is in your power; only do not lay a hand upon his person” (Job 1: 6, 11-12). In **Zechariah 3:1**, **Satan** accuses the high priest Joshua of wrongdo-



Adam and Eve temptation by the serpent mediaeval painted panel on wooden nave ceiling Ely Cathedral in Cambridgeshire, England—photographed by David Lyons in 2014.

ing while “the angel of the Lord rebukes him.” In **Ezekiel** (chs. 38 & 39), a prophet who lived in Babylon in mid-6th century BC, the devil is referred to as Gog/Magog and painted as the source of evil and wrongdoing (chapters 38 & 39).

Even more often and more clearly than in the Old Testament, the **New Testament** makes references to the devil, but often

with a clear meaning as the personification of the crimes and sins of human beings, especially of those in power. In **Matthew 12: 25-32**, after Jesus cures a demoniac (a blind and mute person) and astounded the crowd, the Pharisees countered: “This man drives out demons only by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons.” Jesus then explained it all:

“Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste; and no town or home divided against itself will stand. And if I drive out demons by the power of **Beelzebul**, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore, they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. And, whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”

In **Luke 8:12**, Jesus cures the Gerasene demoniac who wore no clothing and lived in the cemetery and in desert places. When Jesus asked him what was his name, he replied “Legion.”

Acts 13: 8-10 relates how the apostle Paul reprimanded **Elymas, the magician** who tried to prevent the apostle Paul from taking the Gospel to the Proconsul of Cyprus. “You son of the devil, you enemy



of all that is right, full of every sort, full of every sort of deceit and fraud.”

Paul was unwelcomed by the early Christian community of Corinth which celebrated the Eucharist with a lot of drinking, kept its poor members away from its gatherings, and even indulged in religious prostitution (2 Cor 11: 17-22). He points out that like “Satan masquerades as an angel of light, false apostles masquerade as apostles of Christ” (2 Cor 11: 12-15). In the **Epistle to the Hebrews**, Paul says that Jesus, through his death, destroyed the power of death, that is, the devil.” He also emphasizes the meaning of Incarnation and of Jesus’ crucifixion: “Surely he did not help angels but rather the descendants of Abraham; therefore he had to become like his brothers in every way” (Heb 2: 14-16). In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul warns the faithful against the tricks of Satan: “Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil because our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens” (Eph 6: 11-12).

Revelation, the latest book of the Bible, written during the first century AD, has been often misinterpreted. It spells out the author’s visions, so its content is mostly symbolic and allegorical; it uses the metaphor in defining pagan Rome

as the new Babylon, the “Great Harlot” (Rev.17: 9), as he describes Rome’s bloody persecution of Christians during the reign of emperor Domitian (81-96 AD). It also relates the persecution of Christians and evil in the world as the work of the “Seven-headed Dragon” of the sky and the two Beasts that exerted authority over the world (Rev, chs. 12 & 13). Implying that some Christians were trying to escape persecution by stating that they were just Jews, the author says: “I know the slander of those who claim to be Jews and are not, but rather are members of the assembly of Satan” (Rev 2: 9).

Whether or not we believe that the devil really exists, the undeniable fact is that it is people who abuse their freedom and their power to carry out evil deeds. In the days of Jesus, the work of the devil was carried out by the people who controlled religion and society: Roman emperors like



Domitian and Nero, King Herod and his wife Herodias who had John the Baptist beheaded, Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas and the pharisees (cf. Lk 16: 14, Mt, chapter 23). **Both Herod and Pilate at first found Jesus not guilty of misleading the people and of advising the people not to pay Caesar’s taxes, but later, pressured by the pharisees, declared him guilty (Lk 23: 14-18).**

In the modern world we know that it was not Satan, but Hitler who ordered the genocide of the Jews; the mass killings of Central Africans was carried out by bloody dictators and their military; the killing of hundreds of thousands in unjustified wars, including the massacre of up to 50,000 Muslims by the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina; the “Dirty War” in Argentina; and the constant killing of civilians by drug-selling gangs in Mexico and Central America. In the United States, there were the massacres of the Californian Indians, the frequent massacres of blacks during the years of the Confederacy. The present Israeli-Hamas/Palestinian conflict in the Middle East and the killing of more than 50,000 civilians in the still ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine are the latest examples of how the rulers of some States do what

has been called “the work of Satan,” although those responsible can be easily identified.

Now, we all know that, since the 2016 election of Donald Trump, the American Republic has been in serious jeopardy, not by the tricks of the devil but by identifiable politicians and right-wingers intent on carrying out their agenda.

STOP PROJECT 2025 Rally across from Heritage Foundation at Triangle Park along Massachusetts Avenue between 2nd and D Street, NE, Washington DC on Saturday afternoon, 27 January 2024 by Elvert Barnes Photography



If you think that Trump and his cohorts are not plotting to destroy the most prominent features of American democracy, look at their methods and their goals. In a quite revealing article in The Nation (“**Trumpism 2.0:**” March 2024, p. 6), Robert A. Borosage summarizes the specifics of the **Trumpist agenda** as planned by the Heritage Foundation’s “**Project 2025.**” Trump himself has been publicizing his plan on how to turn the American Republic into a centralized, imperial government controlled by the racist MAGA right-wingers. As usual, his major supporters paint the democrats and other opponents as socialist or Marxist. Paul Dans, director of “**Project 2025,**” declares that it is necessary to do away with the Marxist indoctrination that has led to sexual orienta-

Anuncios

May, 2024

Check individual websites, FB and other social media for information on community meetings previously listed in *La Voz*. For meetings and events scheduled at the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center check: www.esperanzacenter.org or call 210.228.0201.



El Mundo Zurdo Conference 2024

Les Atravesades en Comunidad:
Coalition Building as Light
In the Dark

Trinity University, May 16-18, 2024

8:30am – 5pm, Thurs & Fri | 8:30am – 12:30pm, Sat.

WELCOME RECEPTION

honoring Sonia Saldivar-Hull, 6-7pm

UTSA Downtown Durango Bldg. Riverwalk Room

Main Plaza Summer events



SECOND SATURDAY MARKET

May 11 @ 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm

THE SAGA

projected onto the façade of
the San Fernando Cathedral

Every Tuesday through
Sunday at 9 PM & 9:30 PM



CineFestival Call for Entries-Deadline May 5th
Go to: filmfreeway.com/CineFestivalSanAntonio



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tion, gender identity, abortion, reproductive health; research in the national laboratories must be eliminated, the border militarized and the millions of undocumented immigrants expelled. The project also calls for the US to withdraw from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Paris Climate Accord, and the imposition of the regulating powers of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) so that the oil industry can continue to pollute environment. All these plans will be carried out by extending the political appointments of the President from the present 4,000 to no less than 50,000, gaining total control of the State system.

What has greatly facilitated MAGA's plans is the technological revolution in communication (the Internet and iPhones) that allows corporations and individuals to engage not only in political debate but also in mind control by feeding the base with all sorts of lies and by using the right of free speech and of public protest as weapons against the judges and the jurors who are the evaluating Trump's actions since he lost the Presidency in January of 2020. The overuse and abuse of the Internet and of personal iPhones are also leading to mental disease, especially of children and young people who are not properly supervised. The multiplication and

easy access to guns is resulting in an increased number of killings, including by a five year who murdered his own mother. This past week there were 3 mass shootings of and by children in Indianapolis, Indiana. Furthermore, easy and constant communication with pictures and written messages facilitate and reenforce the support of the political base. This is probably why an increasing number of blacks and Latinos are being blinded and support the Trumpism of the Republican party.

Finally, as we pointed out above, the habit of blaming the devil for all kinds of crimes and horrors against human beings cannot, as we discussed above, cannot be explained or be justified through quotations from or misinterpretations of the Bible. It parallels the current justification voiced by some republican congressmen who oppose the democrats' efforts to curtail the production of oil and clean up the environment: that it is God who controls nature; so it is He who sends the earthquakes, the typhoons, the devastating floods, etc. So we pollute the environment, but is God who gets the blame!... It sounds like the guy who did something wrong and laughs about it by saying: "I am sorry! The devil made me do it.

BIO: Tarcisio Beal is professor Emeritus of History at the University of the Incarnate Word who has written extensively in *La Voz de Esperanza*.

