

## Chapter 1

# SATAN IN THE MODERN WORLD

**I**n 1977 rumors started circulating among Christian churches that Ray Kroc, owner of the McDonald's fast-food chain, had appeared on the Phil Donahue show in May of that year to claim that the corporation's success was due to his pact with the devil. According to the rumors, he was donating 35 percent of the restaurant chain's profits to the Church of Satan. A few years later, in 1982, rumors spread that the Proctor and Gamble logo depicting a moon and star was a satanic symbol. It was alleged that the company president, "a major twentieth-century Satanist," also appeared on the Phil Donahue show confessing that all the company profits went to the Church of Satan. Even though the events never occurred—Kroc had appeared on the Phil Donahue show, but only to promote his book—rumors of Satanic activities continue. An Internet search of the names of these companies with the added word "Satan" reveals how persistent these rumors are.

Who is this Satan who supposedly profits from major corporate contributions? Close your eyes and try to picture what Satan might look like. What do you see? Do you see a man in red tights with a forked tail, cloven hooves, horns on his head, and holding a pitchfork?—something akin to the logo found on cans of Underwood Deviled Ham Spread? If so, such a modern appearance is rooted in an early attempt of Christianity to demonize the gods of those they considered pagans. In this particular manifestation, Satan is eerily similar to the Greek god Pan (whose Roman counterpart was Fauna), who possesses the hindquarters, cloven hooves, goatee, wrinkled skin, and

horns of a goat, representing indulgence in music, worldly pleasures, and sexuality (see Figure 3).

Or maybe you envision Satan wearing a \$600 business suit, with manicured fingernails, looking like he just stepped out of *Gentlemen's Quarterly* magazine. Such an understanding of Satan as a CEO is best captured in the popular C. S. Lewis Christian apologetic novel *The Screwtape Letters*, which consists of instructional correspondence written by a managing demon to a bureaucratic subordinate charged with leading a newly converted Christian astray. The image of Satan as a corporate figure was also portrayed in the 1997 film *The Devil's Advocate*. Keanu Reeves played the role of an ambitious and highly talented young lawyer recruited to join an elite New York law firm run by John Milton, played by Al Pacino, who turns out to be Satan. Pacino's character wreaks havoc on the souls and moral integrity of the firm's partners, as well as on the lives and legal affairs of all who come in contact with his law firm.

In most European literature or works of art, Satan appeared hideous—a creature that had different animal body parts. For example, he would be portrayed as a person with goat legs, or pig teeth in his mouth, or duck feet, thus symbolizing an unnatural creature, an abomination of creation. In the United States, racist attitudes have historically seeped into how Satan is viewed by Americans. In many movies and plays, Satan is usually played by a black man. So, for example, while early nineteenth-century artist William Blake could depict Satan in luminous hues as an angel of light, the first cinematic portrayal of Satan, in *Dante's Inferno* (1911)—a film to which we return below—depicted him as a black creature. After all, we find “black” defined by *Webster's New World Dictionary* as “dirty, evil, wicked” and “white” as “pure, innocent,” leaving us to wonder how color can possess moral qualities.

Satan has been pictured by Christians throughout the ages in multiple fashions, from a grotesque and hideous creature to a beautiful being masquerading as light. For many Christians—specifically those whose exclusive views of Christian doctrine and identity do not accept the identity and views of others—Satan can be perceived behind the faiths of unbelievers and outsiders. During the Reformation of the sixteenth century, both sides—Catholics and Protestants—each viewed the other as being in league with the Great Deceiver, who was bent on destroying and corrupting the church of Christ. Luther eventually believed that he was participating in a cosmic struggle against the Anti-Christ, who was acting through the office of the

Roman Papacy. In turn, King Charles I of Spain, whose vast empire included the Americas and the German territories of the Holy Roman Empire, accused Martin Luther of being the real Anti-Christ. The king and his allies were deeply concerned that the German princes, many of whom supported the Protestant Reformation, would break away from the growing territories and provinces of the Spanish Empire. For them, and still for many Christians today, not believing the correct teachings of the church means worshipping the enemy's doctrines—Satan's lies. Even to question the church's doctrine or authority is to oppose God!

A more recent example of equating another's faith with the satanic can be found in a speech given to Christian churches by Army Lieutenant General William Boykin, then deputy under-secretary of defense for intelligence and war-fighting support. The Lieutenant General, in full uniform, addressed church groups while conducting the "War on Terror." According to Boykin, the U.S. battle against Muslim radicals is a fight against Satan. Recounting a story of a Somali Muslim fighter who said that U.S. forces would never capture him because Allah was protecting him, Boykin responded by saying, "Well, you know what I knew—my God was bigger than his. . . . I knew that my God was a real God, and his was an idol." These militant Islamists, according to Boykin, sought to destroy the U.S. "because we're a Christian nation." For him, "The enemy is a spiritual enemy. He's called the principality of darkness. The enemy is a guy called Satan" (*The New York Times* 2003).

For others, however, Satan has been reduced to a profitable, humorous caricature, a symbol or image used as jewelry, displayed on clothing, used for decoration and costumes on Halloween, engraved on bodies as tattoos, and praised in certain music styles marketed to "wanna-be" rebellious youth. Even though most of these concepts of Satan come from popular culture, they remain rooted in the age-old theological and moral attempt to explain why individual human beings and human societies participate in evil. Take, for example, the way Saturday morning cartoons depict a character struggling with temptation. A miniature devil, usually looking like the character but with horns and a pitchfork, sits on the left shoulder of the one being swayed, whispering temptation in her or his left ear. Of course, there exists a counter to these evil persuasions, usually in the form of an angel, again a miniature copy of the character, but this time in a white gown with a halo and holding a small harp, sitting on the person's right shoulder. It is interesting to note that this popular portrayal, which we have witnessed since

childhood on such well-liked television shows as *Popeye* or *Tom and Jerry*, has its grounding in the writings of the third-century Alexandrian Church Father Origen. Basing his views on the early second-century manuscript the *Epistle of Barnabas* (18:1) and the late second-century work the *Shepherd of Hermas* (*Mandate* 6.2.1-10), Origen argued that each individual is attended by two angels. When good thoughts arise in our hearts, they were suggested by the good angel. But if instead bad thoughts arise, then they were suggested by the evil angel (*De principiis* 3.2.4).

So how *should* Satan be imagined? We begin our quest for the historical Satan by realizing that there exists no single, universal representation of Satan. Different groups across the centuries and within modern society, with competing agendas and goals, have created Satan to meet their own needs, justify certain actions against demonized opponents, or provide answers to the unanswerable fact of what can appear as the total moral depravity of humans and creation. In this chapter we explore some of the many ways Satan is imagined and manifested by our popular culture and how these manifestations shape not only our view about evil but also how we have come to know the Divine.

## **Satan Goes to Hollywood**

With the demise of the medieval worldview in the eighteenth century came the increasing secularism and materialism of modern civilization. As the scientific rationalism of modern society increased, the once popular belief in demons, fairies, and angels had waned in favor of the promise of new inventions and industries that became mingled with turn-of-the-century ideas about unlimited progress and the perfectibility of human nature. What happened to humanity's primordial fears of Satan and the forces of evil?

On December 10, 1911, Satan and the themes of evil and human suffering made a dramatic comeback at Gane's Manhattan Theater in New York City in a silent movie based on the medieval literary epic *Dante's Inferno*. The film was sixty-nine minutes long and spread out over five different reels that had to be changed periodically. It was directed by Italian filmmakers Francesco Bertolini, Giuseppe de Liguoro, and Adolfo Padovan. The movie was an amazing financial success at the time and convinced movie moguls that depicting Satan and exploring the problem of evil on the big screen could help them sell more movie tickets!

The visual arts media of the medieval world, whether in stone carvings, marble sculptures, stained glass windows, or in frescoes painted on church walls, portrayed biblical scenes that often included images of Lucifer and demons delighting in human temptation and sinfulness. The visual arts media of the modern world provided a forum for the exploration of evil and human violence in highly realistic cinematic representations that traditional literature and the arts could not convey as effectively (Pomerance 2004, 8–10). Scholars in both biblical studies and the history of Christianity have observed that, although depictions of Satan and the forces of evil decreased among popular culture and literature from the 1700s to the early 1900s, the beginnings of the cinema industry had an indirect but noticeable effect on the modern rediscovery of the Prince of Darkness.

Inspired by the work of American inventor Thomas Edison, in 1895 Louis and August Lumiere of France developed the cinematographe, a new camera-projection system that inaugurated the art and industry of cinema. Two years later, the first theater for showing movies opened in Paris, and by 1902 Thomas Talley opened the first American movie theater in Los Angeles. The Lumiere's movie company boasted a catalog of over one-thousand titles before 1900, but it was comprised mostly of short documentary features of people in factories or people engaged in various types of recreational and work-related activities. The success of short films such as Georges Melies *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), Edwin Porter's *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1902), and Stuart Blackton's *The Life of Moses* (1909) convinced some entrepreneurs among the growing number of directors, writers and producers, and movie companies that the public might respond very well to story films based upon some of the great myths or religious narratives from the past.

Melies is also credited with making the first horror film in 1896, *The House of the Devil*, which, with a running time of only two minutes and with no demonic voices or screaming, offers a stark contrast with more contemporary portrayals. Consider, for example, the agonizing screams and makeup effects of the two-hour-plus-long 1973 classic horror movie, William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist*, which was based on a distorted "true" story of an alleged 1949 demonic possession of a fourteen-year-old boy from Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup> The turn-of-the-century pioneers of moviemaking could not have imagined in 1896 or in 1900 how lucrative the rediscovery of Satan and the problem of evil were going to be for the future development of the cinema industry.

The first feature-length silent movie ever shown in a U.S. theater, and the most expensive film ever made at the time with a staggering price-tag of over \$180,000, was the 1911 production of *Dante's Inferno*, discussed above. Inspired by the popular artistic illustrations of Gustav Doré and based on Dante's thirteenth-century tale of human depravity and damnation, the movie earned over two million dollars in revenue over the next several months. The damned are portrayed mostly nude and surrounded by pitchfork-wielding demons as the directors use brief episodes to show the audience how the sins and evils of these lost souls brought about their damnation. Near the film's conclusion, Satan is portrayed eating the souls of humans condemned to an eternity in hell for their deadly sins. The film's success convinced marketing executives among film companies that demons, evil and human suffering, and Lucifer's presence would help them sell lots of movie tickets in the years ahead.

Not long afterward, between 1912 and 1915, a group of film companies operating in the general area of Hollywood and Los Angeles, California, gradually joined forces under the leadership of Carl Laemmle and founded Universal Pictures. The new company had great success with adaptations of classic literature and horror stories for the big screen. Over the next few years Universal Pictures released some of the most famous fantasy, thriller, and suspense movies in the early history of the silent cinema, such as *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1915), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), and the hugely successful *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923). Like the mythical story of Dr. Faustus, who made a blood-pact with the devil to gain worldly success and magical powers and whose story we will examine in chapter 5, the City of Angels and its neighboring district of Hollywood (literally meaning "Holy Wood") entered into a virtual pact with the Prince of Darkness when it discovered the potential payoff from a type of suspense and fantasy film that would eventually lead to the beginnings of the horror and thriller movie genres.

The movie industry and American moral standards, however, were at odds with each other almost from the very beginnings of filmmaking and the opening of the first movie theaters. In fact, film historians like Tom Gunning and Murray Pomerance point out that America's social and legal doubts about the goodness of filmmakers and the movies dates back to the very origins of the cinema industry. Critics on both the right and left of the political spectrum believed from the outset that the industry was prone to evil and manipulation because of the inherent power of visual images to inspire and

seduce human beings into certain behaviors while molding individual opinions with the persuasive power of the visual image. Christians also criticized the cinema industry for its unrestrained depictions of violence, nudity and sexuality, and evil in the form of human cruelty and depravity.

Tom Gunning observed that for “more than half a century movies shown in the United States were not allowed the privilege of free speech guaranteed to print media” (2004, 22). The reason for this denial of free speech to movie makers and writers resulted from the February 1915 U.S. Supreme Court decision set forth in the landmark case of *Mutual Film Corporation vs. Ohio Industrial Commission*, in which Justice Joseph McKenna wrote the opinion for the court’s unanimous decision that “the new medium of film was ‘capable of evil, having power for it, the greater because of the attractiveness and manner of exhibition’” (2004, 22). McKenna’s court opinion represented the prevailing legal notion of the social and moral implications of films from the beginnings of the film industry in the late 1800s to the series of cases before the Supreme Court in the mid-1950s (2004, 23–26). Nonetheless, moral debates and social concerns similar to these continue to the present day as Hollywood continues to capitalize on the public’s fascination with on-screen evil and moral depravity.

Early horror films, which probably originated in Germany during the era of silent movies, often had a Gothic twist, being set in mysterious castles or dark manors. In the 1930s Universal Pictures began remaking many of the German horror films. The American public became possessed by the alluring elements of fear, suspense, and evil that characterize the horror genre. Today, movies with a touch of evil and scenes of depraved human violence, or demonic shape-shifting beings that morph on the screen with weird sound effects that make some of us jump out of our seats and others utter scared screams in the theater, account for millions of dollars in movie sales and theater revenues.

In her book *Exploring Evil through the Landscape of Literature* (2002), Gloria Cigman suggests that our fears about “the imagined apotheosis of evil” has much to do with both the disturbing allure and moral disdain we experience when confronted by evil. Although her work focuses on literary portrayals of evil across the annals of English literature, Cigman acknowledges that movies create narrative spaces in which story and symbol can affect human emotions and notions of suffering in much the same way that great works of literature can move our souls and influence our emotions and

thoughts (2002, 240–45). She detects a connection between modern literary and cinematic portrayals of the power of evil over good and the increasing nihilism and anxiety of post-modernity in thriller films such as *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). “We have watched the second half of the twentieth century growing less and less convinced that triumph over evil is a viable option” (2002, 241). Audiences throughout the world were both titillated and disgusted by the character of Hannibal Lecter, a reminder to us all that there is something demonically seductive in the viewing of evil and violence on film, as well as an allusion to the age-old portrayals of the devil as a highly intelligent and sophisticated creature capable of inflicting intense harm on others without remorse.

The possibility that evil might somehow triumph over good was at the root of adverse public and ministerial reactions to *The Omen* movie trilogy of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which is now being remade for a new generation of apocalyptic connoisseurs and horror movie aficionados. Some among the viewing public apparently forgot in 1976 that *The Omen* was such a movie. Directors and producers received stern criticism from concerned Christians among the general public and from the clergy about making a film in which the Prince of Darkness triumphs over Jesus Christ and his holy church. Of course, that is precisely what the medieval myth of the Anti-Christ is all about—Satan’s attempt to defeat Christ and his followers by wreaking havoc across the earth and igniting human violence and warfare among all nations while destroying the Christian church.

On the other hand, if we read the book of Revelation carefully, we are reminded that God has promised humanity that personal repentance and God’s loving grace through the return of Christ will lead to the defeat of both Satan and the Anti-Christ. Nonetheless, the success of *The Omen* trilogy in North America may also have been related to American paranoia about a communist takeover of the world originating in Europe and to the apocalyptic expectations of Evangelical Christians theorizing about the Soviet Union’s meddling in global affairs, along with general fear of the potential side effects of a revitalized Western European military establishment aimed at curbing Soviet expansionism someday being turned against the United States.

In the 1976 gothic thriller and series opener, Katherine Thorn, played by Lee Remick, loses her first child while giving birth at a hospital in Rome, Italy. Her husband, American Ambassador Robert Thorn, played by Gregory Peck, is then offered an allegedly orphaned baby by a Roman Catholic priest.



Ambassador Thorn accepts the bizarre offer but does not realize the evil fate to which he has damned his new family by adopting Damien until it is too late. As the mysterious deaths of anyone who comes close to figuring out the little boy's true identity multiply, Thorn learns that Damien is the infernal offspring of a female jackal and Satan. He also learns that his natural child with Katherine was murdered in order to arrange for him to adopt Damien. His wife, too, is eventually murdered by their nanny while convalescing in a hospital after falling and suffering a miscarriage of what would have been the Thorn's second child. When news of Katherine's death reaches Robert Thorn, he is in Israel to meet with an archaeologist named Bugenhagen, who informs him that the only way to stop the Anti-Christ is to stab him in the heart with the "seven daggers of Meggido," and preferably on hallowed ground such as a Christian church. After returning home and finding the infamous 666 birthmark of the Anti-Christ under Damien's scalp, Robert becomes convinced that he must ritually kill little Damien or risk unleashing the son of the Prince of Darkness upon the world stage. The police catch up with him in a church and shoot him in the act of trying to stab and kill his son.

Damien is then placed under the protection of the President of the United States and is to be raised by his paternal uncle and aunt, who appear in *The Omen II* as the owners of Thorn Industries, a multinational corporation with highly significant military and agricultural contracts. This is just the sort of lucrative family business and access to high-level political and military figures that the Anti-Christ can use to take over the world while turning nations against each other en route to Armageddon. Among the general public's apocalyptic fervor in the late 1970s, there was already the notion that the dreaded Anti-Christ had been born sometime after the Second World War and was slowly growing to maturity somewhere in either Western or Eastern Europe. Damien's character profile was perfectly aligned with these collective visions and fears.

The *Omen* films' director, Richard Donner, and his team of producers, Harvey Bernhard and Mace Neufeld, spent years trying to make sense of all the strange tragedies and near-tragedies that befell them and their production crews while making this movie in the 1970s. The newspapers and entertainment magazines thought these men created their fantastic stories about being cursed for publicity purposes. Among the alleged reports of sinister events, there was the emergency landing of several airline flights the film's production team was aboard, two of which were struck by lightning;

the crash-landing of another airliner carrying members of the film crew that then struck a car at the end of the runway, killing several people (including the pilot's wife and two children); an almost deadly near miss of film crew members by an IRA bombing at a local London restaurant; and the gruesome decapitation in a car accident of special effects engineer John Richardson's girlfriend when the couple was driving through Belgium and collided with another vehicle by a road sign listing "66.6 kilometers" as the distance to the nearest town.

While the publicity department at Twentieth Century Fox surely delighted in reporting on all of these uncanny "omens" of evil, and while the public got very excited about these reports when the film was released in June of 1976, the production team never forgot their feelings of fear and apprehension as these and many other unusual things, too numerous to list here, affected them and their colleagues while making the first installment of the trilogy. Harvey Bernhard believes the pattern of unusual coincidences and strange things happening indicated "an aura of not being welcome. I really sincerely believe that the Devil didn't want the picture to be made."<sup>2</sup> Robert Munger, who worked on the original picture as a religious advisor, maintains that he did not believe in the devil before making the movie. As a devout Christian he had previously believed that faith in Christ as his Savior was all his religious life and soul needed. But he and some of the others working on the movie were advised by theologians and clergy that by the end of the film shooting, they would each be convinced of Satan's existence. Concerned Christians among the general public were equally upset over the making of a movie like *The Omen*, in which the forces of evil were allowed to triumph over the forces of goodness and love signified in the life and mission of Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, the public's appetite for horror movies won out over these nobler spiritual concerns as this particular film series emerged as one of the most financially successful among all of Hollywood's portrayals of Satan and the Anti-Christ.

A slightly different twist on the Hollywood portrayal of Satan was inspired by Mike Mignola's comic book series *Hellboy*, which he pitched to DC Comics in the early 1990s. Originally turned down as a result of the marketing team's uncertainty about promoting a super hero from hell also known as "The Beast of the Apocalypse," the first *Hellboy* movie, written and directed by Guillermo Del Toro, debuted in 2004 and was followed by the release of *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* a few years later. Both films fared well

at the box office, and plans are underway for the making of a third picture in the series.

The comic book and movie biography of this character reads as follows: Hellboy, played by Ron Perlman, was brought to earth from hell on December 23, 1944, during a Nazi experiment on a remote island off the coast of Scotland by Rasputin and a host of sinister and violent Nazi occultists from the infamous Thule Society. In the hope of disrupting their diabolical use of technology and machines aimed at unleashing the gods of evil and chaos, the United States Army launches a surprise attack on Rasputin and his Nazi collaborators. From the ensuing explosions and confusion emerges a devil-like child. His skin is red. He also has horns and a tail, as well as a powerful sledgehammer-shaped hand made of what looks like red stone, the hand known in the comic book series as the “Right Hand of Doom.”

Hellboy is taken in by Professor Trevor Bruttonholm, who raises him with the help of the U.S. Army and the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense (BPRD). His superhero abilities are super human strength, the production of fire and resistance to its harmful effects, and the power to regenerate injured tissue and bones after being beaten, shot, cut, burned, or blasted. He loves cats and, in the movie version, is also somewhat addicted to Baby Ruth bars. In the comic book series, we also learn that Hellboy is the three-hundred-year-old offspring of a demon and a witch whose family ties link her to Morgan le Fay of the famous Arthurian legends, Morgan being King Arthur’s sister. Exactly what these medieval and Arthurian family ties are meant to conjure up in the public imagination will have to be left to the creative imaginations of Mignola and Del Toro as each of them develops this fictional character and his marvelous story further.

However, the portrayal of Nazis alongside themes of diabolical scientific plans or black magic is one of the most persistent symbolic images that emerged in the American mythic consciousness after World War II. Satanic and evil characteristics are projected onto persons such as Hitler or Eichmann, or projected onto movements such as the Nazis or institutions like Himmler’s S.S. and Gestapo. This leads to Nazis being equated with absolute Evil by Hollywood film writers and movie producers, whose notions of Nazis as evil are then reinforced in the public imagination where these “images” take on a mythic meaning in the culture at large.

For example, in the genre of science fiction fantasy and adventure films, we find the Imperial Storm Troopers of George Lucas’ *Star Wars* film sagas

(1975–2005) as an example of the many ways that Satan and evil are imagined and manifested by our pop culture and how these manifestations not only shape our views about evil but also how we have come to define goodness and the Divine. Indeed, the Nazi-styled black helmet worn by Darth Vader, whose cruelty and lust for power rank him as one of the most evil characters in modern film, is another example of these mythologizing tendencies perched somewhere between the idea of cosmic battles against super villains and our collective fear over the moral and existential possibility that we as “the good guys” might not be all that different from the Nazis as “the bad guys.” After all, one of the most intriguing elements of Darth Vader’s story and character is his youthful and innocent beginning as the former Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker.

In his informative and insightful essay on images of Nazis in American film, Lester Friedman, humanities scholar and prolific film historian, suggests to his readers:

Try this experiment during the next week: see how often the words *Hitler*, *Holocaust*, and *Nazi* enter your world. My guess is that you will not be able to go more than one or two days without hearing or seeing some reference to those words. Images taken from and inspired by the Third Reich saturate our culture functioning as concrete representations of that specific historical era, free floating signifiers of universal evil and, for some, emblems of purity, power, and erotic fascination. (Friedman 2004, 256)

Friedman’s comments remind us of the alleged racial purity of the Aryan master race juxtaposed with the carnival-like images of Liza Minnelli and Joel Grey in *Cabaret* (1972), which was set in 1931 Berlin where the pair performed night after night at the Kit Kat Klub as National Socialism rose to power and the Nazi reign of terror began unfolding across Germany and Austria before consuming Europe and the world. We can imagine Madonna or Lady Gaga in an alluring grey and black fascist-style uniform intended to make their viewers and listeners imagine the comingling of power and sensuality. We are also reminded of Mel Brooks’ movie adaptation of the bawdy, record-breaking smash Broadway hit *The Producers* (2005), in which Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick played the wacky production duo who set out to make more money with a box office flop than with a record-breaking success by backing a musical titled *Springtime for Hitler*. “The reasons for this cultural obsession

with the images, figures, and narratives of the Third Reich mark the starting point for any serious discussion of films containing Nazis. One must explore their power to understand their appeal” (Friedman 2004, 256–57).

The presence of Nazis in the annals and varied spectrum of American movies is so widespread that Friedman identifies five basic components to help students of film history understand the perplexing appeal for the symbols and satanic evils of one of America’s and Western civilization’s greatest and most destructive enemies: “1) Nazi image power; 2) sympathy for the Devil; 3) the erotic dimension; 4) the Holocaust culture; and 5) the thought that we might be *them*” (2004, 257). While Friedman observes that these component categories are not found among all movies portraying Nazis, most movies dealing with Nazi figures or themes contain a combination of one or more of these elements. The component of “sympathy for the Devil” is an intriguing one for our purposes in the quest for the historical Satan because taking our cues from popular culture usually assume that the rank and file of American society recognize the Nazis as the “bad guys.” But what about the percentage of the viewing public for whom the defeat of the Nazis, when juxtaposed with the power and orderliness of an authoritarian state alongside the eroticism of Nazi uniforms, leather boots, polished caps, and sadomasochistic imagery, produces what Friedman very astutely refers to as “sympathy for the Devil” (2004, 257–61)? This is a most perplexing and confounding realization, yet one that explains the bizarre appeal to some people of Darth Vader’s persona and dress, as well as the appeal of the evil Sith Lords of the *Star Wars* movie franchise.

The symbolic and mythological dimensions of how Euro-Western and North American culture has been conditioned to think about the Nazi menace and evil legacies since 1945 also explains the portrayal of Nazi themes and images in the American cinema. Nowhere is this more noticeable than in the Indiana Jones movie franchise series where the lead character, played by Harrison Ford, routinely states: “Nazis? I hate those guys!” In *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), the Nazis are mythologized as the archetypal enemies of the Judeo-Christian tradition, for their obsession with obtaining the Ark of the Covenant in order to harness its awesome powers, and as the enemies of the United States, the archetypal “good guys,” signified by archaeologist Indiana Jones. Ironically, this mythologizing of a major war has been part of America’s geopolitical predicament in the post–World War II era as we have somehow equated the outcome of that particular war and American national

identity with absolute Good against the absolute Evil of Adolf Hitler and National Socialism.

This mythic theme and social conception of absolute Evil versus absolute Good is especially true in the third installment of the highly successful Indiana Jones movie series, *The Last Crusade* (1989), wherein Sean Connery and Harrison Ford teamed up to play father and son archeologists fighting the Nazis throughout the world and trying to keep the chalice of Christ's Last Supper, the Holy Grail, from falling into the hands of the evil Nazi empire. Ironically, many among the Nazi high command, such as Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler, were quite fond of the legends of the Holy Grail and the Knights Templar. We now know that Hitler and Himmler, inspired by Otto Rahn's *Crusade against the Grail* (Fribourg, 1933), dispatched a team of S.S. scholars and archeologists in search of the Holy Grail to southern France where local legends said that Mary Magdalene had brought the chalice with her after the crucifixion. Many churches and graveyards were desecrated in order to satisfy the Führer's will to possess this sacred object, and the records of this infamous expedition are still available at the Bibliotheque National in Paris. Thus, the S.S. began its aggressive brand of reformism aimed at bringing about a new world order through seemingly reputable "scholarship," as well as by its much more well-known system of legalized violence and murder across Germany and its conquered territories during World War II.

Hitler's rationale for the archaeological expedition must have had something to do with his own self-image of the Führer as literally meaning "the vessel" of the German spirit, or *Volksgeist*. In 1934 Hitler wondered: "How can we arrest racial decay? Shall we form a select company of the really initiated? An Order, the brotherhood of the Templars round the Holy Grail of pure blood?" (Rauschnig 1939, 227). These virtually unknown events found comic expression in American popular culture when Steven Spielberg and George Lucas wrote and directed for the final chapter of the Indiana Jones trilogy. One of the most amazing moments in the entire film occurs when Indiana Jones, while clutching his father's archaeological "grail-diary" to keep it from falling into Nazi hands, stumbles upon a Nazi parade route in Berlin and bumps into Adolf Hitler. Infatuated with his own narcissistic importance and assuming that he is being asked for an autograph, the Führer then extends one hand asking for the diary and, as

a bewildered Indiana Jones hands it over to him, proudly autographs the front page and returns it to Jones before resuming his place and role in the Nazi parade rally.

Not so funny about this cinematic moment is the realization that Hitler and the Nazi S.S. and Gestapo really did leave their mark upon the history of the Holy Grail. This intriguing episode from a tiny moment in American film history coincidentally speaks volumes for the ways that notions of Hitler and the Nazis as the personification and embodiment of absolute Evil in league with Satan can be projected and mythologized into a cosmic struggle against Christ and his church. In this scenario American democratic culture and capitalism emerge as the personification and embodiment of absolute Good against Satan and his evil empire of fallen angels.

Hollywood fuels the imagination so that reality can imitate fiction. The cinematic experiment that began in the late 1800s as an attempt by movie-makers to explore new plot content by reinterpreting the familiar stories and symbols from mythology, religion, classic literature such as Dante's *Inferno*, and biblical stories of both goodness and evil has been transformed over the past one hundred years into a visual medium and thriving entertainment industry in which Satan and the problems of evil and human sinfulness become the focus. Satan went to Hollywood in the early 1900s, signed a deal with the cinema industry, and has been in the moviemaking business ever since. Indeed, perhaps the greatest trick the Prince of Darkness offered over the past five hundred years was to fool modern society from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment that the God of Reason had vanquished this fallen angel and that psychoanalysis had cured human beings of the need to perpetuate the myth of Lucifer and the problem of evil. Our quest for the historical Satan would have been incomplete if we had not taken this detour and stopped in Hollywood for a little reflection on how lucrative the power of evil and the image of Satan were during the movie industry's first century in operation. If the surviving representations of ancient and medieval art attest to the presence of Satan in the historical record and in the imaginations of historic Jewish, Christian, and Islamic societies, then surely the extensive presence of satanic images and unspeakable acts of evil on the big screen, and among nearly all related mass media portals, reveal that Satan, as both deceptive trickster and Anti-Christ, will continue to live and prosper in the popular culture of the twenty-first century.

## Satan among Satanists

Representations of Satan are not limited to the movies. For some, Satan is not a being to be feared or rebuked but rather an exemplar to be revered and embraced. Those who seek to be Satan's disciples have created congregations where they can gather to worship Satan, or more accurately, what Satan represents. Probably the first congregation established for this purpose was the Church of Satan, founded in 1966 (*Anno Satanas*—year one of the Age of Satan) by a former circus and carnival showman named Anton Szandor LaVey.<sup>3</sup> Part religion and part capitalist venture, the Church of Satan, led by the high priest LaVey, helped shape, through his many writings, what Satan means today to the Satanists. According to LaVey, “Without a devil to point their figures at, religionists . . . would have nothing with which to threaten their followers” (1969, 55). In spite of some of the theatrics associated with the Church of Satan, the term Satanist might be a bit of a misnomer. “[Satan] merely represents a force of nature—the powers of darkness which have been named just that because no religion has taken these forces *out* of the darkness” (1969, 62).

For LaVey, devotion to Satan is really devotion to the carnal, nonconforming “self,” coupled with materialism. It seeks personal power and the gratification of individual desires. “Why not be honest and if you are going to create a god in your image, why not create that god as yourself” (1969, 96). LaVey based the philosophical foundation for his countercultural church more on the writings of Ayn Rand, Aleister Crowley, and Friedrich Nietzsche than on anything supernatural—although he does advocate for choosing a rationally based metaphysical perspective. For LaVey, humanity progressed in the sciences and philosophy when people rebelled against God, the “church,” or the acceptable mores of society. What is needed is not a Father God but a rebellious brother. Satan as accuser challenges the status quo, specifically the prevailing and ruling religious concepts (that is, a self-denying Christianity). A Satan that means “opposite,” that enables the advancement of human civilization, was created by LaVey to serve as a metaphoric representation of the individual. In short, to hail Satan is to glorify self.

The Church of Satan's Golden Rule is “Do unto others as they do unto you” (1969, 51). As a congregation, it adheres to nine satanic statements written by LaVey to serve as their Ten Commandments. These nine satanic statements denote what Satan signifies for the church. They are: (1) Satan



represents indulgence instead of abstinence; (2) Satan represents vital existence instead of spiritual pipe dreams; (3) Satan represents undefiled wisdom instead of hypocritical self-deceit; (4) Satan represents kindness to those who deserve it instead of love wasted on ingrates; (5) Satan represents vengeance instead of turning the other cheek; (6) Satan represents responsibility to the responsible instead of concern for psychic vampires; (7) Satan represents us humans as mere animals, sometimes better, more often worse than those that walk on all-fours, who, because of our “divine spiritual and intellectual development,” have become the most vicious animals of all; (8) Satan represents all of the so-called sins, as they all lead to physical, mental, or emotional gratification; and (9) Satan has been the best friend the wider Christian church has ever had, having kept it in business all these years (LaVey 1969, 25).

Sin is also redefined as an attempt to respond to the Christian church’s seven deadly sins. The seven deadly sins of the Catholic Church were written by a fourth-century desert monk named Evagrius of Ponticus and reconstituted by Pope Gregory the Great in 590 CE. The final list included: greed, pride, envy, anger, gluttony, lust, and sloth.<sup>4</sup> But for the Satanist, rather than avoiding or repenting from these deadly sins, they advocate indulging in all of them as a path to physical, mental, and emotional gratification (1969, 46). This is not to say that the concept of sin does not exist for Satanists. For them, the nine satanic sins are: (1) stupidity; (2) pretentiousness; (3) solipsism; (4) self-deceit; (5) herd conformity; (6) lack of perspective; (7) forgetfulness of past orthodoxies; (8) counterproductive pride; and (9) lack of aesthetics (Barton 1992, 243–45).

A portion of the Church of Satan splintered in 1975, creating a new sect under the leadership of a Lt. Colonel with the U.S. Army, Michael Aquino. He began the Temple of Set in 1975 with himself as high priest. The reason given for his break with LaVey is due to, according to Aquino, LaVey’s “egotistic irresponsibility,” with Aquino accusing LaVey of turning the Church of Satan into “a nonfunctional vehicle for his personal expression, exploitation, and financial income.”<sup>5</sup> The alleged corruption of the Church of Satan led to Aquino being informed by Satan during a ritual that he wanted Aquino and the Church of Satan leadership to start a new church. In addition, Satan wanted to be known by his true name, Set—a reach back to pre-dynastic Egyptian times. This mandate came from Satan, or better yet, Set, in the form of a book called *The Book of Coming Forth by Night*.

According to the Temple's official website, Satan is understood:

Not [as] the evil scarecrow of Christian myth, but [as] a champion of anti-hypocrisy—a crusader against the corruption and moral bankruptcy of society, which LaVey blamed largely upon Christianity. In another, more private context, the Satan of the Church of Satan was understood to be an authentic metaphysical presence: a being not evil, but rather independent, assertive, and creative—a true Prince of Darkness after the imagery of Milton, Blake, Baudelaire, and Twain.<sup>6</sup>

Like the Church of Satan before it, an attempt is made by the Temple of Set to raise the individual to personal godhood—free from submission to any other god. To worship Set is to worship self—indulging in all legal desires of the ego and the body. Similar to many Eurocentric Christian organized religions, the focus of Satanist organized churches is on the individual. One exception is that while the emphasis for Christians is the quest for individual spiritual gratification, Satanists seek individual physical gratification.

Perhaps the most damning indictment made against modern-day Satanists occurred during the 1980s. Satanists were accused of engaging in crimes, specifically drugging children and forcing them to participate in sexual acts at their day care centers, or offering human sacrifices, usually babies, to Lucifer. Contrary to such anti-Satanic church propaganda, there appears to be no foundation to the claim linking such churches to crimes or violence against individuals. The *Satanic Bible* clearly states that “Under NO circumstances would a Satanist sacrifice any animal or baby! . . . [because] man the animal, is the godhead to the Satanist [and thus sacred]” (1969, 89); nevertheless, such nefarious accusations were usually made by so-called ex-Satanists who claimed to have been eye-witnesses to such activities. Fueled by the news media, specifically the May 16, 1985 ABC *20/20* television show and the Geraldo Rivera 1988 two-hour documentary special, a “Satanic Panic” ignited throughout most of the 1980s and early 1990s among the general public. The book that is probably most responsible for launching the “Satanic Panic” was *The Satan Seller*, written by Christian comedian Mike Warnke in 1972.

Mike Warnke, an alleged former high priest of Satan, one of the three Master Counselors of the Brotherhood with fifteen hundred disciples (Warnke 1972, 57), claimed that Satanists, backed by the Illuminati (1972, 93–95), are responsible for two million human sacrifices a year throughout the United

States (Medway 2001, 199). He appeared as an expert commentator on the 1985 ABC *20/20* report, which bore the title “The Devil Worshipers.” Unfortunately for him, his character, and thus his witness, eventually came under question when his testimony was debunked in 1992 by the cover-story of the Christian magazine *Cornerstone*. The exposé refuted his claims of living a drug-addicted life or ever belonging to a satanic cult (see Trott and Hertenstein 1992). Further investigative reporting revealed he was engaged in financial irregularities, collecting funds at evangelical events for preschool children abused by Satanists and diverting said funds for personal use. In 1991 Warnke Ministries paid over \$800,000 in salaries to Warnke, his wife, and his brother-in-law and only \$900 for charitable purposes (Warnke 1972, 168).<sup>7</sup>

Warnke was eventually forced to “clarify and acknowledge” that his conversion story from Satanism and accusations against Satanists as outlined in his best seller, *The Satan Seller*, contained “some exaggerations and embellishments . . . due to old and perhaps faulty memories as well as deliberate attempts to ‘protect the innocent.’” Additionally, he confessed to “the previous ungodliness of [his] personal life, to [his] multiple divorces and unwise decisions” (2002, 169). Also problematic was Warnke’s assertion that two million human sacrifices a year were occurring. Two million human sacrifices a year is a statistically significant number; yet there is a total and complete lack of evidence substantiating his claim. If these figures were true, one would expect at least one body would have been found, one arrest would have been made, one conviction would have been on the records. It must be asked if the yearly murders of two million individuals offered up as human sacrifices was an exaggeration or a fabrication. Medway concludes by pointing out, “In alleged cases of criminal Satanism, there are no missing persons, no bodies, no bones, no blood, no temples, no altars, no robes, no rituals, and no Satanists (2001, 199, 329).

## **Satan among Fundamentalists**

It is ironic that while Satanists see Satan more as a symbol signifying qualities needed for human progress and power, many Christian Fundamentalists see Satan more as an actual being. If Satanists perceive the Devil as a figure needed to spur forward the advancement of civilization as a means by which the individual is centered, then Fundamentalists see Satan as someone to fear, someone bent on destroying God’s good creation and the sacred mission

of Christ's church on earth. Fundamentalists' stern support of biblical literature has led to the advocacy of mass media censorship to protect Christ's lost sheep from the lures of the Evil One. They are not deceived by the satanic motivations inspiring Rock music or Hollywood's obsession with horror films and science fiction fantasies like Darth Vader or Hellboy. They recognize that the destruction wrought by the Prince of Evil is usually conducted by subtle means. Take the example offered in the book *Satan Is Alive and Well on Planet Earth*, written by famed evangelical author Hal Lindsey. He argues that the methodologies used at universities and seminaries to study the sacred text known as higher criticism is part of Satan's plan to discredit the Bible and lead people away from having a personal relationship with God (1972, 42–45).

Hal Lindsey is best known for his best-selling 1970 work *The Late Great Planet Earth*, in which he predicts that the earth would end around 1988 (1970, 43). In his follow-up book, *The 1980's [sic]: Countdown to Armageddon*, he boldly claimed, "The decade of the 1980's [sic] could very well be the last decade of history as we know it" (1980, 8). For Lindsey and the millions of Christians whose perception of Satan resonates with Lindsey's work, Satan is the mastermind behind non-Christian religions, specifically Eastern religions (1972, 44), and the drug culture of the 1960s (1970, 114). He even credits UFO sightings with the demonic: "I believe these demons will stage a spacecraft landing on Earth. They will claim to be from an advanced culture in another galaxy" (1980, 33).

According to the narrative, as advocated by Lindsey and most Fundamentalist proponents, God created an angelic realm to glorify the Creator, making Lucifer the crowning achievement of creation. Among all the angels, Lucifer was the most beautiful and the most intelligent, bright as the morning star. Realizing his superiority to the other angels, Lucifer's ego became overblown, leading him to rebel against God. Inflated with pride, Lucifer dared to equate himself to God. Attributing a satire on the king of Babylon (Isa 14:4) to Satan, most Fundamentalists believe that the fall of Daystar, son of the Morning from the Heavens, refers to the reason for Satan's rebellion. Isaiah 14:12-15 reads:

How you have fallen from the heavens, O shining star, son of the morning. You who weakened the nations are cut down to the ground. In your heart you have said, "I will ascend to the heavens, I will raise my throne

above God's stars, and I will sit on the mount of meeting, on Zaphon's heights. I will rise over the tops of the clouds. I will be likened to the Most High." Yet to Shoel shall you go down, to the depths of the Pit.

Arrogance and self-importance caused Lucifer to become the first created being to sin. To make matters worse, he led an insurrection, backed by a third of the angelic host, against God. This rebellion of angels brought impurity into God's perfect universal order. Although the insurrection was crushed, thanks to the archangel Michael, Lucifer, along with his followers, was cast out of Heaven. With Lucifer's fall from the highest pinnacle came a name change to Satan, an eternal banishment from Heaven, and the start of a cosmic war that could be won only by a wounded God. Hell was created for Satan and all who chose to follow him.

Prior to creating humans, God restored harmony and perfection to the universe in the form of Eden. Other scholars and biblical interpreters have tended to date Satan's rebellion to a time after the six days of creation when everything was still good and before the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Regardless of the timeline, God placed the first man, created in God's image, and the first woman, created in man's image [*sic*], to enjoy perfection. Humans, rather than angels, became God's crowning achievement because they contained the *imago dei*—the image of God. The first couple was to rule over all creation as long as they obeyed one rule: they could not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil planted in the center of this idyllic garden—for if they were to eat its fruit, surely they would die. After providing the warning, God allowed Satan to enter the scene, for Satan is unable to do anything without God's permission. Satan had but one goal, lead this new creature into rebellion against God. Disguised as a serpent with legs, Satan tempted Eve, the more susceptible of the two [*sic*], with the fruit of the forbidden tree, knowing that if she sinned, Adam would follow. Eve ate of the fruit, as did Adam, thus disobeying God and falling from grace.

The disobedience of humans meant that they and all of their descendants became enslaved to Satan. Their only salvation would be a perfect sacrifice that could redeem humanity and break loose the bondage of Satan. But how, if all begotten by man would carry this original sin of disobedience? Only a perfect sacrifice, born of a woman, not man (because the substance of original sin was located in the man's semen), could be sinless and thus an unblemished sacrifice. Through the death of this unblemished sacrifice,

humanity could be redeemed and restored to fellowship with God. It should have been us, as humans, who should have died, but Jesus took our place on the cross. He, the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world, paid the price for our transgressions. Through Jesus Christ's redemptive suffering in the crucifixion, humanity is healed. Hence, salvation would occur for those who believe that through the incarnation of God in Jesus, Satan's hold on humanity is broken. But for those who reject Jesus/God, they remain in rebellion and thus under the power of Satan. Those who participate in other faiths or are more liberal in their interpretation of the biblical narrative are, in reality, whether they know it or not, still following Satan's lies and thus separated now and for all eternity from God.

Among some Fundamentalists, specifically those who are Pentecostals or charismatic, demons can possess any individual. These demons have names associated with sins. For example, there is the demon of lust or the demon of envy. Demons could also be associated with illnesses, like the demon of cancer or the demon of back pain. Finally, these demons can be named after activities that the overarching group believes to be a sin, as in the case of the demon of homosexuality. Exorcism can become part of the worship service, where the pastor or minister, anointed by God, lays hands upon the one possessed with a certain demon for the purpose of casting the demon out. The minister, speaking in the name and authority of Jesus, commands the demon to identify itself. Because the demons are forced to obey the one anointed by God speaking in Jesus' stead, they must obey truthfully. They respond through the voice of the one possessed, revealing its demonic identity. Once the minister knows the demon or demons' name(s), the minister can cast them out in Jesus' name. Usually a struggle ensues, with the demon yelling it does not want to leave—but eventually, because all authority over demons is given to the believer, the minister wins the spiritual battle, leaving the once demon-possessed individual collapsed on the floor from physical exhaustion.

## **Satan among Catholics**

Many Catholics, like their Fundamentalists counterparts, have a history of promoting the concept of Satan's existence, contributing to the creation of a Christianity of damnation. The Devil is engaged in a cosmic warfare against the spiritual forces of God, and as punishment the Devil and all those who follow his lies will be damned to Hell and eternally separated from God.

Satan's existence was reaffirmed by Pope Paul VI in an address he gave to a general audience on November 15, 1972 titled, "Confronting the Devil's Power." In his address, Pope Paul VI portrays the Devil as "a dark, hostile agent . . . [who is] an active force, a living being that is perverted and that perverts others. It is a terrible reality, mysterious and frightening."<sup>8</sup>

Like most Protestant belief systems, many Catholic teachings confirm that Satan was at first a good angel made by God who rejected God's reign and authority. He then led the first human parents, Adam and Eve, into rebellion by tempting them to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and their subsequent Fall from grace as a result of these temptations and their disobedience to the Will of God. Although powerful, Satan's power is not infinite. Due to the original sin of the first parents, death entered creation and all of humanity is born under the sway of the Evil One.

Only through Jesus freely giving himself up to death can humanity be delivered from the Devil. Thus, baptism becomes an exorcism signifying the candidate's explicit renouncement of Satan and liberation from sin and from sin's instigator. Why God would allow Satan to exist and wreak havoc with creation is chalked up as "a great mystery" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2000, 391–97, 413, 1237, 2853). Like Protestants and Evangelicals, Roman Catholics have also been alarmed at the satanic and evil nature of much that passes for the secularism and pop culture of the modern world, and since the nineteenth century, the Papacy has sought to engage modernity more creatively and more focused on peace and social justice activism than most other denominations. In the wise pastoral words of John Paul II: "The evil of our times consists in the first place in a kind of degradation, indeed in a pulverization, of the fundamental uniqueness of each human person" (de Lubac 1993, 171–72). His own experiences of violence and loss in Poland during the Second World War convinced him of the subtle and persistent power of evil in the world, and in his thoughtful speeches and moving sermons, while traveling around the world during his pontificate, encouraged young men and women to practice true compassion and forgiveness by becoming the "craftsmen of a new humanity" despite the persistent mystery of evil and human violence in the world.

## **Satan and the Left Behind Series**

Probably no other book series has contributed more to the modern Christian understanding of evil than the twelve-book Left Behind series written by

Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. When the first book made its debut in 1995, it, along with the next seven books of the series, received modest attention among a conservative, evangelical niche market. However, its lack of popularity was reversed shortly after the collapse of the Twin Towers. According to the authors, sales of the series skyrocketed immediately following the events of 9/11 (LaHaye, Jenkins, and Swanson 2005, 13). For the first time, one of the books in the series, the ninth book, *Desecration*, the first to be published after 9/11, made the *New York Times* best-selling fiction list. As of 2006, over sixty million books were sold (Flesher 2006, 7). Although the book is fictional, the authors insist that it is based on the correct and only valid literal interpretation of biblical prophecy. In their version of biblical interpretation, common among most conservative fundamentalists who are mainly Protestant and evangelical, but also Catholics (even though the series is extremely anti-Papal),<sup>9</sup> all believers will be raptured before Jesus returns to earth.

The rapture is based on 1 Thess 4:15-18, where the author of the epistle states that Christ will return and take up into the clouds those who are still alive with those being resurrected from the dead. To be taken or snatched by Christ has come to be called the rapture. Those who are left behind are the enemies of Christ, in league with the Devil, whether they know it or not. They are usually characterized as being anti-family, understood as being pro-feminist, pro-homosexual, and pro-abortion. In effect, a dichotomy is created where everyone who disagrees with how LaHaye and Jenkins interpret the eschaton, that is, the last days, are in cahoots with the Devil. Hebrew Bible scholar Leann Snow Flesher best summarizes who, according to LaHaye and Jenkins, is a true believer and who follows Satan:

[LaHaye and Jenkins] have used the premillennial agenda to declare what is good and what is evil, who is in and who is out, and how proper Christianity ought to behave. According to these authors, secular humanism is the satanic nemesis of the true Christian church; the Roman Catholic Church is filled with idolaters; the Chinese are pagan humanistic communists plotting to take over the world; the world is quickly moving toward a one-world government, economy, and religion over which the Antichrist will reign; white U.S. males will physically take charge and lead us to the path of salvation; Jewish men will convert to Christianity and teach that Bible prophecy speaks of Jesus;



women play support roles, which includes the priority of bearing and taking care of children; the 'other' is the enemy and is to be evangelized whenever possible; Greek philosophy has polluted Christianity; martyrdom is an honor; and taking arms is part of the call. (2006, 56–57)

Once true believers are raptured, all the world religions (Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and so on), except Judaism, can put aside their differences and join forces as one faith system because, after all, they have the common denominator of being inspired by Satan.

After Christians miraculously depart planet earth, those left behind will face seven years of tribulation. Tribulation is the period of time marked by global trial and suffering. Those who advocate, as do the writers of the *Left Behind* series, that the believers in Christ will be spared this period of earthly destruction and desolation are called pre-tribulationists, because they will be raptured before the start of the tribulation. Those, on the other hand, who believe the church of Christ would also undergo the trials of the tribulation are known as post-tribulationists, while those who claim the church would be spared the last, more brutal part of the tribulation but will endure the first half are known as mid-tribulationists. It is during the tribulation, according to the *Left Behind* series, that fictional character Nicolae Carpathia, the Anti-Christ, establishes his worldwide government.

Under the Anti-Christ's rule, all Hell literally breaks loose as the world suffers God's merciless judgment. For example, the fifth book of the series, *Apollyon*, which is based on Rev 9:1-12, interprets the blowing of the fifth trumpet by God's angel as the prelude to the release of locust-type creatures with scorpion-type powers. Led by a chief demon named Apollyon, these locust creatures attack those who are without God's seal on their forehead. The pain inflicted by the sting of these demonic insects is so great that people try to kill themselves but are unable to die.

In the *Left Behind* series, the Anti-Christ is eventually assassinated in the sixth book, *Assassins*. Yet on the third day, according to the seventh book, *The Indwelling*, the Anti-Christ arises from the dead, indwelt by Satan. Halfway through the tribulation, the Anti-Christ demands total allegiance (Carpathianism—the worship of Nicolae Carpathia), and those who refuse are sent to the guillotine in public squares throughout the world. Soon he is forcing the mark of the Beast upon the world. He goes to Jerusalem to desecrate the Temple by declaring himself god. There, he gathers all the world's

armies for one last cosmic battle against the Host of Heaven, led by Jesus Christ riding a white horse. With the Anti-Christ defeated, all the people of the world are gathered for the final judgment prior to the start of the millennium. The millennium, based on Rev 20:5, starts with the first resurrection, when those who have been martyred for the cause of Christ come back to life and rule with Christ for a thousand years.

This understanding of a tribulation occurring before Christ returns to earth and establishes his thousand-year reign is known within theological circles as premillennial, the view held by the authors of the *Left Behind* series. Humanity is beyond reform; hence, the world would become more and more violent, as in the days prior to Noah's flood. Total world destruction is averted through God's intervention; evil is defeated and Christ physically establishes his kingdom on earth. Postmillennialism, on the other hand, believes that as the gospel is preached and people are converted, evil would come to an end, making it possible for Jesus to return and establish his thousand-year reign.<sup>10</sup>

Premillennial thought became part of theological belief known as dispensationalism. U.S. Christians since the Revolutionary War up until the Civil War were mainly postmillennialists. They believed that the only thing preventing God's return was the social issue of slavery. Once slavery was abolished, Christ's second coming would occur. Reading the lyrics of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" clearly reveals the songwriter's postmillennialist tendencies. The first verse of the song is, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord: He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword: His truth is marching on." The verse is a clear reference to the final cosmic battle laid out in the book of Revelation, where an angel of the Lord is found casting grapes into "the great winepress of the wrath of God" (14:19), and where we find a description of how God's Word wields "a sharp sword" that "treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (19:15).

After the carnage of the Civil War and the unrest and chaos during Reconstruction, many Christians lost faith in the optimistic postmillennialist proposition that humans were morally getting better and closer to God's ideal. In fact, the reverse occurred, humans were becoming more reprobate with each passing year—hence the rise in popularity of premillennialism (Marsden 1980, 48–55). Dispensationalism is a modern theological invention,

never held by any church scholar, teacher, or minister until it was introduced to the American public in the 1870s by a man named John Nelson Darby. Darby's dispensationalism is a system of interpretation imposed upon the biblical text. Human history, according to Darby, can be divided into seven dispensations, namely: (1) innocence (prior to the Fall); (2) conscience (from the Fall up to the Flood); (3) human government (from the Flood to the call of Abraham); (4) promise (from the call of Abraham to the giving of the law at Mount Sinai); (5) law (from the giving of the law to the death of Christ); (6) grace (from the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost to Christ's second coming); and (7) kingdom (from the second coming of Christ to the establishment of the throne of judgment). Obviously, we are presently living in the sixth dispensation of grace.

Darby's ideas became popular with such conservative evangelicals as D. L. Moody and C. I. Scofield. With the rise of fundamentalism as a response to the spread of secular humanism, liberal Christianity, Darwinism, and the use of biblical higher criticism epitomized in the so-called Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925, Darby's dispensationalism became a major tenet of most conservative-leaning believers. The problem with dispensational thought is the negative contributions it makes to moral reasoning. Followers of dispensational theology, like LaHaye and Jenkins, are suspicious of justice work and humanitarian concerns. Such concerns are not part of true Christianity but rather are expressions of secular humanism. To challenge oppressive social structures or to try to achieve a more just political or economic system are sure signs of apostasy. To work for justice, that is, to try to make the good news of the gospel as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount a reality within human history, is to participate in evil, for such efforts are inspired and directed by Satan. In a perverted form of logic, to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, or clothe the naked is Satanic.

### **Satan among Liberals**

For liberal Christians, science, the child of the Age of Enlightenment, killed Satan—if not God. An evil being responsible for much of the world's misery was exchanged for the evil that lurks within human hearts and minds. All may wrestle with their “personal demons,” but these satanic minions are not metaphysical beings as Fundamentalists might argue. Instead, they are personal addictions that may be caused by chemical imbalances or unfortunate

circumstances caused by personal or societal wrong choices. For example, the casting out of the devil by Jesus from a boy who was constantly in a wretched state, always falling into the fire or into water (Matt 17:14-18), is interpreted by most liberals not as a demonic possession but as an epileptic seizure. Not having the benefits of modern scientific knowledge, the Gospel writers used the supernatural to explain physical and emotional ailments.

Some liberals would argue that the Christian's spiritual warfare against demons is, in reality, a psychological attempt to repress the libido. While the term libido is usually linked to sexual energies, the term is here understood in its more general definition, the psychic and emotional energy that is associated with primitive biological urges and drives (that is, self-preservation) expressed in conscious activity. While the Christian teaches sexual self-restraint, putting the needs of others before self-interest, self-sacrifice, and a willingness to seek martyrdom, our libido urges us to do the opposite. The libido, representing the biological, wars against the spiritual ideals humans wish to achieve. We do not wrestle with non-existing demons but with flesh and blood. There is no Satan to blame, there is no exorcism that can cure us; rather, the problem lies with us—individually or as part of human society—and thus the cure lies with us and our repressed drives and biological urges.

This was the gist of the argument behind the theory of psychoanalysis that emerged in 1899 with the landmark publication in Vienna, Austria, of Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*. As a student of Classical philosophy and modern psychology at the University of Paris, Freud's humanistic convictions theorized that people could be healed from their anxieties, phobias, neuroses, repressed emotions, and behavioral complexes through a series of dialog sessions aimed at uncovering the contents of the patients' unconscious. It was a sort of modern Socratic Method applied to the process of self-discovery by which Freud and his disciples substituted their role as psychological guides for the traditional roles of priest, pastor, or rabbi in the spiritual and mental development of the person.

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) later published two of the most influential books of the modern world: *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) and *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). The latter volume elaborates his psycho-sexual theory on the relation of repressed sexuality to neurotic behaviors and expands on his theory of the “death-drive.” Freud, like many others of his generation, was profoundly disturbed by the violence and destruction of World War I and Europe's post-war social problems, which influenced his

negative views in *Civilization* and his growing conviction that as a “collective neurosis” religion was the root of many of humanity’s problems. Freud was also an intensely passionate supporter and defender of the Enlightenment legacy that scientific rationalism and logical positivism held the potential to emancipate humanity and society from the age-old superstitions, repressions, and childish wish-fulfillments of religion. He and many others from among the generation of intellectuals and sociologists who came of age in Europe and the Americas during the 1890s believed that an ethics and epistemology based on the principles of science might lay the foundation for a new human consciousness by the year 2000 that would be free from the need for a God or a Satan to hold human behavior in check while allegedly struggling against each other for the salvation or control of the human heart and mind.

Religion, Freud maintained, was an illusion with no future. It was as if psychoanalysis had invited Satan into therapy and, there on the psychologist’s couch, had tricked Satan into believing he did not have power over the human spirit. Or was this trickery actually the opposite—such that Satan had once again fooled humanity into believing the Prince of Darkness did not exist? Faith seemingly could not stand up to the liberating influences of the new scientific spirit:

If this belief is an illusion, then we are in the same position as you. But science has given us evidence by its numerous and important successes that it is no illusion. Science has many open enemies, and many more secret ones, among those who cannot forgive her for having weakened religious faith and for threatening to overthrow it. She is reproached for the smallness of the amount she has taught us and for the incomparably greater field she has left in obscurity. But, in this, people forget how young she is, how difficult her beginnings were and how infinitesimally small is the period of time since the human intellect has been strong enough for the tasks she sets. Are we not at fault, in basing our judgments on periods of time that are too short? No, our science is no illusion. But an illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give us we can get elsewhere. (Freud 1927, 70–71)

In the end, however, this “scientific spirit” proved to be another modernist ideology masquerading as a meta-narrative that Roman Catholics, Fundamentalists, and Protestant Christians came to view with skepticism and mistrust. Some, disturbed by Freud’s atheism and preoccupation with sexuality,

went so far as to repudiate all Freudian ideas and applications of psychoanalysis as a demonic derailment of the pastoral care of persons suffering from mental illness and behavioral disorders.

Some therapists from among the ranks of the clergy, including the Swiss Lutheran pastor Oskar Pfister (1873–1956), responded sternly to the Freudian ideology by developing the field of pastoral theology and care as one grounded in the basic teachings of Jesus, Christian humanism, and the early Christian legacy of healing and promoting personal wholeness. A lifelong student and supporter of Freud's theories, Pfister responded to Freud's attack on religion with a highly critical essay in 1928, "Die Illusion einer Zukunft" ("The Illusion of the Future").

Other therapists, such as Freud's most brilliant and favorite disciple, the Swiss psychiatrist Carl G. Jung (1875–1961), responded to Freud's anti-religious ideology by investigating the spiritual and symbolic dimensions of the unconscious and the care of the soul in the psychoanalytic process. His approach led the famed teacher and his designated heir to a devastating professional break around 1913 (Donn 1988, 137–85). As Jung's career unfolded in Zurich and he witnessed the horrors that European totalitarianism and Nazism set loose upon the world, he came to despise the naïve and optimistic dreams about scientific emancipation and the "Good Life" that intellectuals and politicians in such modern-day societies as Germany, Russia, Japan, Great Britain, and the United States had promised the world in the late 1890s and early 1900s. In the face of such atrocities and terrors as those caused by two World Wars, Germany's descent into the abyss of Nazism and the Holocaust, and America's development and deployment of atomic weapons, Jung became one of the twentieth century's most ardent protesters against the denial of evil in the cosmos, criticizing modern civilization's obsession with absolute good and its denial of the demonic realities of the dark side of human behavior.

The rift between faith and science grew wider in the first half of the 1900s as a result of such reactions and suspicions to the effectiveness of psychoanalysis in the treatment of mental health. Nonetheless, Freud's convictions regarding the possibility of healing the mentally afflicted by simply "talking-out" their fears, repressions, or anxieties and analyzing the content of patients' dreams proved to be a game-changing moment in the quest for the historical Satan and in the ancient struggle to understand the origins of evil within and among human societies. No area of human knowledge,

medicine and education, leadership and ethics, or social relations was immune to the influence of Freudian psychoanalysis and its related movements since 1900. In this sense, Sigmund Freud was a prophetic writer and thinker who perceived the final demise of the old medieval spiritual and religious worldview.

Yet we must pose a major question that we shall have occasion to ponder more deeply later in this volume: Did Freud invite Western Christian civilization into a psychoanalytic therapy session on a comfy, cozy couch in an office surrounded by ancient religious icons and scientific books and then convince men and women that our dreams of Satan and his demons were now irrelevant in the liberated new worldviews of modernity?

### **Satan and Ethical Thought**

Satan, as a meta-narrative that personifies evil, is a term today's Christian ethicists hesitate to use as a moral category. Nevertheless, the definition of Satan and his host of demons relentlessly tempting humans, coupled with a stern God quick to punish twisted sinners and the wicked, have served as powerful tools for social control. Fear of Satan and the threat of Hell have historically forced large segments of the population toward self-policing while setting high moral standards. Individual guilt has been used by churches, both Catholic and Protestant, throughout the ages to scare parishioners into obedience and compliance. It matters little if Satan actually exists. What is important is that the figure of Satan, and the theme of "satanic" intentions and actions, has become an institutional construct employed to control the masses.

The pursuit of goodness requires the repression of those who fail or refuse to obey. And what better way to justify the silencing of subversives to the authority of the church and/or society than to project evil tendencies upon them? Inquisitions, crusades, the burning of witches, or the genocide of heathens and unbelievers become means by which the good—here defined as the status quo—is maintained. To oppose dissent, by definition, transforms the accuser into the defender of the good, righteousness, and the forces of light. It is as if the defenders project their own lower, base instincts and desires upon the accused to provide an excuse to rid, and in so doing exorcise, the qualities society's defenders possess and detest.

Widespread demonic conspiracies are created to mobilize the public (mob?) in empowering leading spokespersons against the satanic threat. But

for the evil of others to be believed, the community must first be made to be afraid. Anxiety over those in league with the Devil must be maintained at a fever pitch. Such an anxiety is usually maintained on half-truths and manufactured facts, as was the case made concerning Iraq's connection to the 9/11 events and its alleged stockpile of weapons of mass destruction. A vested interest exists in keeping Satan and his dominion alive for the "grand inquisitors" who derive their power by maintaining fear among the masses and by having an evil to purge. Because fire must be fought with fire, satanic methodologies, out of necessity, must be adopted. During the first Persian Gulf War (1990–1991), Saddam Hussein and his regime were repeatedly compared to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. Hence, torture was employed by the defenders of the good (liberty) against those they labeled terrorists. To torture publicly Satan's allies and followers assures that others will privately police themselves and submit to the authority of the church and/or society's rulers, lest they, too, be accused and face a similar fate.

Still, the problem with evil may not lie as much with the Satan figure as with the "thoughtlessness" of humans who simply accept and follow those on a crusade against the satanic. In Hannah Arendt's classical discourse on the banality of evil, she reveals that the logistics manager responsible for transporting millions of Jews to the death camps, the individual known as "the architect of the Holocaust," did not carry out his responsibilities due to any personal malice or depravity. S.S. Lieutenant-Colonel Adolf Eichmann was no Shakespearian villain like Macbeth. He was no fanatical anti-Semite but in fact had plenty of "private reasons," including Jews within his own family, for not being a Jew-hater (1977, 26–30). What makes Eichmann frightening, according to Arendt, is the banality of his normalcy. "He *merely*, to put the matter colloquially, *never realized what he was doing*. . . . It was sheer thoughtlessness—something by no means identical with stupidity—that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of the period. . . . [W]ith the best will in the world one cannot extract any diabolical or demonic profundity from Eichmann" (1977, 287–88). The satanic exists not because there are a few villains among humanity, a few who are vicious or cruel, a few who reject God or Christianity. "The trouble with Eichmann," Arendt writes, "was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal . . . this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together" (1977, 276).



Similarly, the infamous founder of the Nazi Gestapo and leader of the S.S., Heinrich Himmler, was born and raised in a devout Roman Catholic family descended from Bavarian nobility and had access to the finest educational and religious opportunities for German youth of his era. He was also fascinated by mythic tales of the Aryan master race and medieval legends of the Knights Templar who guarded the Holy Grail. In the early 1920s, Himmler's interest in medieval lore and the history of Aryan racial origins known as Ariosophy, led him either to join or at least to examine the teachings of German-Aryan secret societies such as the Thule Society and the Ordo Novi Templi (O.N.T.), which was modeled on the legends of the Templars. In his groundbreaking work on "Ariosophy," *The Occult Roots of Nazism* (1992), Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke describes the ideological delusions and theories of race that led to this strange mixture of childlike attraction to chivalry with ardent nationalism and Anti-Semitic hatred. Membership in groups such as the O.N.T. depended upon the novice's ability to prove his racial purity, adhere to the rules of the order, and assist in the task of founding new chapters and lodges across Austria and Germany.

The ideal of breeding racially pure "god-men," who could act above the laws of humanity by virtue of their exalted spiritual and biological status and who would then advance the mission of the Order, has been documented by Goodrick-Clarke, who suggests a direct link between these romanticized chivalric fantasies and the killing machine that emerged when Himmler assumed increasingly more command over all S.S. operations in the early 1930s. From that moment on, we find Himmler's revitalized S.S., bolstered by the research of Ariosophy, adopting numerous ideals and symbols that formerly characterized Aryan fraternities and cults.

In the years that followed, Himmler directed an amazing number of "culture-preserving" and "culture-creating" activities by annexing medieval castles, villas, and priory lands across Europe. These endeavors were part of the overall design by which he and his administrative staff sought to bolster the prestige of S.S. officers and troops as modern Aryan knights. This elite-guard of the Nazis even had their own departments of culture, pre-history, and archaeology at S.S. headquarters that issued manifestos and publications on the history of Aryan origins. Himmler also hired architects and consultants to design a lavish museum of S.S. history and lore where the *Übermensch* (literally, "Overman" or "Super-Man") of this racialized culture of power and hatred would be honored and glorified well into the

next Aryan-Christian millennium (Goodrick-Clarke 1992, 108, 192–204, 209–14, 217–25).

As fate would have it, however, Himmler's chivalric fantasies and murderous reign came to an end in May 1945 when he was captured by a British army unit after trying to negotiate the surrender of all Nazi forces with General Eisenhower's office. He allegedly had also asked to be appointed as the national "police director" of the new German government after the war, which oddly would have been just another "ordinary" and "normal" job for a major Nazi war criminal. He committed suicide a few days after being arrested while awaiting his trial. Himmler's Waffen-S.S. numbered nearly one million members by the close of the war in 1945. Of the surviving S.S. leaders and members investigated by Allied tribunals after the war, the vast majority claimed to be just "ordinary" German citizens and "normal" individuals attracted to the ideals, discipline, and culture of the S.S. and to Himmler's charismatic and patriotic qualities.

After the war, when public knowledge of Nazism's mechanized murder became more widespread, it exacerbated psychiatrist Carl Jung's moral crisis over the problem of absolute Evil versus absolute Good. How did the presumably most intellectually and scientifically sophisticated nation among Western civilization plunge itself into the apocalyptic juggernaut of Nazism? As his patients struggled with these same concerns and other related sentiments of collective guilt, Carl Jung found himself questioning Saint Augustine's conception of the origin of evil as the absence of good (*privatio boni*) and, as the result of disordered love, against something much more sinister and demonic in human nature. Jung's professional efforts to restore an appreciation for the reality of the human soul among psychiatrists and psychoanalysts were juxtaposed with his personal struggle to deal with modern humanity's individual and collective denial of the problem of evil. Before passing away in June 1961, Jung was rumored by some among his inner circle to have been quite disturbed by dream-like visions of continued global violence and environmental destruction throughout the early twenty-first century. In his own words, and as reported by his colleague and close friend, Marie Louise von Franz (1915–1998), on the occasion of her last meeting with him before his death: "I see enormous stretches devastated, enormous stretches of the earth, but thank God it's not the whole planet."<sup>11</sup> One wonders today if it was just another *illusion of the future*?

The satanic ceases to be limited to the intentional infliction of suffering, pain, and/or the forces of death. Evil becomes more than just the absence of

the good. The satanic can very easily become complicit with social structures designed to benefit some at the expense of others. Eichmann and Himmler were ordinary individuals complicit with such evil social structures. They were like so many of us are today—normal. And it is those who are “normal” that go to church each Sunday, sing hymns of God’s goodness, and through their “thoughtlessness” remain complicit with social structures that bring death to those on the underside of the dominant culture, death to those who are disenfranchised by the status quo. Arendt’s critique on evil’s banality is that there might be more “little Eichmanns” around us (as Ward Churchill, professor of ethnic studies at the University of Colorado expressed concerning the 9/11 tragedy) than we care to admit. Blaming Satan for the horrors of the Holocaust, or for the terrors of 9/11, has the tendency of acquitting thoughtless “normal” people from responsibility, people who fail to see the everyday immorality of social structures and indifference to human suffering.

To deal with the satanic is to move beyond the metaphysical toward praxis, social actions. We should be less interested in Satan the being than with the satanic. If Satan represents death, then actions and the social structures that sustain oppression—more so than individual people, no matter how evil they may appear—are satanic. It was not Eichmann or Himmler who was the satanic monster but the social structures of Nazism that allowed normal, everyday people like Eichmann and Himmler to participate as a cog in the wheel of death and destruction. For those on the underside of society, there is less interest in answering questions about metaphysical beings than in seeking Christian actions that combat the evil that causes oppression. The struggle is with the historical causes of oppression that forces the vast majority of the world’s population to live in want so that a small minority can amass power, possessions, and privilege. The Christian ethical response is not to explain Satan but to explain the satanic and point toward forms of praxis that rebuke such evil.

In the final analysis, regardless of whether one believes or disbelieves in the existence of Satan, the Devil has become a cultural construct. Unfortunately, this construct is responsible for much of human misery, from inquisitions to crusades, from colonialism to genocide. Maybe our conception of Satan as signifying absolute Evil has outlived its usefulness and thus deserves once and for all to be put to death and buried—and let the dead bury the dead. And yet maybe, just maybe, Satan as eternal trickster continues to confound humanity by providing us with the simplistic choice of either the

personification of unadulterated evil or simply a figment of humanity's imagination. Maybe Satan can be a more important construct to the development of ethics if we return to a more original understanding of the figure of Satan as a trickster. Our attempt in the present quest for the historical Satan is not to dismiss Satan but to shift our understanding of him so that he can become a better tool for bringing about liberative ethical responses to evil. But before exploring this possibility and how it can change contemporary ethical discourse and the historic dichotomy of absolute Good versus absolute Evil, this book will first explore the textual birth of Satan in the biblical tradition and his influence on human history. \*