

The evolution of the theory of Satan keeps pace with the development of Jewish angelology and demonology. In Wisdom ii. 24 he is represented, with reference to Gen. iii., as the author of all evil, who brought death into the world; he is apparently mentioned also in Eccus. (Sirach) xxi.27,

He is the incarnation of all evil, and his thoughts and activities are devoted to the destruction of man;

“One who entrusts himself to God does not dread the devil. ‘If God is for us, who is against us?’” We ask God to deliver us from all evils – past, present and future – of which Satan is the author or instigator.

JUDAISM

so that Satan, the impulse to evil (yeZer ha-ra), and the angel of death are one and the same personality.

“He descends from heaven and leads astray, then ascends and brings accusations against mankind. Receiving the divine commission, he takes away the soul, or, in other words, he slays (B.B. 16a).” He seizes upon even a single word which may be prejudicial to man; so that “one should not open his mouth unto evil,” i.e., “unto Satan” (Ber. 19a.). In times of danger likewise he brings his accusations (Yer.Shab. 5b et passimi).



MUSLIM

Muslims believe that Allah created a host of angels, all of whom are sinless, do not eat or drink, and have no determining sex. They, like humans, will die and be resurrected.



When Adam was created, Allah commanded all the angels to bow down to him. All the angels did so, except Iblis (Satan), who refused, saying, “He was made of clay, but I was made of fire, so I am better than he” (Sura 15:28-33). For his

refusal, Allah cursed him and threw him out of paradise. From that time till now, Iblis has become man’s chief enemy, and is the leader of all the demons and evil jinn, who harass and torment mankind (Sura 15:34-46).

Scripture is clear about the evil of lying. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No’. Anything more is from the evil one”. This reminds us not only that we need to be truthful, but also that hypocrisy – saying one thing while doing another – is a sin against the truth.

BUDDHISM

In the Abrahamic religions, it is the fallen angel Satan; in Buddhism, it is the Tempter, Mara. Many of the Buddhist scriptures depict Mara as a real being capable of verbal communication; in these he is often, like Satan, portrayed as a Luminous One (a god), but one whose sphere includes passion, temptation and evil.

Some Buddhist texts clearly present Mara as a state of the human mind—a metaphor for the principle of evil, passion, and diversion from the Dharma:

when our nature is dominated by [these], we are said to be possessed by the “devil”.



In the Gospel of John, Jesus describes the devil as father of lies. St. Paul discouraged lying: “Stop lying to one another”; “Speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, for we are members one of another”.

SATAN AND CONCUPISENCE

By our first parents’ sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free. Original sin entails “captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil.” It is interesting to note that ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil can give rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action, and morals.

The whole of man’s history has been the story of our combat with the powers of evil (concupiscence), stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield man has to struggle to do what is right. It is at great cost to himself, and aided by God’s grace, that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity.

CHALLENGE

The most basic principle of the Christian moral life is the awareness that every person bears the dignity of being made in the image of God. He has given us an immortal soul and through the gifts of intelligence and reason enables us to understand the order of things established in His creation. God has also given us a free will to seek and love what is true, good, and beautiful. Sadly, because of the Fall, we

also suffer the impact of Original Sin, which darkens our minds, weakens our wills, and inclines us to sin. Baptism delivers us from Original Sin, but not from its effects – especially the inclination to sin, concupiscence. Within us, then, is both the powerful surge toward the good because we are made in the image of God, and the darker impulses toward evil because of the effects of Original Sin.

A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. Everyone must avail himself of the means to form his conscience.

NEW TESTAMENT – HOPE

Because of Satan’s defeat through the historical death on the cross by the redeemer, Jesus Christ (Col.2:14,15), Christians can repulse his evil spirits that harm so many people. All believers have this strength,

given by Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to resist and repel Satan and all his cohorts. God will finally cast Satan out of the earth and into the eternal fire, from where he will never bother man or God again.

INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the Christian life, the Holy Spirit Himself accomplishes his work by mobilizing the whole being, with all its sorrows, fears and sadness, as is visible in the Lord’s agony and passion. In Christ human feelings are able to reach their consummation in charity and divine beatitude. When we learn how to be open to the Holy Spirit, He shares with us the gift of understanding that contains the power to know Jesus and to give witness to him.

The Holy Spirit is dynamic, transforming our bodies into temples of God and our souls into dwelling

places for Christ. Sometimes called the Paraclete, a term that describes Him as advocate and consoler, the Holy Spirit wants to fill us with inspiration and encouragement.

We may not have to do great things, but we are called to do every day duties with great love. The Holy Spirit is essentially Love. Love can change those we meet and change ourselves in each encounter. Because of the Holy Spirit our whole being, mind, heart, soul, and body can be permeated with Love.



Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel

*St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle,
be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O Prince of the heavenly Host, by
the Power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all evil spirits who wander the earth to
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.*

BACK TO OUR ORIGINAL QUESTION: "IS SATAN REAL OR IMAGINARY?"

With the limitations of us humans, we can only IMAGINE what Satan looks like and how he operates. We do know from history that evil spirits have attacked every culture from Adam and Eve through modern times.

If we need concrete proof of the REALITY of Satan

we need not look beyond the New Testament. Jesus was tempted three times by Satan with promises of total power over people and the universe if he would bow down to him: at the end of forty days in the desert, on the mountain top and in the garden of Gethsemane. Satan was real then, Satan is real today.

"God is Love" and love is his first gift, containing all others.



WE CELEBRATE IN THIS NEWSLETTER, THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.
WE CELEBRATE THE PEACE THAT COMES OVER THE WORLD IN THIS DEFINING MOMENT IN HISTORY.

THANK YOU GOD FOR THE PEACE, FOR THE LOVE THAT PERMEATES THE WORLD ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

Image courtesy of the Fathers and Brothers
MARYKNOLL

This newsletter is composed mostly from existing writings from internet sources: www.debate.org.uk/topics/theo/6belief.htm; www.myjewishlearning.com; www.jewishencyclopedia.com; www.moroni10.com/protestants.html; www.shunyata.net/mara2.htm; www.wikipedia.com; www.answering-christianity.com/satan.htm; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994.

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Don and Shirley Barton, Coordinators, HSC



NEWSLETTER

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SATAN! REAL OR IMAGINARY?

Did you ever say to your parents "The Devil made me do it"? I know I did. It is a favorite refrain when a child is caught with "his hand in the cookie jar". Yes, it is defensive, but it is much more than that. It's the conscience again at work, knowing right from wrong, and looking for a scapegoat.

Well, the Devil (Satan) is a formidable scapegoat. From the beginning of time he has persuaded people to succumb to his temptations, to live life ignoring human virtues. You remember virtues...**faith, love and charity**. And the cardinal virtues, **prudence, temperance,**



justice and fortitude. In Genesis 2.15-3.24, we see the fall of man in which the vulnerable first man and woman are enticed by a serpent (later understood to be Satan) to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, thus violating God's will and bringing sin into the world. This paves the way for the sin of their son Cain, who slays his brother Abel, but is first informed by God about Satan's plan for the spiritually weak: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it." (Genesis 4.7)

HOW DO GREAT RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD VIEW SATAN?

MAINSTREAM CHRISTIANITY

For most Christians Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: "The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing."

The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in

Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries – of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature – to each man and to society, **the action is permitted** by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but "we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him."

ANGEL: A spiritual, personal, immortal creature with intelligence and free will, created by God to serve him increasingly and to act as a messenger to carry out His plan of salvation.

DEVIL: Angels who, in pride, turned away from God and have fallen from grace are named demons or devils, and they tempt human beings to sin.

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