

Another Approach to the Problem of Evil

There are four main topics discussed here. We will maintain the following points:

1. The architect of evil is Satan
2. The structure of evil is Institutional
3. The medium of evil is The Flesh
4. There is Supernatural Defense against evil

The Architect of Evil Is Satan

The source of all evil is Satan. We learn from the Scriptures that Satan is a *liar* and a *murderer*¹. Lucifer, also known as the Great Dragon, the Serpent, and The Devil (Revelation 12:19) is the architect of evil. He became evil at some point and has been evil ever since. He inspires and tempts others to evil.

So just who is this architect of evil? From Isaiah 14:12 we know that Lucifer 1. *Fell from heaven*, (confirmed to be Satan in Luke 10:18), 2. *Was cut down to the ground* (which may mean that his temporary abode was made planet Earth), and that he was responsible for having *weakened the nation's*. This latter point almost certainly refers to culture, since not all nations can be said to have been equally weakened politically or militarily, but they are, and always have been, equally susceptible to the cultural impetus to sin. This includes politics, and thereby greatly enlarges the arena in which Satan works. It is instructive to look at Isaiah 14:12 ff. to see what all the fuss is about concerning Satan. There, we read, “I will ascend, . . . I will exalt my throne . . . I will sit upon the mount . . . I will be like the most high.” This is a pretty impressive resume of *self-seeking desire*.

In Ezekiel 28:11-19 we are shown another personification of Satan's character in the person of the king of Tyre. We notice that 1. He was full of wisdom and perfect beauty; 2. Was created perfect and was covered (or clothed?) in every beautiful thing. 3. He was the anointed cherub who walked the streets of heaven. 4. We are told that he was perfect in all his behavior . . . Until he wasn't. 5. Shifting gears somewhat we are told that by the huge amounts of merchandise (business, trade, culture?) they have “filled you with violence” (this is spoken, no doubt, of the city itself). But all of this was the result of the King and his policies. 6. Your beauty and wisdom made you proud. (Are we talking about the King or his city? It's very difficult to tell.) 7. Your iniquities have defiled your sanctuaries (again, spoken to the city itself). And speaking to the city itself it is said that it will be “brought to ashes.”

Apparently, “seeing” Satan in evil people was a prophetic motif. In the passages above, Isaiah and Ezekiel link Satan to great kings.

This is done by ascribing known actions, statements, or purposes of the king to Satan, at points where Satan's character is thought to be the efficient *cause* of the king's behavior. The value of this procedure is the insight we gain regarding Satan, for Satan may well have inspired such behavior. In other words, at the very least, we see similarities between the characters of the kings and Satan. At the most we can surmise a satanic cause for the kings' behaviors.

The problem for exegesis is knowing the limits of the comparison. For prophecy regarding the king who exhibited satanic behavior may or may not also apply to Satan himself at a later time.

¹

John 8:44.

This would amount to a second fulfillment of the prophecy. But there is the possibility as well, that the prophecy *does not* apply to Satan at all. It may be that Satan's inspiration, or the exhibition of his character, is used as moral justification for the judgment prophesied against the king.

But there are a couple of other important points that we wish to address. First, it is noteworthy that in neither Isaiah 14:12-14, nor Ezekiel 28:11-19 is Satan identified with or addressed as *a common, ordinary, man*, but *as a king*, as one having immense authority and influence. Second, in the present passage, it is difficult to distinguish between Satan as the king of Tyre, and the city (and culture) "produced" by the king. They are coterminous. We see these features repeated often enough in the rest of Scripture to believe that they represent a consistent pattern.

The Hebrew word "Satan" means *adversary*². When the definite article is attached to the word (The adversary) we are talking about Satan. The King James uses the term *adversary* often. It is not always clear whether the adversary is Satan, but whoever he is, he usually is speaking for him. When Jesus said to Peter "get thee behind me, Satan," Satan was being his typical self. Satan "borrows" people through whom to speak and act. Jesus may be the only human being ever actually to have *seen* Satan. He saw him fall from heaven, and He apparently saw him during his temptation in the wilderness.

In 1 Chronicles 21:1 Satan is said to oppose Israel and David, a nation and her king.

In Job 1:6 we see that Satan has access to God, and on one occasion attacked Job, a wealthy, powerful, influential man of God.

In Zechariah 3:1 we see Satan resisting Joshua, the high priest, before the Angel of the Lord.

In Matthew 16:23 Satan speaks through Peter, the "spokesman for the disciples." Note that this is immediately after his *Great Confession*.

In Luke 22:3, Satan manipulates Judas. Judas was just the person Satan needed to betray Jesus.

But in 2 Corinthians 2:11 we see that Satan takes advantage of *us* through his "devices," i.e., by operating on our hardheartedness and the weakness of our flesh. The word "devices" is interesting. The Greek word (noema) means 1) thought; mind, and 2) purpose; design; plot. Translating this term with the English "scheme" seems to do the trick.

Yet in 2 Corinthians 11:14 we are told that Satan seems to be an "Angel of Light" (or enlightenment?). How better to deceive than to appear to be reasonable and compassionate?

In 1 Thessalonians 2:18, Paul complains that his plans had been "hindered by Satan." This appears most likely to be brought about by a confluence of detrimental social circumstances, rather than by a direct confrontation with the person of Satan himself.

Revelation 12:9 tells us that Satan "deceived the whole world?" Did he go door-to-door selling disbelief? No. In first Peter 5:8-9 we are told that Satan, like a lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour. The expression "looking for whom he may devour" simply means he's looking for someone who is morally pliant and yet (in this case) with power, or influence, or access, and who lacks belief in, respect for, or fear of, the Devil. A lion does not eat *all* the gnus; he eats the babies, the old, the unfortunate, and the stragglers. Similarly, Satan seeks the *moral* stragglers and babies, and "devours them" by turning them to his purpose.

² Satan is the adversary of God, and only thus, secondarily, of man. In his attempt to defeat God, or thwart His plan, it is essential that he keep us from hearing or heeding God.

Luke 22:31-33 provides us a striking example of just this. There, we read, that Jesus tells Peter that (1) Satan has desired “to sift like wheat” the disciples, (2) that he has prayed for Peter, and (3) when he (Peter) returns, he is to build up his brethren (presumably the other disciples). Do we know enough to surmise Satan’s plan in this case? Why did he want to sift the disciples like wheat? It seems likely that first and foremost it was because his temptations of Jesus had failed. And if Jesus truly was about to die, he would be leaving them “in charge,” thus making them important people in proclaiming Satan’s message of the death and “failure” of Jesus. Henceforth, he thought, with the help of the disciples, he could strengthen the Jewish disbelief, servitude and legalism. Was Peter the biggest target among the followers of Jesus? Probably. Jesus responded to Satan’s wish to sift *all the disciples* by praying *specifically for Peter*! Jesus doubtless prayed for the others as well, but they are not mentioned. Why not? Could it be because Peter was their leader and had more influence than they?

From these verses we learn that Satan is monumentally *self-centered* and that *he is engaged in constant warfare against God*. It is true, that the Devil is our adversary, but he is primarily *God’s* adversary. It is only in this context that Satan has any use for us. He wishes to keep us from salvation, *not merely to thwart us*, but *to thwart God*. In the Parable of the Sower, he is said to “come immediately and take away the word that was sown in their hearts.” Why? Because he hates us, or because he hates the Sower? Satan’s primary enemy is God, and he will use any means of destroying or perverting His plan (as found in the Gospel), devising any alternative to it, or hiding or minimizing its effects. To this end he uses great men, men in high places, or men who *have influence* in high places to produce satanic cultures and anti-Christian political “solutions” to the problems he has himself created.

We have only two exceptions to this general rule. In Luke 16:13 we read of a woman who is “bound 18 years by Satan,” and in Acts 5:3 we read of Ananias and Sapphira lying to the Holy Spirit. But even in the second of these cases, it may be argued cogently that the influence these two may have had within the fledgling church was out of proportion to the deed done. Had the early Christians thought that they could lie to God and get away with it, they soon would have noticed that they were worshiping a very small God indeed. So, as with Judas, in whom we see no particular greatness, but one having the kind of access to a great figure it would be useful to harness, Ananias and Sapphira, while not great in themselves, had access to a large body of believers in the infant Church.

But the most important thing about Satan is that *he is a defeated enemy*³. He was defeated on the cross at Calvary by his arch enemy Jesus Christ. Yet he remains in the world, working on borrowed time. In fact, he is still *the god of this World*⁴. How? In what sense? To what extent? Are Christians subject to demon *possession*? Probably not. Are they subject to demon *influence*? Probably so.

How does Satan “govern” the world and influence Christians? First and foremost, by means of perversion; by instilling in the culture false values, materialistic philosophies, and perverting the truth through fragmentation and revisionist history. We recognize the counterfeit culture of the Pharisees in the time of Jesus; do we recognize the counterfeit culture of Christendom since the fourth century? Secondly, he governs the world by inspiring non-Christian philosophers and

³ Matt 4:1-11; Matt 12:24-29; John 12:341; John 14:30.

⁴ 2 Cor 4:4.

teachers and supplying for them an eager audience⁵. And thirdly, he perverts the gospel and Christian worship services by substituting *the Madison Avenue method* for the *Gospel method*, thereby diverting man's interests and redirecting his focus which, in the worship service, ought *always* to be on *the objective teachings* and *the finished work* of Jesus Christ.

How does Satan make such appeals? Remember the temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden⁶ which ultimately resulted in the "fall" of man. His method was similar in his temptation of Jesus⁷. However, the temptation of Jesus failed and ultimately Satan's own defeat was effected. Yet it is important to remember that the *method* he used in both of these temptations was the same. It was an appeal to the "self." And so it is today. We must remember that the promises he makes in his temptations are greater or lesser in accordance with, and in proportion to, the importance and moral stature of the person being tempted. He promised Jesus The World⁸. He promised Judas thirty pieces of silver⁹. He can tempt me with a cheeseburger. He will never promise *more* than it will take in order to avoid becoming the *obvious* author of the temptation. He seeks anonymity and *darkness*, and does not resort to fabulous means when lesser means will do. The fewer people there are who believe in him, the better he is able to accomplish his ends.

How does this vanquished enemy meet with such huge success? He does it by appealing to man's self-interest – his desires, lusts, and appetites and his would-be autonomy – in short, to his *Flesh*. This *is* the Madison Avenue approach: "Sell them what they already want. If they don't know that they want it, remind them." If Satan speaks through important men, people in high places, through culture and politics, if he is selling us what we want, we only need to discover what our *Flesh* desires to discover through whom he is speaking to us at the time.

To those who are "important," and whom Satan wants to use for his own purposes, as with Jesus in the wilderness, he suggests ideas and possibilities they would never have thought of themselves. Through such people, he promotes "humanism" and doubt of God, Jesus, and the Bible. By so doing, he determines our self-centered ideas and social behavior patterns – not always "bad," but *never* godly.

The Myth that "Satan Made Me Do It!"

What if Satan had died in 1865? How would things be different today? My guess is that things would not be so orderly, that they would be no less sinful, but chaotic and undirected. Our lack would be the direction provided by cultural impetus. Rather than each man "doing what seemed right in his own eyes," he would now do with impunity *whatever seemed the most fun* in his own eyes.

This brings up a subsidiary question as to why we need the Holy Spirit. Is the function of

⁵ Nietzsche, Marx, Darwin, Freud, and Jung are recent "big names" that spring to mind. But there are many, many others. Isaac Asimov, and Richard Dawkins are lesser names who none the less have the same importance.

⁶ Gen 3:1-6.

⁷ Matt 4:1; mark 1:13.

⁸ Matt 4:8.

⁹ Luke 22:3.

the Holy Spirit to counter Satan or to counter ourselves? Were we not already Satan's allies, we could counter Satan just as Eve could have, if only we were able to stay focused on God rather than on *self*. To what did Satan appeal in his temptation of Eve? Her *self*! Worse, to her *unfallen* self. We do not have an *unfallen* self, but a *fallen* one. We are *ipso facto* Satan's "fifth column" – automatically, consistently, universally, with only rare and inexplicable exceptions. *That* is why it is imperative that the Holy Spirit be given to those who are Christians. In short, Satan cannot indwell all, many, most, or even several people at once, but only one. It is his God-denying, self-promoting *culture* that most charms and deceives our *willing-accomplice* flesh.

We feel a certain sense of piety when we think we have the goods on Satan, when we are able to blame him for every little sinful deed ever done. And he might even *like* getting the credit for all that, but our sinful deeds are most often our own doing. The Bible has surprisingly little to say about Satan compared to its teachings concerning humanity's sinfulness, frailty, and its fallen flesh.

It is true that Satan ruined humanity. It is just as true that having ruined it he no longer has to *try* to ruin it. All he needs to do is *direct* broken humanity, to give "purpose" to the flailing, chaotic mass of human beings and endeavors. This he does by cultural control (mass communicatin'') and one-on-one encounters with great man (one-at-a-timin'). Why?

Clearly Satan is against God and not primarily against man *qua* man. Satan might have little or no interest in man but for his envy of God, and the use he can make of man by demonstrating his own power with man, God's great creation. God created and pronounced "good." Satan said "we'll just see about that." He is powerless to create – his power lies in his ability to pervert, redirect, misdirect, and to ruin. His is a wholly negative power. God created man to commune with Himself in order that it might find his deepest purpose and fulfillment in Him.

Satan, knowing firsthand God's intolerance of unrighteousness, spoiled God's creation so that it *could* not so function because it *would* not so function. God's creation became "self" *centered*, and could never again, on its own, be *God centered*. Hence, the Holy Spirit.

Now it becomes clear why Satan has behaved as he has throughout history. And it is clear where he wishes to go with mankind. Satan is ruling God's creation and still fights every step of the way against its redemption. He tried to exterminate the royal line of the Messiah. He tried to tempt the Messiah to worship him. He tried to keep the Messiah from His plan (even though he didn't know what that plan involved). He got the Messiah judicially murdered. But he still lost.

For ruined man redemption and reconciliation have now been made freely available. Why do all men not take the free gift? Because they are *ruined*, *self-centered*, and *sinful*, *not* because Satan tempts each one as an individual. Satan now has only one course open to him and that is to maintain his ruined realm as best he can. This he does by directing and managing his World *away* from redemption, perverting our notions of redemption, and by confusing men regarding himself and his mission. He does *not* want to get rid of the church, he wants to *ruin* it (*and he largely has!*).

This is why if Satan had died in 1865 we would still be evil. The world would still be a hotbed of sin, and man would still be self-centered. But it is because he is alive and well that the New Testament can prophesy concerning man's worsening condition and Satan's program (political and cultural) that will eventuate in the Antichrist and the False Prophet.

This is also why accurate knowledge of Satan is important. We must not conflate all evil as some do. This is merely to perpetuate the myth of Satan. How can the prophecies concerning the last times and the conditions that will arise therein be accurate and how can the church of the

latter days be described as apostate, if Satan is not doing precisely what the New Testament says he will do? Unfortunately his influence extends right down into the church pews every Sunday morning. We, as Christians, are as susceptible to deception about Satan and his program as anyone. Whereas Satan has convinced the world that he does not exist, he has convinced Christians that he has nothing better to do than to tempt pickpockets. Mouth the words as we might, we do not really recognize him as the “god of this World” – the god of *our* world – the god who controls every cultural and political impulse, who is still tenaciously fighting the battle of hatred and envy against his creator. In order for Christians not to perpetuate the myth of Satan, while understanding the reality of Satan, we must not only know him, but *whom* he is fighting and *how* he is carrying out his battle.

AKA The Devil

It may be well to notice a few points that are made clear in texts in which the term of interest is “devil,” or “The Devil” rather than Satan. The following are a few pertinent passages from which we may derive a few fundamental truths that will aid us in understanding evil and our relationship to it.

2 Corinthians 2:11 “Devices of Satan.” The importance of this verse is that it shows that Satan uses “devices.” This word is better translated “schemes,” with both NASV and NIV. RSV has “designs, better than *devices*, but perhaps not quite so good as *schemes*. For the point seems to be that there is a psychological or sociological confrontation in view here, dealing, as it does with forgiveness and community solidarity. Some of those devices are clearly indicated elsewhere.

Luke 8:12. The Devil (Satan) takes away the word sown in the hearts of believers.

John 6:70 one of the disciples is “*a devil*.” The anarthrous construction generally implies quality, characteristic, or an unspecified, single example of a class of things. It seems most likely that Jesus is saying of one of the disciples that he is *a devil*. But he may indeed mean that the disciple in question has the characteristics of the devil. So, like many questions that divide us into denominations, we are faced with interpreting this passage either literally or figuratively.

John 13:2. *The Devil* takes possession of Judas Iscariot. In contrast to John 6:70, where Jesus says that one of the disciples *is a devil*, here he says that The Devil now “puts it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s *son*, to betray him.” Satan seemingly inspired an action in the heart of one who was of the same nature and in sympathy with him.

Acts 13:10. The Devil perverts righteousness. Paul rebukes the false prophet Elymas (Bar Jesus) who was in the service of Sergius Paulus, the deputy of Paphos, and himself “a prudent man.” “Deputy, here, means an aid chosen by the Consul or Proconsul of a Roman territory. So he was a fairly high ranking subordinate. And behold, who should be with him but a “false prophet?” As we shall see, Paul called the false prophet something else. “O full of all subtlety and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

The expression “child of the Devil” is actually “son of *a* devil.” Even though it is an anarthrous construction, because the person named in the genitive case is well known, no article is necessary to make him specific. Therefore, the translation “son of *the* Devil” is permissible. And because of the position of the false prophet in company with the deputy of the territory, I would bet on “son of *the* Devil.”

It is helpful to remember here that just as being the “Son of God” was viewed by the Jews as implying that Jesus stood in some very special relationship to God (or was God Himself), so here we are looking at a “son of the Devil.” There is nothing here about which we can be dogmatic, but in any event, there are instructive parallels to be considered.

Ephesians 6:11 “Wiles of the devil.” Interestingly, the word here is that from which we get the word “method.” Yet NASV and NIV translate this word also as “schemes (cf. 2 Cor 2:11.= μεθοδεΐα, ας, ἡ *scheming, craftiness*. Eph 4:14; pl. *wiles, stratagems*).

1 Timothy 3:7 (“snare” of the devil). In order to be a Bishop (3:1)... A man “must” meet several qualifications (3:2-6) and “have a good report of them who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the *snare* of the devil” (3:7).

Because the man seeks to be a Bishop, a bad report might make him do things or curry favor with the wrong people, thereby falling prey to the devil’s devices, which might disqualify him from *ever* becoming a Bishop. Or, if he gain the office of Bishop and become proud (i.e., manifest one of the distinguishing features of Satan) he will improperly influence the whole body of his local assembly (3:6). The possibilities are endless.

2 Timothy 2:26 (“snare” of the devil). The servant of the Lord “must be gentle to all...” (2:24), instructing them that oppose (by ignorant questions?) so that perhaps God will grant them repentance “to acknowledge the truth,” (2:25), and that they may recover themselves *out of the snare of the devil*, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2:26).

This may apply to “carnal Christians,” but it certainly applies to the unrepentant, unsaved who fall into various “snares,” or are taken in by the “schemes” of the devil. These people are said to need instruction – because they do not know what they think they know. They need to acknowledge the truth – they are delusional or are “in denial.” They need repentance – for they have not yet acknowledged their state. Thus, they may recover themselves. They are now ignorant, delusional, and unrepentant. These are the results of the “snare” of the devil.

1 Peter 5:8 “seeking whom he may devour,” i.e. the spiritually weak? This verse is interesting for the fact that another word sometimes used as a synonym for the devil is *adversary*. Although the word “adversary” has other uses, in this text, adversary and devil are placed in apposition, showing that they are synonymous here.

A Word study of the term *adversary* tends to the conclusion that the devil is not *our* adversary, but God’s. This conclusion works fine until the very last occurrence of the word, here in 1 Peter 5:8.

Here, Peter says that “you must be vigilant because *your* adversary...” So Peter says that the devil *is* our adversary. And this is not the same kind of adversary spoken of in Matthew 5:25, Luke 12:58, or Luke 18:3; this adversary is “the Devil.” Not *a* devil, *The* Devil.

So we must amend our tentative conclusion. But the situation is changed only slightly. Verse 19 shows that our safety lies in resisting the devil, and our means of resistance is “standing firm in your faith.” That is, the devil may “devour” you by making wreckage of your faith, in which, by one’s standing firm, he fails. So again, it is God’s work, God’s plan, God’s provision for man, that Satan seeks to destroy. We may be attacked as ancillary to the plan and thereby become “trophy,” as it were, collateral damage, casualties in Satan’s war with God. The old expression “my enemy’s friend is my enemy” is instructive.

We might be better advised to worry about God’s plan more than about our own personal safety; it is that which Satan would destroy. And we must not do Satan’s work or aid and abet his efforts by tempting others or by taking God’s plan for granted.

We should certainly fear the Devil and what he might do *to* us, but we should just as certainly fear what he might do *with* us. It is bad enough to be tempted by that which belongs to Satan, but let us not do his work! Put another way, If Satan is The Devil, and other devils are those who do his bidding (not unlike the relationship between Christ and Christians!) we must be sure that we do not become devils.

The name *Satan* is used of him who rebelled against God and seeks to undo His work and usurp His position.

1. He is a spiritual being.
2. He is finite, or limited.
3. He is primarily God’s adversary, but insofar as we can be used by him, he is our adversary as well.
4. Either he inhabits, or indwells physical beings and speaks or acts through them – The Serpent, Simon Peter; or his character becomes so manifest in a person clearly under his influence that he is recognizable within that person – The king of Babylon, the King or Tyre.

A devil is one who does the will of Satan. This includes Satan himself, who is sometimes called (*The Devil*) the evil spirits or “fallen” angels who follow Satan, or a person (such as Judas) who does Satan’s work.

1. Devils, as evil spirits, have been known to “possess” persons.
2. Devils do Satan’s work for him in any number of ways.
3. Devil is who devil does. A person may be a devil by doing Satan’s bidding. Again, it may be impossible to tell by looking whether a person *has* a devil, *is* a devil, or is *merely doing the work of a devil*. We need not succumb to dogmatism to see a point here worth careful and prayerful consideration.

The Structure of Evil is Institutional

Principalities and Powers

Six times in the New Testament we are confronted with the phrase “principalities and powers.”

The lexicon (BAG) defines *principality* (arche) as:

1. Beginning; origin; elementary principals.
2. Ruler; authority; official.
3. Rule; domain; sphere of influence.

The lexicon defines *power* (exousia) as:

1. Power to choose; liberty to act.
2. Ability; capability, might, or power.
3. Authority; absolute power.
4. The power or authority exercised by rulers.
 - a. The ruling or official power *itself*.
 - b. The *domain* or *jurisdiction* under such power or authority.
 - c. The *bearers* of such power or authority.
 - d. The *means of exercise* of such power or authority.

These terms, both individually and together, can designate any degree of power or authority in any domain or sphere of influence. They may be highly abstract or denote lesser, particular entities. They may refer to spiritual entities or political figures. The context must decide on how these terms are used.

In Romans 8:35-39 they are listed among things that are unable to separate us from the love of God including *death, life, and Angels*. That such *principalities and powers* might wish to separate us from the love of God may indicate that they are to be viewed as malevolent, although it is possible to see them as neutral, as is the case with *life*.

In Ephesians 3:8-12 Paul speaks of these *principalities and powers* as being in “heavenly places.” The context in which the phrase occurs indicates that the deep mysteries of God may now be “made manifest” to them by the Church, the body of believers given salvation through the “manifest wisdom of God.” Here, although the tendency may be to see these as malevolent entities, the implication seems to include even the godly entities. It appears that no one but God knew what He was going to accomplish, and even his own Angels were unaware of this “mystery.”

Again in Ephesians, this time in 6:10-20, the *principalities and powers* are explicitly stated to be opposed to believers. They are listed with the rulers of darkness and spiritual wickedness.

Colossians 1:9-17 relates that Christ created the *principalities and powers* (here listed with “thrones and dominions”) for Himself. From this it is clear *principalities and powers* are not eternal but created.

Colossians 2:13 tells us that Christ spoiled and made a public humiliation of the *principalities and powers*. The context of this passage indicates that we are talking about The Law and the Old Testament, specifically as it had been used as a political instrument by the corrupt Jewish leaders. This tells us something pretty remarkable about the Jerusalem power mob and their leaders.

Titus 3:1 enjoins us to be subject to the principalities and powers. Being joined, as it is, to the phrase “to obey the magistrates,” indicates that here, they refer to earthly powers.

So *principalities and powers* were created by Christ for His own good purposes. We can see that sometimes they refer to “neutral” entities to which we are to be subject. But it is equally clear that sometimes they are spoken of as *demonically controlled*. And we can but assume that there has

been an encroachment upon Christ's possession. Someone has usurped His position and authority – someone who prefers darkness to light; who prefers his own way to that of the rightful owner.

Satan, we have seen, is the arch enemy of God. He is evil, and he tempts others to evil. Where God created all things and pronounced them “good,” Satan has superimposed evil. How better to accomplish this than by corrupting society by means of institutionalizing evil? But how has he accomplished this?

Everybody has a personal philosophy, or *worldview*. These philosophies are unique from person-to-person in the smaller details. But the vast expanse of one's personal philosophy overlaps and conforms, in most areas, to the philosophies of those around him. The philosophical features shared by the majority of the people can be called the *corporate*, or *social worldview*. This is the general philosophy that informs the larger culture.

Members of a Marine outfit will have a typical Marine mindset, or worldview. Those of the Air Force will share a corporate worldview that differs in some points from that held by the Marines. New York firefighters will also share a worldview, and it will differ in subtle ways from those of the Marines and the Air Force. But the greatest part of these different worldviews overlap and are common in most areas. Similarly, all Americans hold a great many beliefs in common that mark them as different from the Chinese or Muslims.

Worldviews both shape culture and are modified by it. There was a time in the 1950s when the word “abortion” could scarcely be discussed in mixed company because the mentality of the time

held the topic to be so despicable as to be literally unspeakable. There were, of course, problems in the 1950s which were accepted as normal, and went unquestioned, segregation being one of them. No worldview is perfect and neither is the culture that enshrines, nurtures, and reflects it. The culture has control of the institutions that examine, and either *modify* or *perpetuate* the corporate worldview and the culture. It is the worldview, or corporate philosophy that Satan seeks to control. Satan knows far better than we do that to control the mentality is to control the culture, and that control of the culture is control of the individuals within the culture.

So things like family values, national policy, and legislation shape our corporate worldview. When family values are shaped by the Bible, national policy by strong Christians, and laws are passed to protect the innocent and further the benefits of all, our culture and society reflect these values. So even those who are not Christians in such a society are controlled, to a large extent, by Christian moral values and benefit from them.

Satan has altered the process of the Supreme Court, put rogues and skirt-chasers in the White House, and not only legalized abortion, but made us all pay for it. The American military was once intended only for the defense of our country. But Satan has convinced us that we (and our military) are the world's policeman. The list goes on.

Clubs, organizations, charities are also vehicles for Satan's activities. Recently the Boy Scouts decided to allow homosexuals to be Scout leaders. What message does this send?¹⁰ The Girl Scouts have taken an active pro-abortion stance. How does such anti-Christian propaganda affect our young girls? Labor unions, once a boon to blue-collar workers, are now, many of them, tyrannies forcing workers to join unions, and conscripting dues; they are routinely investigated as

¹⁰ Whatever the answer, it comes straight from those who have learned to think Satan's thoughts.

organized crime. The United Way promotes abortion on demand. These organizations now not only do Satan's bidding, they funnel billions of dollars into the coffers of others doing Satan's work. So what about us? Should we allow our boys to join the Cub Scouts or our girls the Girl Scouts? Should we vote for or join a labor union? Should we financially support the United Way? If giving to missions makes us a participant in God's work, does not giving to Satanic organizations make us participants in his?

Universities proceed with Satan's work at a breakneck pace. Atheistic philosophy, revisionist history, naturalistic "science" (evolution, uniformitarian geology), man centered psychology and sociology, indeed, every tenet of *secular humanism*, as well as *political correctness* are today the very substance of the university "education." *No one* who goes for a semester to a state university, private university, or publicly funded liberal arts college escapes intense and prolonged exposure to Satan's message. Satan *owns* our universities from the top down.

The media are also in Satan's pocket. Whether it is slanting the evening news, pushing causes such as gay rights, abortion on demand, or "global warming," the news outlets are rabid in their propaganda efforts on behalf of Satan. And television is perhaps the most dangerous tool under Satan's control. We may call it *entertainment*, but Satan knows it as omnipresent mind control and the means of mass moral pollution.

Make people laugh at what once was considered sinful behavior and you not only have a "cutting edge" sitcom, you have the means at your disposal of making the masses accept such behavior as the "new normal," or they will at least not be so openly critical of it (remember Archie Bunker?). Five years of the show *2 ½ men* and other shows of like immorality, and another group of our youth will be morally disarmed. Conversely, take a traditional moral value and turn it into a horror show or a tragedy and the moral value will soon be minimized or eliminated completely.

It is precisely because TV programming is "mindless" that it is so dangerous. You're invited to sit down, relax, and be entertained. And while your guard is down, while you are *not thinking*, you are imbibing huge vats of Satan's "thinking." If you *really* want to fight evil, begin by turning off the TV.

And what of professional sports? Obscene salaries paid to people because they can shoot baskets or hit a baseball. Who are these athletes? They are our heroes. They are our role models. And they are, many of them, drug users, rapists, drunk drivers, or mere pleasure seekers. Tim Tebow was routed out of football for being an outspoken Christian. So who do you suppose benefits most from pro sports? The players? The advertisers? The fans? Or Satan?

We expect Satan to be at work in the world. That is why we are told that the friendship of the world is enmity with God. But sadly, Satan has a stranglehold on local churches, and is apparently preparing them to be comatose at the moment of Christ's return.

It is not just cults such as Mormonism and Unitarianism that Satan owns. It is not only denominations he exploits. It is not even the liberal theology or neo-orthodoxy with which he has poisoned today's churches. It is the fact that churches large and small, denominational and independent, are letting the world dictate what constitutes worship. And Satan smiles – nay he guffaws. The irony is suffocating. Because if we are "worshiping," it *can't* be wrong, right?

We have invited the very same pagan practices and beliefs into our churches today that drove the monks into the desert in the fourth century! Yet we haven't the sense to seek the desert ourselves. We are down to "the remnant." Most have run-up the white flag without ever having whimpered an objection.

If you want to see Satan at work, read the newspaper. Don't wait for him to confront you personally. There is no need for that. All these things, TV, universities, and the rest, would be bad enough if all they did was tempt us to sin. But it is much worse than that. Satan knows that if you can be made to *think like he does, your conscience will atrophy*. You will become adept at rationalizing sin. You will become *tolerant*, and no longer be *judgmental*, or *hypocritical*. You will come to believe that various *lifestyles* are neither better nor worse, only *different*.

It would be bad enough if *all* Satan did was tempted us to sin. But he controls our culture and, to an extent we probably cannot admit even to ourselves, our minds¹¹. There is no need for Satan to personally confront any but the tastemakers, the world-shakers, and the leaders. For he already controls the water we swim in and the air we breathe.

The Medium of Evil Is The Flesh

In Romans 7:18 we are told that “in the Flesh dwells no good thing.”

A few verses later, in Romans: 7:25, Paul tells us that The Flesh “serves the *Law* of sin.” We can scarcely avoid the conclusion that the law of sin is nothing other than the incessant pursuit of pleasure or the satisfaction of desire and it is difficult *not* to draw a parallel to a sort of addiction.

In Romans 8:1, and Galatians 3:3 and 5:17, Paul makes it clear that The Flesh is the opposite of, and opposed to, spirit. These passages do not refer to the Holy Spirit, but to the spirit of man, and refers to his higher instincts and reason, or his accurate assessments of reality.

So in Romans 13:14 it can come as no surprise that Paul admonishes his readers to “make no provision for The Flesh and its lusts.”

In Galatians 5:19 Paul condemns the works of The Flesh and enumerates a few of its passions. It is clear from this passage that The Flesh includes both the appetites and mental sins.

Flesh is frequently used as a synonym for the physical body and hence of earthly life. This gives rise to the powerful figure of *The Flesh* as the seat of sin and its lusts, for all sin is directed by, and toward, the satisfaction of human desires, and hence is a defining characteristic of life in the physical body. The Law is directed at containing and limiting the activity of The Flesh. Paul is at pains in Romans and Galatians to show that life motivated by spiritual concerns does not fulfill the lusts of The Flesh and therefore needs no Law. It is noteworthy that both Peter and John also use the word *flesh* figuratively in the same way.

Bearing in mind that Christ was a man “tempted as we are, yet without sin,” we have a striking example of how Satan works. In Matthew 4:3-11 we read that Satan tempted Jesus. His first appeal was to the physical appetite of hunger. Jesus had been fasting for 40 days and was without a doubt hungry. His Flesh was doubtless screaming “feed me.” Satan suggested that satisfying his hunger (or pandering to His Flesh) would be as easy as turning the rocks into bread. The second temptation was an appeal to pride in the suggestion that he cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple and rely on God's angels to protect him from mishap. The third temptation was an appeal to power, and not just any power, but *the power to rule the world*. All these temptations were aimed at human appetites, by offering to satisfy common lusts. In all these cases,

¹¹ The corrective is found in Romans 12:1-2.

Jesus resisted the Devil and the Devil fled from Him. It is not without interest that when Satan failed with Jesus, he did not simply give up. He watched and waited, and found someone whose lust could be satisfied, not with world power, but with 30 pieces of silver.

The flesh is that part of man that harbors desire, whether licit or illicit. It is man's appetites, whether for food, sex, money, power, shelter, or entertainment. It is his appetitiveness. It includes his pride, his overestimate of his own importance – what we call his “ego.”

Once one falls to a certain temptation and sin is indulged, it becomes part of his psyche. It becomes part of his mental “muscle memory.” By fulfilling the lust, the fulfillment, enjoyment or power becomes addictive. At the level of the flesh (or the *satisfied* flesh) there is no difference between alcoholism, drug addiction, nicotine dependence, sexual promiscuity, gluttony, greed, or personal approbation lust. They all begin with one trying something “new” and end with his becoming entangled in a never-ending quest to scratch the “itch” thus created.

This is the way the flesh operates. Feed it just once, and a new craving sets in demanding regular, if not constant, attention. This is the very picture of fallenness. There may be pleasure in sin . . . for a season,”¹² but pleasure is a tyrant. A drug dealer knows that if he seeks out a victim and gets him to try heroin once or twice, he will *never again* have to seek out that particular victim. Because the victim will henceforth *seek him out*. The flesh is a self-seeking, appetite satisfying, psychological mechanism. And it makes a man a voluntary slave.

So what is Satan trying to accomplish? Satan seeks to keep men from God. Those he cannot keep from God he causes to question or disobey God. Those he cannot cause to question or disobey God he seeks to marginalize and make ineffective by distracting them from their status and mission. He seeks to put spiritual distance between God and man. Amazingly, all these goals may be reached by the same “device,” namely culture control.

Satan seeks to keep people from the gospel– and *the flesh* willingly complies

In 1 Timothy 5:15 we read of young women who have “turned aside after Satan.” The context makes it abundantly clear that this can mean nothing other than becoming “worldly.”

Satan will gladly provide alternatives to the gospel – and *the flesh* gladly subscribes

In Revelation 2:9, John calls those “who call themselves Jews, but who are not (i.e., the Scribes, Pharisees and Judaizers? The Talmudic Jews?), “the synagogue of Satan.” If we work backward from Biblical revelation about the anti-Christ to the Devil who stands behind him, we see again the attempt to enthrone Satan (or man) in the place of God.

There are no other Biblical references for this, but what better explanation can we possibly give for the Theory of Evolution, Psychology, Abortion on demand as a “woman's right,” Secular Humanism as a whole, Dialectical Materialism (Communism) and a host of other Man-centered, God-denying religions, than as Satanically fostered alternate religions? Could these secular religious beliefs possibly have arisen by accident, or become so widespread without help? All of these beliefs encountered extreme resistance at first, but, almost miraculously, not only survived, but thrived, by appealing to what the Flesh of the “natural man” wanted.

¹²

Heb 11:25.

Satan may pervert the gospel – and *the Flesh* rejoices

Those who might be of what John called “the Synagogue of Satan,” sought to pervert the Gospel Paul had delivered. In Galatians 1:6-9 we read of the Galatians having received a perverted Gospel, by “some that trouble you,” and the breath-taking, twice repeated, curse he pronounced on anyone who perverts the Gospel.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:9 Paul is warning the Thessalonians in regard to the Antichrist – Satan’s man. Notice that the Antichrist is said to have the same sort of characteristics as Lucifer; these include a lust for power and performing signs and lying wonders, responding to which will cause God to send “strong delusion” to them who have “pleasure in unrighteousness” in order that they “might believe The Lie.” (Personal note: I believe that *The Lie* refers to the ancient Greek dictum that “Man is the measure of all things.”)

In Acts 13:6-12 there is an exquisite example of how Satan seeks to prevent belief in the Scriptures. Note the Jewish name of the Magus, or “sorcerer,” (same word as used for the “wise men” that visited the baby Jesus), and his access to “the deputy of the county,” who was “a prudent man.” Paul notes that he “is full of all deceit and mischief,” and an “enemy of all righteousness,” calls him a “child of the Devil, and asks him if he will ever “cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord.”

All of these, schemes, or “devices of Satan,” are based upon appeals to the intellect, pride, or appetites – *The Flesh*. This is where having access to men in power, men with influence, men in high places, serves the Devil well. There is nothing sadder than a Christian who enters the political arena a Christian, but then falls to the grossest level of degradation and ruins himself.

Christians should think twice before entering politics, for they are almost certain to find themselves in Satan’s cross hairs. Should they not get into politics? Not the weak ones. And not without beforehand coming to grips, not with *what he wants to do for his constituents*, but what *Satan will try to do with him*. Every election we send men to confront Satan, or to be used by him. Guess which happens more often. They run the risk of enacting laws that further Satan’s agenda, or making a spectacle of the Christian faith. Those are a couple of the risks for those who seek power.

But what about the rest of us? We pose little or no threat to Satan. We talk amongst ourselves, but (in my case) steer clear of being a “pest” by spreading the Gospel. It is ludicrous to be on the lookout for a personal attack from Satan, as though he needs your help, while all the time we are imbibing huge quantities of our pagan culture in front of the television, where popular (Satanic) culture is peddled non-stop by the hour. What segment does he not own? Entertainment? News? Finance? Granted, he may not be able to use the weather forecast to his own advantage, but that is just window dressing.

There is adequate defense against the *Flesh* (and evil)

The enlightened Christian has a defense system custom-made for his situation¹³. It begins

¹³

1 Cor 10:13.

with the proper understanding of God's Law. His Law *prohibits illicit (or unnatural)* appetites and *regulates the licit (or natural)* appetites lest they become forms of idolatry. Learning from the *wisdom* and *instruction* of the Law allows us to avoid being introduced to new lusts. We are not talking here about mere blind obedience to a set of commands, but understanding the nature of Law. One of the primary functions of the Old Testament Law is to define sin *as evil*. It is there to protect us from behavior which is displeasing to God and harmful to ourselves and others.

The second means of defense is to make no provision for the flesh¹⁴. This prevents us from easily satisfying the lusts we have already acquired. Just because we have become Christians does not mean that defense comes automatically. It does not. Nor does it mean that our character is converted. All the sins we have enjoyed in the past have left a strengthened sense of desire in us, a sense that cannot simply be wished or prayed away. Although the desires will lessen over time, they never really leave us. Hence, not only do we pray for strength, guidance and forgiveness, we simply *make no provision for our lusts to be fulfilled*. If you were once a drunk, stay away from liquor stores and bars. Duh. But also keep a safe distance from those you used to hang with to drink, and others with alcohol problems. If you found that lying was an everyday event with you, be heartless toward your inclinations to lie. Speak the truth no matter what. Say what is true or nothing at all. Eventually it gets easier – but the tendency to lie is always there. Guard against it. If you were sexually promiscuous, stay away from parties, and such scenes where this character flaw can easily manifest itself. Do not enter situations that may cause problems.

The third means is to resist the Devil¹⁵. This, in our age, is nothing more than refusing the friendship of The World. It is ridiculous to suppose that the Devil is *personally* at work in each of us. He has bigger fish to fry. He is not omnipresent. He has one location. He is not everywhere. He has minions through whom he works, but even they are limited in number. Satan engineers a world especially suited for sinners and designed to deny, ignore, pervert, or minimize the Gospel at every turn and by every means. He encourages all things human, and eagerly suggests “letting the chips fall where they may.” It is precisely when you are being “worldly” that Satan (indirectly) has his hand on your Flesh.

The fourth means is *to die to the flesh daily*¹⁶. But be warned: you must also prepare for its repeated resurrection¹⁷. This is a further example both of *making no provision for the flesh* and *refusing the friendship of the world*. And it is an ongoing battle.

The fifth method, is to “put on the armor of God.”¹⁸

These last four items can be subsumed in letting Jesus live His life in your person.

Summation

The Devil is the God of this World. True Evil is brought about through the inspiration of great men by Satan. Do we think that the anti-Christ is going to simply begin his evil by branding

¹⁴ Rom 13:14.

¹⁵ Jam 4:7.

¹⁶ 1 Cor 15:31.

¹⁷ Gal 2:20.

¹⁸ Eph 6:11-13.

people with “666”? He will exercise his power easily because the culture *will have been prepared to accept his dictates*. This is why remaining true to Christ is going to be such a difficult matter. The voices of the culture will be very convincing, so much so that “even the elect” might nearly be deceived.

But most sinful behavior in daily life is our own reaction to the sinful culture around us and by imitating the sinful behavior we see in others. Satan’s temptations are mediated to us through the culture he has painstakingly created. The World is his culture, where he grows every form of evil and sin imaginable; where it is attractively packaged and aggressively marketed. Once in that culture, we are exposed to ever and ever more evil strains of sin.

Even Hitler prepared the Germans for what was to come by modifying their culture to support his conquests, in part, by demonizing the Jews. The Devil (working through our own culture) captures our flesh, and we become slaves of a seemingly absentee master. We must *crucify* the flesh and *make no provision for it*. We must allow Jesus to live his life in our persons and reconcile ourselves to this practice as our daily refuge.