

## Redefining Satan

by: Steven J. Wallace

Throughout the ages, men have been masterful at redefining words, beliefs and even persons. About 2700 years ago, Amos condemned some who:

*“. . . turn justice to wormwood, And lay righteousness to rest in the earth!”<sup>1</sup>*

The turning of “justice” into bitter wormwood is indeed an interesting expression, but unfortunately is often replayed in our culture today. Keep in mind, that the redefinition of righteousness is the funeral for righteousness within any culture. Today, examples abound where doing things illegal is often *compassionately* defended, while calling out against such is met with more and more resistance including racial and self-righteous slurs. Coming to America illegally is now termed “undocumented.” Adultery is labeled “affair.” Homosexuality is termed “alternative.” Recently, making captured terrorists sit in a cold room listening to the Red Hot Chili Peppers has been condemned as “torture”—despite the loss of over 3000 souls who perished on 9/11. I thought torture was cutting off limbs, food and water deprivation, burning out eyes and mutilating the body in some way.<sup>2</sup>

As Isaiah spoke, so are we today:

*“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”<sup>3</sup>*

### Judas?

People have also sought to redefine persons of infamy. Recently the airing of the Gospel of Judas seems to suggest that Judas was the most sensitive

and sacrificial of the apostles and that the Gospel of Judas is intended for those who want a deeper understanding in religion.<sup>4</sup> This presentation of Judas has him working *with* Jesus to perform the betrayal. Betrayal is portrayed in a positive light here! Any reasonable mind should know that the *Gospel of Judas* is fraudulent without the slightest credible fact that Judas even wrote it. But if people can create fiction regarding Jesus having a secret love affair with Mary Magdalene, then why not also invent sensational ideas about Judas’ betrayal? Those who jumped on the Judas bandwagon simply want to hear and tell some new thing. Such is the way Paul classified many at Athens in Acts 17:21,

*“For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.”*

### Satan?

It may be surprising to you to know that there are those who seek to redefine Satan as well. Manya A Brachear reported in the *Chicago Tribune* of a scholar, Henry Ansgar Kelly, who seeks to prove that Satan has gotten a bad rap!<sup>5</sup> Kelly contends that Satan is not the mastermind of evil; He asserts that “church fathers” twisted the scriptures to make Satan out as Gods’ enemy rather than merely a “jaded employee.” (Does this not sound similar to the Gospel of Judas approach?) Kelly complains that it wasn’t until 1215 that men defined the devil as the instigator of sin. From there he concludes that Satan as a monster crept into pulpits.

Kelly withdraws any satanic connection to the serpent in the Garden and redefines the serpent as

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<sup>4</sup> For a debunking of National Geographic’s presentation of “The Gospel of Judas” visit: <http://www.revelationandcreation.com/audiofiles/gospel.judas.1.htm>

<sup>5</sup> “Giving the Devil Due Process” as printed in the *Tri-City Herald*. 09.09.2006, Sec. A10; to view the article in Adobe PDF, please visit here: [http://www.revelationandcreation.com/audiofiles/redefining\\_satan.htm](http://www.revelationandcreation.com/audiofiles/redefining_satan.htm)

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<sup>1</sup> Amos 5:7, NKJV

<sup>2</sup> See Judges 16:21; Jeremiah 38:6; etc.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 5:20, NKJV

merely a conniving animal trying to trick Eve. He impresses upon the minds of others that Satan is God's "hired heavy" to do God's dirty work of testing the faith of men by citing Satan's activity in the book of Job. Kelly exonerates Satan's personality as merely being suspicious of human virtue and wanting it checked out.

Brachear also reported on an American Baptist, Rev. Gregory Mobley, who praises Kelly's work and who also wrote a book, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots*. Mobley stated, there is no absolute truth about the Prince of Darkness. He prophetically condemns the lack of success for Kelly's work because the majority of people prefer "Cowboy movies" where there are distinct "good guys" against distinct "bad guys." So, did we create Satan's malicious personality because we like cowboy movies? Absurd!

The article leaves the reader with the impression that men created Satan as "tempter" in order to maintain the belief of "Original Sin." It contends that "Original Sin" is what has been used to galvanize congregations. This is obviously false. The church of Christ rejects the doctrine of "Original Sin" yet maintains the evil character of the devil. Congregations of Christ are galvanized, not by doctrines of men (e.g. inheriting sins), but by the truth. While we may inherit temporal consequences from our fathers, the scriptures show that one cannot inherit the guilt, the sin or the eternal punishment of another.<sup>6</sup>

Mr. Kelly proves himself an embarrassment to not only history but also to the scriptures when he maintains that attributing "evil" to the devil's character originated after the Bible was written. Rather, it was revealed in very clear terms by Bible writers long before the year 1215.

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<sup>6</sup> "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Ezek. 18:20). For more references read: Deut. 24:16; Jer. 31:30; Rom. 2:6.

Has Mr. Kelly failed to read the book of Revelation when he interpreted the serpent of Genesis 3 as merely a conniving critter? John stated, "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev. 12:9). The expression "serpent of old" makes no sense when isolated from the Genesis account of Paradise. Further, the apostle Paul warned:

*"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).*

In the same chapter Paul identifies this work of deception as being of Satan.

*"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15)*

Further, the promise to the serpent in Genesis 3:14, 15 would be indiscernible apart from his work being the working of Satan:

*"So the LORD God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.'"*

Who is this seed of the serpent? Who is the seed of woman? What battle is involved here if not relative to Christ over Satan? We are left with the undeniable position that Satan was literally in the Garden tempting Eve in the body of a serpent.

## The Book of Job

Satan in the book of Job is not merely cynical, but an insulting accuser:

*“So Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’”* (Job. 1:9-11).

Satan clearly *accuses* God of foolishly blessing and protecting Job. He also *accuses* Job of only being good because God had made his life so easy. The Lord later condemned Satan for inciting Him “. . . he [Job, sjw] holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause” (Job. 2:3, NKJV). Now if Satan can try to provoke God into ruining one with no cause, who is to say that he cannot incite us? Make no mistake about it, Satan, in what has been considered as the oldest book of the Bible, is not portrayed as God’s employee!

## What’s In A Name?

Mr. Kelly would do well to note that Satan lives consistently with his name. “Satan” means “adversary,” one who opposes. He is not God’s “employee.” He is not God’s “fellow worker.” He is God’s *adversary*; he is our *adversary*. “Satan” was not given by men in 1215 AD, but by God.

## Usage?

The Hebrew word for Satan is used of the Angel of the Lord who stood to oppose Balaam when he was going to work for Balak to curse Israel (Num. 22:22; 22:32). The Angel of the Lord is not Satan, but simply opposed Balaam. Satan opposes us!

David employs the word against the sons of Zeruiah.

*“And David said, ‘What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should be adversaries [satan, sjw] to me today? Shall any man be put to death today in Israel? For do I not know that today I am king over Israel?’”* (see 2 Sam. 19:22).

That is what the name literally means—*adversary*. Yet, it is the devil’s personal and proper name because that is what he is. He opposes:

*“Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel”* (2 Chron. 21:1)

This is none other than the devil, Satan. He opposed Israel’s progress.

Unlike Mr. Mobley’s assumption that nothing absolute can be known about Satan, we submit with full fervor that Satan is the accuser of mankind. He stood against God’s people of old; he stands against God’s people today. He wants us to fail. He is at work to make us deny the Lord. A plethora of Biblical writers consistently present this truth. Besides the writers of Genesis, Job and Chronicles we submit these others for your consideration. This is not necessarily an exhaustive list.

- **Opposing** – *Zechariah*, “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him” (Zech. 3:1).
- **Tempter** – *Matthew*, “Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread’” (Matt. 4:3).<sup>7</sup>
- **Takes away the word of God** – *Mark*, “And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear,

<sup>7</sup> We understand that these are the words of Christ, but we merely attributing them to a part of Matthew’s preaching as well. Such is the case with the passages that follow.

Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts” (Mk. 4:15).

- **Bound in affliction** – *Luke*, “So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” (Lk. 13:16)<sup>8</sup>
- **Accuser of brethren** – *John*, “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world . . . for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (Rev. 12:9-11). This also implies that Satan was responsible for their death (cf. Jn. 8:44)
- **Seeking to take advantage of us** – *Paul*, “lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11). Paul also refers to Satan as working in the sons of disobedient (Eph. 2:2)
- **Adversary** – *Peter*, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). As Job long ago depicted Satan as walking to and fro on the earth, Peter likewise states that he does so to devour prey.
- **Disputing** – *Jude*, “Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’” (Jd v. 9). It is noteworthy that Satan

doesn’t just oppose us, he even opposes other angels and God Himself.

- **Power of death** – *the Hebrew writer*, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

With this sample listing of verses and thoughts, five thoughts should emerge:

One, Satan is a real being and not a figment of man’s imagination. Neither is he merely an evil thought. Satan’s person really did tempt the second person of the Godhead in Mark 4:15. Even to reduce Satan to an evil thought results in blaspheming the purity of Christ. Christ was not tempted by his own thoughts, but by an exterior person—Satan.

Two, Satan is evil. Not only is he described as a lion seeking to devour us (1 Pet. 5:8). Jesus describes him as a murderer and the father of lies (Jn. 8:44).

Three, Satan is our enemy and not some “hired heavy” of the Lord. He is the accuser of our brethren (Rev. 12:9-11). He is to be met with resistance on our part (Jas. 4:7). The war is real and it must be won!

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand . . . above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one”* (Eph. 6:12, 13, 16).

<sup>8</sup> Also note that Luke records Paul’s teaching from Jesus that Satan has the power of darkness (Acts 26:18). Luke also attributes Satan as entering Judas (Lk. 22:3). This of course is not apart from Judas’ own will as men can resist Satan (cf. Jas. 4:7).

Four, Satan has a dominion.

*“I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:17, 18).*

Make no mistake about it, there is a “power of Satan.” “Power” here means “authority. Satan has a domain in which he works. All people live and exist in one of these two domains. We are either of the power of Satan or of God. We are either in “darkness” or in “light.”

Five, we can resist him. “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7). To successfully resist, we must first successfully submit to God. That is an undeniable “one-two-punch” that works in defeated our adversary.

Please also consider, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are *children of God*, when, and only when we are “led by the Spirit.”<sup>9</sup> We are led by the Spirit when we obey His revealed word,

*“Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 Jn. 3:24).<sup>10</sup>*

Without keeping the commandments of God there is no fellowship with God.

But it should *equally* stand out in our mind that there is a spirit who bears witness with disobedience. Paul wrote,

*“in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of*

*the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2).*

There are sons of God as much as there are sons of disobedience. Our actions, and inactions determine which father we have. Agreeably, John warned,

*“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother” (1 Jn. 3:10).*

Of course, Satan doesn’t care if we redefine him. He would be happy for us to think upon him as a friend, rather than a foe.

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NOTE:

PowerPoint sermons on “Redefining Satan” and other subjects pertaining to the Bible are made available here:

[www.revelationandcreation.com](http://www.revelationandcreation.com)

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<sup>9</sup> See “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. . . . The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:14, 16).

<sup>10</sup> Also consider Galatians 3:26, 27, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”