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Evil and the Role of Evil in  
The Book of Revelation

by  
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Religion 391, Honors Thesis

Dr. Philip Hart

April 11, 1986

## OUTLINE

Thesis: The symbolism of evil as used in the Book of Revelation portrayed God's response through the personal revelation of the author to the wickedness of humanity. The purpose of this focus on evil was to instill obedience and faith of the early church community as it held to strong messianic expectations.

- I. The Nature of Evil
  - A. The Definition of Evil
  - B. The Purpose of Evil
  - C. The Theodicy Problem of Evil
- II. The Development of the Christian Perspective of Evil
  - A. The Greek Influence
  - B. The Greek Factions and Their Thought
  - C. The Early Christian Factions and Their Thought
  - D. The Early Christian Philosophers
  - E. Various Other Religious Influences
- III. The Nature of Symbolism
  - A. The Usage of Symbolism
  - B. The Existence of Satan/The Devil
  - C. The Christian Labelings of Satan
  - D. The Personification of Satan
- IV. Jesus' Experience of Evil
  - A. Jesus' Use of Parables
  - B. The Early Christian Community
  - C. Jesus' Personal Experience of Evil
- V. The Usage of Evil in The Book of Revelation
  - A. The Nature of the Apocalypse
  - B. The Nature of a revelation
  - C. The Nature of Revelation
  - D. The Symbols of The Book of Revelation

VI. The Final Conflict of Revelation

- A. The Nature of Suffering in Revelation
- B. The Last Judgment
- C. The Almighty, Sovereign God

## Evil and the Role of Evil in

### The Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation undoubtedly represents one of the most exciting as well as perplexing sections of literature found in the New Testament canon. It reflects a deeply dramatic response of a people to a terrible time of persecution and a route of deliverance through obedience to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.<sup>1</sup>

A purpose becomes evident within the grotesque and majestic use of vision. This purpose is one of hastening in the Kingdom and being prepared for the return of the Messiah. Because the apocalyptist believed in a moral factor at work in history, judgment would fall upon individuals and institutions, nation and state, and people and kings.<sup>2</sup> The message was a universal one and the usage of evil by the writer became a very practical means of conveying the seriousness of God's intentions for his people.

Evil is used alone as well as being contrasted with the goodness manifested in the ideas of hope and salvation as humanity's ultimate destiny. In order to understand the role of evil in the Book of Revelation, it may be helpful to deal with the nature of evil and exactly how it evolved through the years.

Evil is a concept which has a reality of its own. At the same time, evil is inherent in man as well as completely independent of man. Evil becomes evil when that which is good in its right place attempts to take a place for which it is not made.<sup>3</sup> More than anything, evil is an attitude and a disposition of the soul and mind. It consists of no materials of its own in the realm of evil objects, actions, or intentions. Evil stands against all that is good and delights in the destruction of good.<sup>4</sup> Evil is always a part of the soul and is structural in nature.

Humanity is not evil or can even act evil of its own volition. Evil exists as an innate element of the soul and can influence one's thoughts, feelings, and actions.<sup>5</sup>

Evil has an outstanding universal nature because there is no religion in the world that exists without its own demons and evil manifestations representing suffering, destruction, and misery in the path of goodness and truth.<sup>6</sup> It may be assumed that fear was a primary incentive to religious worship.<sup>7</sup> This fear relates significantly to humanity's desire to escape evil and undoubtedly was a primary motivation for worship.<sup>8</sup> Pain is also that which begins the thinking process of humanity and thus begets the consideration of life after death in preserving oneself beyond the grave. Carus, therefore, supports that without death as well as pain and sin as representatives of evil, there would be no religion and without sin there would be no virtue in a life of merit and goodness.<sup>9</sup> This concept leads into a further definition of the nature of evil and the necessity of the good versus evil theory.

The development of thought in the conception of the interactions between good and evil leans toward a principle of unity seen in the consistent as well as harmonious concept of monism. Yet, both monotheism and monodiabolism originated simultaneously based upon this monistic tendency and have come together to form a dualism which is very much accepted today.<sup>10</sup> This dualistic thought process prevailed among all peoples at its initial point of religious development and is commonly referred to as Animism.<sup>11</sup> This principle is coordinate with the principle of perfection as well as being opposed to it.<sup>12</sup> Without this opposition, God

would not be God, for God and Devil are relative terms and the existence of God would cease if there were no Devil.<sup>13</sup> The acceptance of the dualistic concept in Christianity is one of moderate proportions. The evil force is believed to oppose the work of Christ, but the power of evil is always controlled and held in check by God as a limitation on the Evil One.<sup>14</sup>

An important question to propose is whether or not evil is a true fact of existence in our experience of day to day life or an intrinsic purpose of the process of living.<sup>15</sup> Moral evil is that which arises in the world through perversion of God's good gifts to man's evil purposes.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, it would be safe to assume that evil is always a part of or an aspect of a futuristic becoming and more than just being.<sup>17</sup> The great problem that exists in posing that evil is a problem of fact and not a process of existence is that of escapism. Evil is not just a problem, but it is the totality of all the pain, suffering, injustice, frustration, and loss that we meet every day in our life pilgrimage. Coping with it, admitting to it, and living with it are all necessary functions in claiming ourselves a part of humanity.<sup>18</sup>

The final resultant in the nature of evil is that it separates us from that which is most high and most true. Because of the process of becoming, we are very limited in our right to a full and satisfying identification with the ultimate truth and the eternal goodness, which is God.<sup>19</sup>

The existence of evil as a problem of process is especially difficult in the monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The idea of justifying God's ways to man is referred to as Theodicy.<sup>20</sup> In these traditions, the question

circles around whether God is completely powerful and completely good, and/or does God permit the existence of evil. God is omniscient as well as omnipotent. He is perfectly good and has created the world, including all matter, energy, and spirit from nothing, but the world contains evil.<sup>21</sup> The idea of God's being all-good and all-powerful has been adopted by the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, but is a very difficult one demanding concordance of evil with the existence of good. Thus, no real simple solution exists for the question of Theodicy. Evil exists as a result of free will and human sin. God allows evil in order to achieve the greater good of freedom. This is the most prominent argument of Christian Theodicy.<sup>22</sup>

The Christian perspective on evil has come out of many different contributing influences and a discussion of these thought patterns will be very advantageous to a complete understanding of evil and its usage in Christian literature.

The Greek mind set has had much great philosophical and developmental influence on the Christian perspective of evil. The Greek roots of evil exist as parallels to the Promethean myths and center in on man's curiosity and desire to depart from nature and to attain the unattainable. It is not difficult to relate this theme to the serpent in the garden myth from Genesis. These forces not only bring man into a civilized existence, but are also the origins of all pain and misery.<sup>23</sup> The Ancient Greeks also dealt with a general fear of their gods and this fear was exclusive of love.<sup>24</sup> They held confidence, gratitude, and affection for their gods, but never love. The Greek mind took the responsibility of meeting the abundant evil in the world and explaining it. These explanations exist upon the



basis that man does evil when he thinks or aspires, consequently inducing envy of the gods toward this mortal who would dare to think and ambitiously strive to gain knowledge and power.<sup>25</sup>

Greek thought also exhibited some indecision between monism and dualism. This gave rise to different traditions as well as opposed points of view within the same tradition.<sup>26</sup> Christian thought was further influenced by the Greek conception of dualism which was the Orphic/Platonic opposition between spirit and matter. There is no doubt, however, that the Greek mind had great difficulty dealing with the crimes of the ignorant as much as undeserved suffering. They were the same perplexities that grew out of Christian philosophy and rendered the question of theodicy unanswerable.<sup>27</sup> Another problem that existed in the Greek mind was the connection made between the existence of moral evil and the nature of a very abstract metaphysical evil.<sup>28</sup>

A general overview of prominent Greek thought and attitudes is necessary, yet the differing factions with the Greek world and the early Hellenistic Christian society may also lend some valuable information and insight into the development of the Christian perspective.

One group who emerged by 70 A.D. held many interesting ideas about the origins and nature of evil. These people were referred to as the Ebionites. They followed Christ as a great prophet, but did not support his role as the Messiah or the Son of God. Uniquely, these people taught a dramatic ethical dualism in which God established two opponent beings, the Christ and the Devil.<sup>29</sup> The gnostics, who were regarded as a Christian heresy coming out of a radical Hellenization of Christianity continued to support a dramatic dualist alternative in the question of theodicy: God did not cause evil, but evil came from an independent, malevolent

concept.<sup>30</sup> The gnostics combined a view of a cosmic battle between the spiritual powers of good and evil with the struggle that existed between the spirit, which was good, and matter, which was evil. Therefore, the human body, being matter, was seen as a horrible place in which our clean souls had to exist in constant turmoil.<sup>31</sup> They tended to lean toward the idea that the entire created world was evil which often gave way to an identification of the God of the Old Testament with the Devil. Nonetheless, orthodox Christianity finding strong counterweight in the complete goodness of God and Gnosticism viewing the world as a totally evil creation continued the great theodicy problem.<sup>32</sup>

The different factions within Greek thought made many attempts to justify evil as well as explain its existence. The nature of the Stoic theodicy was one which proclaimed the existence of a divine providence, while justifying the occurrence of evil as a spur to improvement and greater moral goodness.<sup>33</sup> The Stoics saw evil as necessary and supportable in that it led to some type of virtuous betterment.<sup>34</sup>

Some followers of Plato maintained a perfection of the rational universe, yet there was an implied dualism which reached into the existence of material evil.<sup>35</sup> These Platonists saw demons which were beings that existed somewhere between the gods and the mortals. The demons were easily assimilable to the Judeo-Christian conception of angels. Yet, for the Platonist, the demon creatures contained a mixture of both good and evil dependent upon the irrational domination of their souls.<sup>36</sup> Plato was not clear, however, on the subject of evil. The concept of an ultimate goodness of reality and imperfection in matter always existed in conflict with the fact that evil was thought to have been ingrained into the very substance of being and that certain "evils" could pass away.<sup>37</sup>

The Epicurean thought pattern tended to totally dismiss the Platonic problem by accepting a complete materialism which was very antiteleological in nature. Pain and Pleasure simply existed as a part of the world, therefore, there could be no conflict of evil.<sup>38</sup>

As a final look toward the Greek philosophies, the Socratics were in strong support also of the evil of matter while preserving the infinite perfection, error, and all evil in the world.<sup>39</sup> Yet, the Socratics proposed a question as to whether matter itself was the real evil or just a medium through which evil made itself real, since physical disease and bodily contanimation were unable to conquer the soul.<sup>40</sup> A parallel question for the Christian could be, "Is the existence of evil in the sin or in the sinner?"

There also existed many church philosophers who pondered the idea of evil and its origins and effects on the future of the cosmos. One of the greatest Hellenistic, Jewish thinkers was Philo of Alexandria. He probably gave more influence to Christians than he did to the Rabbis. Philo equated the Greek demons with the angels of the Jews, but introduced another classification which he referred to as evil angels. These angels could very easily parallel the Judeo-Christian idea of the fallen angels.<sup>41</sup> Philo saw evil not as a part of existence, but as existence itself. Due to the fact that the soul must unite with the body, no human was ever liberated from this condition. Matter, once again, was the basis as well as the medium of evil.<sup>42</sup>

Justin Martyr exhibited much of the same thought and concern that was prominent amongst the second century Christians. He began to lean towards an inferiority of

the Devil to God and away from two totally, independent, cosmic powers as well as the struggle between spirit and flesh. In this sense, God was eternal; the Devil perished at God's desire and thus destroyed all evil.<sup>43</sup> Justin was able to come to these conclusions following Revelation by equating Satan of the Old Testament with the Genesis serpent as well as placing the evil personification in the role of the tempter of Adam and Eve, and of Jesus himself.<sup>44</sup>

Papias, who served as Bishop of Hierapolis in Asia followed the Jewish apocalyptic tradition that supported that God had given certain angels governing power over the earth and its nations. In early Christian thought, it was common for a person of a nation to assume that it had its own angel or angels. Papias argued that these angels had lost their authority through abuse, thus falling into the general category of "Fallen Angels" in which Satan was so traditionally accepted.<sup>45</sup>

Tatian, who was a disciple of Justin Martyr related the idea that the demons were identified with the pagan gods, claiming Zeus as their leader and drawing further equality with the Devil. It may have been for this reason that the despising of Greek and Roman worship structure was so very strong in the early Christian community.<sup>46</sup>

There were many other religious and philosophical influences other than the Greeks and the early church philosophers who contributed to the tradition. Many of the religious traditions which existed before the emergence of Christianity contributed in very significant ways to the view of evil and its purpose of meaning.

The basic structural idea of a world of demons which exhibited both good and bad originated in some of the early Mesopotamian civilizations and reached into Zoroastrianism.<sup>47</sup> The Zoroastrian mind set could not see good and evil coming from the same source. Ahura-Mazda was good and was opposed to the evil creation of Ahriman in moral combat.<sup>48</sup> This Zoroastrian tradition also saw an ultimate overcoming of evil by good in a world consumption in which all things would be made new and evil would cease to exist.<sup>49</sup> The theme which is contained in the Book of Revelation is very similar.

There also existed some primitive Canaanite religions who supported a particular angel who stood in opposition to men and brought them into disfavor with God. This idea combined the principle of evil and a recognized dualism with the restraints of a monotheistic theory which gave way to the idea of the Devil. This soon became a very popular perception held by many Jews and often was translated with a tinge of religious superstition. There is no doubt that many of these beliefs passed right into the ranks of the early Christians and the Christians of today.<sup>50</sup>

Within the nature of Babylonian origins, common ground may be assumed with the evil perceptions held by the Greeks and the Romans. Babylonian tradition held that evil origins were based upon man's denial of divine prohibition in seeking greater knowledge and consciousness. The Garden of Eden story undoubtedly found its kinship in Babylonian folklore which combined semitic and non-semitic races. Therefore, the initial stirring of an impulse toward civilization led to a common origin held by the Greeks as well.<sup>51</sup>

Of all the religious influences discussed to this point, it can be assumed that the effect of Jewish writings, Old Testament scriptures and the Hebrew concept of good and evil share the greatest commonality factor with the ideas supported within the Christian tradition of the early church. Christian dualism was one aspect of tradition that derived from Jewish dualism, uniquely found in Essene and apocalyptic thought. There was more of an emphasis on the moral dualism than the metaphysical, thus this struggle between good and evil existed in the human soul.<sup>52</sup> Yet, the non-apocalyptic and Jewish writings seemed to move in an opposite direction from Christian thought of the New Testament. The rabbinical teachings found in the Talmud rejected this dualistic tendency which was very common of the apocalyptic writers. Their insistence was on the unity of one totally good Lord and that sin resulted from a human misuse of free will. Commonly, the rabbis refused the idea of a personified evil being and tended to refer to the Devil as a symbol of evil with humanity.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the idea of dualism was very much contrary to the nature and spirit of the Old Testament and the Talmud.<sup>54</sup>

Hebrew thought gave significant power of explanation to God by attributing the occurrence of all things to God as the ultimate source. The Hebrew mind saw God as the source of good and evil and all things were sent justly and wisely. The contractual nature of the man-God relationship attributed evil to the disobedience and sin that was directed towards God.<sup>55</sup> This thought pattern also incorporated the union of religious fear and love of the divine and was a very high form of spirituality found in Christianity as well as Judaism.<sup>56</sup>

The evolution of evil thought patterns is essential to the purpose of understanding the nature of evil and exactly how man saw himself in relation to God and his society. Evil, nevertheless, has been used to motivate and enforce religious involvement, yet not in the literal sense. Symbolism was used throughout the Old and New Testaments as an instrumental means of relaying God's wishes for his world. Religious symbolism leads to a deeper and more accurate conception of the truth. Internalization of symbols always gives extreme significance to just mere statements of fact.<sup>57</sup> Often, a thought is more easily expressed through a symbol than through words alone.<sup>58</sup>

Symbols represented truth; they were not falsehoods. Allegories as well as parables brought clearer comprehension to those who were not ready to receive the plain truth though a statement of fact.<sup>59</sup> The Hebrew prophets were very active in using various symbolic means of drawing attention to and expressing their teachings to their congregations.<sup>60</sup> They used verbal imagery in the realm of things discussed to relay images of purpose.<sup>61</sup> In assuming that ancient man was very involved in the objectification of God, the Hebrew mind was very willing and able to give authority. The Greek mind did the same in fashioning an ideal of beauty around the goddess, Aphrodite.<sup>62</sup>

Evil, used in a symbolic, personified manner existed as one of the most widely used elements of religious understanding. Satan, traditionally viewed as a fallen angel had been burdened with the origin of all hurt, pain, and corruption in the world. Therefore, it is valid at this point to discuss the origins of the "Evil One" and to see how these origins related to the representation in the Book of Revelation.

Tradition holds to the fact that Satan was one of many fallen angels and was often identified with Sammael who was said to represent a prominent angel who was distinguished above the Seraphim and all creatures of the earth based upon the fact that he had twice as many wings (Ezekiel 1:5 and Rev. 4:6). Therefore, the idea of Satan and an army of angels was seen as a part of the apocalyptic literature and New Testament writings.<sup>63</sup> Satan was referred to repeatedly in the Synoptic Gospels, in the letters of Paul, and very often in the Revelation of St. John.

Eusebius supported that the Hebrew belief was that a whole race of demons came from these fallen angels and that all their doings were wicked.<sup>64</sup> An example of this type of belief is in the story of Beliar found in the apocalyptic literature of the "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs." At this time, the Hebrews continued to believe in an existence of many princes of evil, but Satan had the undeniable pre-eminence. Beliar was only an apocalyptic reference to Satan. Whether Beliar stands for the chief power of evil or a being operating through an Antichrist concept is unknown.<sup>65</sup> Tertullian further supported that this prince of darkness was good by creation and though the choice of free will became corrupt and was therefore cast down from heaven.<sup>66</sup>

The name of Satan has been identified to represent many facets of evil. There have been names to represent this evil power as well. Satan has been labeled as the ultimate source of all deception and that when this deception is contained, that he will be locked into the bottomless pit which begins the millenium.<sup>67</sup> He has also been referred to as the "opponent" and the chief of evil who despises human kind and thus draws them into sin and iniquity.<sup>68</sup> In



addition to the common names of Satan and The Devil, Beelzebub, the Evil One, the great dragon, the old serpent, the prince of the devils, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disbelief, and the Antichrist were all used to represent this primary source of no good.<sup>69</sup> These names were all used very interchangeably in the New Testament, yet in the Old Testament the name "Satan" which is a Hebrew word was always used with the article—the Satan, to represent simply "the adversary." The word "Diabolos" from which "Devil" was derived is the corresponding Greek form and the verb "diaballein" was often used to convey the idea of "defaming" or "to inform against." The noun form referred to "a calumniator" or a "slanderer."<sup>70</sup>

As can be readily assumed, there were many references given to Satan throughout the Old and New Testaments. Yet, the question of true significance is, "What was the Devil?"

The Devil was a basic personification of the concept of evil. Some traditions viewed his role as independent of God and others as a subordinate creature to God. In either framework, the devil was not a mere and limited spirit demon, but he was the direction and willing force of evil itself.<sup>71</sup> The major religious traditions have always referred to the Devil in masculine terms. In English as well as most other tongues, Satan was referred to as "he." Some faiths suggested many subsidiary female spirits, but the chief spirit was always of the masculine gender. There is no necessity in the Devil having a masculine classification in the realm of theology and today Christian theologians do not recognize any specific gender labeling for the Devil.<sup>72</sup>

Whether or not the Devil is a person is quite unimportant in the literal

sense, yet very unique in the teleological understanding of the Hebrew and the early Christian mind. The Jews referred to him as Satan the fiend, and the early Christians called him the Devil or the slanderer based upon the story of Job in which his accusations of man were falsely proclaimed.<sup>73</sup> The Devil as a person was first fully developed in the Book of Job even though the spiritual beings of Genesis 6: 1-2 represented the earliest myth of evil origins.<sup>74</sup> Justin clearly supported as well that the serpent in the Garden of Eden very naturally paralleled with a demonic power, and this led the original pair into disobedience to God. For this they were cast out of Paradise as Satan will be punished by an eternal fire for his deception.<sup>75</sup> The unique element to acknowledge was that Satan, in the Book of Job was not characteristically satanic at all. In the beginning, he represented himself before God as one "among the sons of God." He was an agent, not an accuser. He was a tempter, but only through God's permission. In this sense, he only carried out what had been deemed by God as necessary and seemed to take no additional enjoyment of the pain that was inflicted upon the suffering victims by his actions.<sup>76</sup> Old Testament philosophy believed that all suffering was deserved. This may have accounted for the downplay on the role of Satan because the Jewish theism did not comprehend undeserved suffering.<sup>77</sup> There was undoubtedly a very opposing view of the Satan character between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Testament presented Satan as the chief of evil and an arch enemy of both God and man.<sup>78</sup> Conversely, the Old Testament had the conception of Satan as an angel-minister carrying out and being apart of the eternal plan of God.<sup>79</sup>

To truly understand the differences that exist between the Old and New

Testaments, it is imperative to ponder the teachings of Jesus as well as his personal conception of evil and the role that He Himself was in as a divine messenger of God. Therefore, it can be assumed that Jesus used Satan as a personification of the evil powers to symbolize that which was wicked and immoral in his parables.<sup>80</sup> Yet, many scholars support that Jesus himself believed in a Satan who personally headed up the kingdom of evil. Jesus was limited in his knowledge (Mark 13:32) and in this sense it was believed that he gained information in the usual human manner. There were also indications, too, that supported that he shared the beliefs of his day.<sup>81</sup> The belief in Satan and Hell were very essential to the early Christians and Christ was believed to have battled with "the Evil One" immediately after his death.<sup>82</sup>

The concepts of personification were often used to further explain the language of Jesus. Thus, all the references to Satan need not be taken literally. In the case of Christ's Temptation in the wilderness, which implied a visible appearance of Satan; it could be accepted as only a reference to an internal spiritual conflict assuming Christ's humanity.<sup>83</sup> This was not to say that Jesus' Temptation was not real. This temptation was real in that the power of one's personal will could be contrary to God's will. "Not my will, but thy will" was a cry of agony and turmoil. Whether or not Christ ever denied or refused the will of God is beyond the grasp of any scholar.<sup>84</sup> Christ claimed to be tempted by all things, but remained without sin. He may have had a personal revelation that God alone was good, yet to second guess the consciousness of Christ is a futile attempt.<sup>85</sup>

There was also great significance and meaning in the Passion of Christ for this was the point of climax to which God had a proposed purpose in Jesus.<sup>86</sup> In

this event, Jesus was responsible for the great task of working out the salvation of the universe, and it all rested upon what he did; and what he did was to die for the sins of humanity.<sup>87</sup> Though Christianity defines that the Devil was a subordinate being to God, this was a cosmic struggle between the two. The Hebrew struggle between the Lord and the Devil becomes the Christian translation of a struggle between the Christ and the Antichrist. This often flowed into the idea of combat between the faithful church and the Devil.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, the culmination of the Passion of Christ was a very powerful event as the single creative factor of Christianity and a further reiteration of the theme of the Christian perception of evil.

Christ's Passion began with a temptation which in many ways resembled the temptation of the first Adam except that the Devil left with failure in the case of Christ. Jesus was condemned, sentenced, and executed by means of a cross, and in a sense the Devil had briefly won the battle, yet Christ's resurrection proved victorious for the war.<sup>89</sup> Such a miracle portrayed a further expression of a great eschatological drama in the works. This drama assured an ultimate victory of God over Satan and is the beginning point at which the kingdom of God broke in upon humanity.<sup>90</sup>

As one can assume at this point, an abundance of information was needed to bring into full view the nature of evil and exactly how it was perceived by the early church. The congregations of the early church era were instrumental in the role for writing the Book of Revelation. Understanding the concepts, ideas, and beliefs of that time will in many ways assist one in completely comprehending the nature of Revelation. Understanding the historical background may also lend

beneficial aid in grasping how and why the message of the apocalyptic document was relayed. Therefore, discerning a little bit about the nature of an apocalyptic writing will assuredly be of great help as an attempt is made to comprehend the symbolic nature of evil as seen in the Book of Revelation.

The Apocalypse genre was essentially a type of literary classification that came out of Judaism during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, (175-163 B.C.), a Seleucid Ruler. The word itself was derived from the Greek noun "apokalypsis" meaning "revelation."<sup>91</sup> This type of literature of revealing not only disclosed the past mind of God, but also the present mind of God. The themes of apocalyptic writings usually varied between the eight groups of motifs that follow: a dire expectation of a complete overthrow of earthly conditions; a tremendous cosmic catastrophe; a relationship between history and the end of the world; spirits of goodness and spirits of evil; cosmic destruction followed by redemption; God's enthronement and the coming of his kingdom; the coming of the mediator; and the magnificence of the coming age.<sup>92</sup> Most writings of this sort occurred during periods of great political, social, religious, and economic conflict and were purposefully written to reinforce the faithful during their affliction.<sup>93</sup> Often it was assumed that the true meaning of an apocalypse would only be made known at the birth of the New Age. Jewish apocalypses such as Daniel were proclaimed to encourage steadfast endurance of a Jew during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. For the most part, subsequent Jewish apocalypses were inspired by Roman oppression.<sup>94</sup> As time went on, Christians began to produce their own apocalyptic writings, yet the style and presentation were very similar to that of the Jewish type.<sup>95</sup> An example of likeness of symbolism can be seen in the

Book of Jubilees. The story was about Mastema, who supposedly opposed Moses and brought him to Pharaoh's feet. Yet, when the Exodus occurred, Mastema was bound and imprisoned. He was captured again, and then let go subsequently. The binding and loosing of evil demons was very characteristic of the apocalyptic genre and gave some insight into Revelation, a book of the same class of literature.<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, the writer of Revelation borrowed freely from Daniel, and this was the main source for his usage of symbolism and imagery.<sup>97</sup>

Having defined the book of Revelation as an apocalyptic document, it is essential to "unveil" the meaning and purpose behind St. John's Revelation and to define the role of the apocalypticist/prophet.

Revelation as a noun referred to God making himself both present and known as God. It was a display of God's nature which was often hidden by God due to the nature of His being.<sup>98</sup> In the case of John's revelation, its purpose was to instill constant and never-ending faith among the Christians of that day so that they could refuse the paganism of the cult of the Roman Emperor.<sup>99</sup> Even in the disaster scenes which were quite effective in their usage of violence, the fact remains that Revelation was written to uphold the faithful and not to send screaming pagans into a life of repentance and newly accepted Christianity.<sup>100</sup> Faith in God was a central theme against the Roman cult who represented the evil forces of the Antichrist.<sup>101</sup> Undoubtedly, John's purpose came across very effectively through his picturesque use of language and imagery.<sup>102</sup> John's revelation was a work of God in the sense that everything except sin was a work of God.<sup>103</sup> It would be beneficial to note also that a personal revelation was always colored by individual personalities and experiences, thus John's vision should be viewed in the same light.<sup>104</sup>

According to John, there was no individual, personally redemptive process. Instead, society as a whole would become new and a common interest in God would be the ultimate goal for existence. "It is a city designed in heaven, but established on earth (Rev 21:10).<sup>105</sup> Therefore, the final objective of salvation was in the creation of a new society where righteousness and peace were totally supreme.<sup>106</sup>

It is important to recognize that all New Testament apocalyptists were prophets in the nature of their vocational call.<sup>107</sup> John preferred to call his book a prophecy and to think of himself as a prophet (Rev 1:3, 10:11, 22:6-19). In this sense, John saw himself as a prophet.<sup>108</sup> His call was not just to announce the will of the divine, but to intervene between God and human sinfulness.<sup>109</sup> Yet, to this involvement there was a theme of hope, not just condemnation and judgment. There was confidence that God would become a part of world history and complete his redemptive purpose of world salvation.<sup>110</sup> God himself was thought to have been in control of the situation, even during the darkness of persecution.<sup>111</sup> This idea of hope in the Book of Revelation and its components of Christianity cannot be denied or misinterpreted.<sup>112</sup>

With a basic understanding of the nature of evil and some investigation into the origins of particular religious perspectives pertaining to the beliefs commonly held by most of the early Christians, a closer evaluation of the actual symbols in Revelation which depict the writer's usage of evil in some way, shape, or form can be undertaken. Twenty-three concepts of significant symbolic representation will be discussed as an evident example of the early Christian apocalyptic literature and its symbolic usage of evil as a device of meaning and purpose. The symbols will be grouped according to the type of symbols used and a general outline of the nature and purpose of evil within the Book of Revelation, and the

origins of these evil concepts will be investigated for each character denoting an evil importance.

The Old Testament was full of numerous associations of darkness with the Wrath of God as a metaphorical signal of the Day of the Lord. Contrasting the darkness of the Judgment Day with the light that often accompanied the description of salvation for the faithful was very common in Old Testament literature (Amos 8:9).<sup>113</sup> Traditionally, the presense of darkness represented tragedy in contrast to "the light of the world." Further evidence of this usage of darkness can be found in the Synoptic Gospels, especially at the death of Jesus and at Judas Iscariot's betrayal. Other references which utilized the concept of darkness can be found in Isaiah 90, 45, and 49.<sup>114</sup>

It is important to note that the first Christian literature which referred to darkness/blackness was within "The Epistle of Barnabas." The distinction was very clear between light and darkness. This relationship between evil, darkness, and blackness undoubtedly occurred in this epistle. Nonetheless, the sources for the "black" or "blackness" terms used in the literature found their origins in Jewish, Greek, and Ebionite writings.<sup>115</sup> Black was also used in the Book of Revelation to denote the hue of the horses. The concept of black was evident in the black horse which represented horrible days of famine and a scarcity of food. Thus, the relationship of blackness once again paralleled the presense of evil in the unfolding of the apocalyptic story (Rev 6:5).

Another symbol of gigantic proportions was the symbolic meaning and significance of the usage of Death and Hades. Death represented such a tremendous theme based upon its pertinent, universal application to all humanity. In



this sense, Death and Hades served as symbols of bondage and futitility for all humanity. These symbols of restraint and miserable captivity existed as long as the first heaven and earth existed.<sup>116</sup> The Greek word, thantos, which is translated as Death may also mean pestilence (Rev 2:23 18:8), and the pale horse which is accompanied by Hades who naturally served as a companion for the personified Death. This symbol served both as a symbol of pestilence and death representing a climax of all four plagues, thus implying a double meaning.<sup>117</sup> Death was a weapon used by Satan in the realm of deception. This death was a death of the soul and occurred when humankind sinned against the truth of God.<sup>118</sup> The reference in Revelation was that of a second death in which sinners were prohibited to share in the rewards of the resurrection or the New Jerusalem due to their faithfulness.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, the Just would enjoy the fruits of an eternal life as the Wicked took part in a perpetual death. Those who enlisted in the ranks of the Devil thus ended life as a first stage of a continued death process which was referred to as "the second death" in St. John's Revelation (Rev 21:4).

Christ had a use and purpose for Death and made his most momentous statement through giving His own life to Death, and securing humanity's redemption through His sacrifice.<sup>120</sup> He used death as an ultimate weapon against Satan and his deceit in order to show the power of a vicarious, redeeming love.<sup>121</sup> Thus, the resurrection of Jesus Christ served as a tremendous attack on the constant existence of evil through Death as well as the principal basis for the development of the Christian faith structure.

In the Book of Revelation, Death and Hades were classified as the final enemies of God and an essential component of the first heaven and earth. Death

itself ceased to exist, and the prison of Hades yielded up all the faithful which it held captive as the new earth unfolded.<sup>122</sup> Ultimately, Death and Hades were destined to be sent into the lake of fire with the monster, the false prophet, and Satan (Rev 20:14). The early Christian community believed that these messengers of evil existed only with God's permission and not as obedient angels carrying out God's retribution.<sup>123</sup> Nonetheless, Hades was the universal grave which men entered by burial and whose final destruction would open up all passages for the establishment of an eternal reign of God.<sup>124</sup> Mostly, the author of Revelation may have wanted to emphasize his concern that Death was an inevitable part of the vocation of the Church and that this vocation was truly fulfilled only with the death of Death.<sup>125</sup>

The writer of Revelation was known to incorporate natural phenomena in his presentation of the message. A common symbol used was the symbol of an earthquake. The symbol of the earthquake was one phenomenon used as a sign of the Day of Wrath which was drawing near.<sup>126</sup> The cosmic earthquake undoubtedly was one of the most prominent features in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition.<sup>127</sup> Thus, in John's Revelation, the earthquake was a symbol of the defeat and overthrow of human haughtiness which built corrupt political and economic systems, and therefore, stood in opposition to the righteousness of God.<sup>128</sup> This usage of the earthquake symbol stood for the overturn of a worldly, political power destined to organize itself against God.<sup>129</sup> In this case, the reference is that of Rome, the Second Babylon (Rev 18:2).

John also used present natural references to emphasize the desperate nature of his message. By utilizing historical sites as well as traditions, John was

able to enforce further the authenticity of his revelation. The Euphrates River symbol was a prime example of this link to the area and the historical past. It was by the Euphrates River that the Parthian hordes were expected to come under the rule and leadership of the Antichrist.<sup>130</sup> This threat of invading armies from beyond the Euphrates was an element of guaranteed apprehension for both the Roman and the Jew alike. For the Roman, the Euphrates existed as a frontier of the East, but for the Jew, it was the northern frontier of Palestine by which the kingdoms of Persia, Assyria, and Babylon would come to enforce their pagan beliefs on the faithful of God. The numerous references of a foe from the north give great evidence for John's usage of the same symbol and theme in his revelation.<sup>131</sup> The author kept the tradition alive in Revelation and used its long time standing for the benefit of the message's purpose.

Fire was also used as a common emblem of divine power in the realm of another great natural phenomenon.<sup>132</sup> This phenomenon, nevertheless, was thought of as the most destructive agent known to humanity, and it was very easy for the Jewish mind to consider that the ending of evil in God's world would be conceived as being destroyed by fire (Isaiah 50:1, 66:24, and Malachi 3:2). The final destruction of evil was justifiably following in the basic apocalyptic tradition.<sup>133</sup> It may be helpful to note that John was not being literal with his reference to "fire and brimstone." John probably did not support an idea of an eternal torment in the sense of a community on earth, but that those who remained indifferent and defiant to God's love and grace would be overthrown, along with Death and Hades, into the lake of fire which represented the Second Death (Rev 20:14).<sup>134</sup> Thus, the symbol of fire had been quite evident in Jewish literature and made itself present in the Christian writings of the Book of Revelation.

Two additional signs of divine judgment, either on the faithful of God or on God's enemies can be found in the Old Testament references to the harvest and the vintage (Rev 14:15 and Rev 14:20). The two symbols were different conceptualizations of the same theme in that the harvester angels as well as the vintager angels held the same purpose of gathering in the elect.<sup>135</sup> The symbol of the winepress which existed in the vintage reference pointed to God's final judgment and remained quite parallel with the other symbols of the vision itself (Rev 16:19, 17:2 18:3). Assuming that the winepress was a symbol for punishment, it may also have been a place where the grapes were transformed into wine. Therefore, the real punishment of Babylon (Rome) came upon the actual drinking of the cup of God's Wrath making the winepress a place in which God's Wrath was prepared (Rev 14: 14-20).<sup>136</sup> A further reference to the winepress found in Rev 19: 15-19 may also have represented the means by which God's Wrath was produced and not just a symbol for punishment in itself.<sup>137</sup> In the same manner, the symbol of the sickle served to indicate the nearness of the Day of Judgment. The mowing down of the nations represented an instrument of punishment which was no less effective than that of the vintager.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, the winepress and the sickle exhibited a sense of judgment in the form of the Wrath of God upon those unfaithful to Him and those obedient to the evils of Satan.

The thousand year period referred to as the millenium was basically the non-literal idea of a long time which was yet to be endured before the final conflict.<sup>139</sup> It had been concluded that the thousand year period (or long time) as found in 2 Enoch was a residual of the traditional Jewish expectation of an eternal messianic kingdom upon the present earth.<sup>140</sup> The thousand years messianic reign probably came

from the Zoroastrian belief that Saoshyant would reign for a thousand years during the last millenium of history.<sup>141</sup> The idea of the millenium symbol was probably presented to encourage the martyr-church, and not as a literal timed vision to be set in the context of a calendar of the future.<sup>142</sup>

The beginning of this period was introduced by the rider of a white horse who relayed a prophetic message of Satan's defeat by all those faithful who gave assistance in the "first resurrection."<sup>143</sup> The culmination of this "long period" was described as Satan was released from the bottomless pit. At this point, Satan became the deceiver and gathered to himself the nations of Gog and Magog who joined for a final encounter against the saints (Rev 20:7-10). The symbolic unity between the first victory and the ultimate victory gave a picturesque role to the millenium as a connective factor. Thus, the final victory occurred when the evil trinity (false prophet, beast, and great serpent) were cast into the lake of fire. This banishment into the pit of fire was not only addressing the evil trinity, but all the historical enemies, as well, who stood in defiance to God and his power.<sup>144</sup> At this point, an investigation into the background behind the cities of Gog and Magog and the nature of the bottomless pit or abyss may be useful.

According to the author of Revelation, the end of the thousand years shall be met with the loosening of Satan out of the abyss. "Gog" and "Magog," who symbolize the worlds which were hostile to Israel were very common in the apocalyptic writings.<sup>145</sup> The symbolic nations were therefore nations deceived by the loosened Satan (Rev 20:8). This myth emphasized the resilient nature of evil and that the depth of evil powers could often call forth reinforcements from beyond man's knowledge or control.<sup>146</sup>

Why the author believed in the reoccurrence of evil can be answered only as

a fulfillment to an event prophesized in Ezekiel 38-39. In this case, the prophesy was needed to be fulfilled, yet the origins of source for Ezekiel cannot be definitely known. Magog is referred to in the genealogy of Noah (Genesis 10:2). John, nonetheless, has paired the two nations and created a symbol which is also found in the Sibylline Oracles (3:512) and in the Talmud as representations of revolutionary nations against God.<sup>147</sup> This theme also referred back to Armageddon as well.<sup>148</sup> Thus the writer placed the Gog/Magog myth as a fulfillment of previous prophetic statements giving reference to an enemy from the north.<sup>149</sup> These symbols made their appearance following the kingdom of the Messiah.<sup>150</sup> This myth was also used at two other points in his story (Rev 19:11-12, Rev 20:7-9). These references also give further evidence of evil hordes of battle coming from beyond the Euphrates River.<sup>151</sup>

The end of the millenium was accompanied by the surging forth of the mythological nations of evil, but also by the loosening of Satan from the pit that is bottomless. This symbol existed as the place in which the beast was locked until the resurrection day.<sup>152</sup> This abyss, presented the total power and strength of evil to which all humanity contributed and from which all humanity could never escape.<sup>153</sup> Understanding the nature of the abyss requires a look back to the creation myth.

Based upon this view of the beginning, God controlled the ocean monster of chaos (Tiamat or Leviathan or Rahab), and from the two halves of its physical being, created the heavens and the earth.<sup>154</sup> Presumably, the "sea" in the sense of the underworld in which the chaos monster represented evil, was the haven for evil and for this reason the sea could not be a part of the new cosmos in Revelation. Therefore, the reference to the sea gave the abyss its evil nature and thus no place in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:1).

There are many references made to institutions of a religious, social, or political nature that the writer weaved into his scheme of evil manifestations. An example of this type of approach is seen in the reference given to the Synagogue of Satan in Revelation 2:9. This was evidently made in reference to the persecution from the Jews. The author categorized a true Jew in the sense that he accepted and believed in Christ. For these Jews who did not, the writer saw the Devil at work in their actions and referred to their unity in the "Synagogue of Satan."<sup>155</sup> Based upon their slanderous attempts against the Christian, they gave up all rights to be called a Jew and had therefore formed Satan's Synagogue in the eyes of the author.<sup>156</sup> This was not a synagogue of location, but a non-literal reference to Jews everywhere who had assisted the Roman cults as well as initiated their own persecution against the Christians.<sup>157</sup>

Another place of a political nature in which the writer found manifestations of evil was in the Roman Emperor Cult itself. The reference to "The Devil" is found many times and is a prepresentation of an incarnated evil power in the world.<sup>158</sup> Not only was the Roman military an evident aspect of the "Evil One," but the whole Roman Empire was referred to as a part of the Devil's Kingdom.<sup>159</sup> A strong link was made, nonetheless, with a place which was described as the place "where Satan's throne is." This was also the place where "Satan Dwelleth." This could be an allusion to Pergamum as the center of Asia Minor and its serpent worship.<sup>160</sup> Due to the fact that the first imperial cult was built at Pergamum in honor of Rome and Augustus, this might lead one to assume that John spoke of Pergamum as the place where Satan's throne resided. The writer saw in the Roman city not only a religious totalitarianistic demand, but an evil worldliness and paganism which came to be so clear in the religious monuments at Pergamum.<sup>161</sup> Thus, Satan's

throne gave much evidence as being the seat of the Roman Emperor and implied great evil in practice, but this type of evil which the author referred to existed elsewhere in the Empire.<sup>162</sup>

The basic reference to Babylon as a symbol for Rome finds its source in many Old Testament writings. Babylon epitomized all great, tyrannical empires and the writer took this ancient city and equated it to the "New Babylon" which was Rome.<sup>163</sup> It is quite evident that Babylon served as a symbol for Rome.<sup>164</sup>

This reference could also be thought of as a sinful, second Babylon with evidences of its evil nature found in Revelation 14:8, 16:19 and 2:21.

The second Babylon, Rome, stood as an obstacle of seduction through which the cup of salvation was unable to be taken. John utilized the Old Testament themes from Isaiah 21:8-9, Jeremiah 51:6-10, and Isaiah 51:21-23 in their original purpose by which the defeat of Babylon must come before the rewards of salvation.<sup>165</sup>

An additional inference can be drawn between the Great Harlot and the evil of Babylon. The Great Harlot/Whore represented cities far from worshipping the Lord and were related to Babylon which was Rome in this sense.<sup>166</sup>

Among the churches to which the author wrote, the first three were known to have housed temples honoring the goddess Roma. There may have existed an intention of the writer to expose this greatly honored and dignified figure as the Great Harlot/Whore. He equated this goddess with Mother Goddess, the Magna Mater who was worshipped universally throughout the ancient world. This relationship to the Great Harlot/Whore further expressed the Old Testament aversion against fornication, whether it be literal or metaphorical.<sup>167</sup> The symbol of the Great Harlot/Whore was used by the writer to designate the great depth of evil which abided in the unholy city and seduced the nations into worship of the ungodly (Rev17: 1-



This is an example of a direct usage of sexual symbolism implying very negative evaluations.<sup>168</sup> Undoubtedly, this type of symbolic representation has furthered the misinterpretation of the scriptures when involving the role of women.

One of the most intriguing and controversial symbols in the Revelation of St. John is the numerical value and symbolic significance behind the numeral six hundred and sixty-six. This number stood to represent the beast being worshipped, and in this case, it may have been Nero.<sup>169</sup> There was a common belief accepted that Nero, though dead, would come to life again and lead a Parthian army from the north to conquer the empire (Sybilline Oracles 5:361-67, 4:119-27, and 137-139).<sup>170</sup> Based upon the true apocalyptic nature of Revelation, the usage of a number rather than a name gave the reader a feeling of mystery and cryptic significance. If the name of the actual person had been used, it may have placed the faithful Christians into more situations of severe persecution by the followers of the Antichrist.<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, whatever name that may have stood behind John's usage of six hundred and sixty-six, he would not have employed the practice of gematria unless the number 666 had other underlying factors of significance.

The number 666 consistently made a statement of less than perfection as it fell short of the number seven which was commonly thought to represent completeness and wholeness of purpose. This number was a familiar element denoting divine perfection.<sup>172</sup> This number also represented the fractional two-thirds of a thousand, with one third of the evil kingdom having already been consumed by the plagues of the trumpet.<sup>173</sup> Mostly, this was a triangular number which denoted an evil, sinister contrast to the numbers of the martyrs and the heavenly city which were always square numbers (Rev 8:4 and 21:16). Thus, the prophet emphatically would

have applied this number to any Roman Emperor who claimed a divine nature and the desire to be worshipped.<sup>174</sup> The real meaning behind the number 666 may have been lost in the big push to label it with a name. Its significance stood only in the nature of its evil implications, and that whoever it represented was one who went against the will of God.

Both the name of Satan and the Devil were used interchangeably throughout the New Testament scripture. Yet, there was much of Satan's character that came from the Old Testament references. The Satan of the Old Testament had a character somewhat of a "second god" similar to that found in Persian theology. In the scriptures, he was thought of as an agent of God and indeed even a "son of God."<sup>175</sup> On the other hand, the idea of Satan in the New Testament as the fallen star took on an almost dualistic nature. The Lucifer-star image presented to the reader a manifestation of the Son of God; yet as a fallen star, he was categorized as the disobedient originator of all evil. The role changes again as one looks at 2 Peter 1:9 in which he was portrayed as a rising star who humbly and obediently brought salvation as a part of God's plan. This dualism presented two very different images of the "two sons of God"; one introduced calamity and darkness while the other proclaimed salvation and grace.<sup>176</sup> In Revelation, however, Lucifer had become evil and satanic and was referred to as Wormwood or Absinthe (Rev 8:10 and Rev 9:1). The name Wormwood found its source in Jeremiah, but the falling star image went back to an old myth about how Heylel, the morning star, attempted to climb the walls of the Gods in order to make himself the ruler of heaven. Unfortunately, he found himself only to be forced from the sky by the rising sun. In Isaiah 14:12-20, this story was historically applied.<sup>177</sup> Nonetheless, the Roman Emperor was regarded by the writer as the incarnation of

Satan and had been allowed for a limited time as a pagan government to rule over the world.<sup>178</sup>

The final symbols of interest are those of the Dragon/Serpent and the beasts of the earth and sea. The idea of a great foe of God in the form of a dragon was not unique to Revelation. Psalms 74:13 and Ezekiel 29:3 portrayed the great enemy of God in the shape of a Dragon or Serpent. This was a very ancient tradition and later Jewish writings evidenced the continuation of this idea. In the "Apocalypse of Abraham," Azazel, which means Satan, was portrayed as a dragon who devoured the wicked. This is a prime example of this type of myth.<sup>179</sup>

The first identification of the Dragon/Serpent with Satan/Devil was found in Revelation 12:9. "The Great Dragon was cast down, the Old Serpent, he that, is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world." This passage demonstrated the combining of several different myths. The Dragon was related to the chaos monster of the deep (Tiamat-Leviathan-Rahab) in Genesis 1, while the serpent found its connection to the tempter in Genesis 3.<sup>180</sup> The Dragon was also identified with another mythological creature name Lotan. This creature was an ocean dragon found in a Canaanite story of creation.<sup>181</sup> Further reference is made to a "great red dragon" (Rev 7:3) who was expressly equated with the Satan character (verse 9). The dragon was identified with the Old Serpent and with the Devil and Satan from Genesis 3.<sup>182</sup> It has been suggested that the red color of the dragon was extracted from the "ranging" or "red" serpent which was set up in the temple honoring Marduk Esagil. The idea of the seven heads probably originated from the same source. The reference made to the Dragon having ten horns assuredly came from Daniel 7:24. It should be emphasized

that the Book of Daniel was the model from which most apocalyptists extracted symbolic information and with respect to the dragon image, this was so.<sup>183</sup> Thus, in general, the references to the Dragon were developed to equate this serpent with the Devil. The Dragon/Serpent was also the source of power from which the beast received its authority.<sup>184</sup>

The first apocalyptic beast was evidenced by a painting recently discovered as one of some palaeolithic cave-pictures at Lascaux. This "apocalyptic" creature was painted at least 10,000 years ago or possibly longer.<sup>185</sup> Thus, the apocalyptic usage of the beast had some history before its presentation in Revelation. For the apocalyptist, it was not uncommon for them to use these beasts in order to symbolize evil political forces such as emperors and empires.<sup>186</sup>

The first beast to be mentioned was the beast that arose up out of the sea. Initially, the sea was a place of evil and danger in which many lives were lost; thus, its connotation to the beast can be interpreted as nothing else but evil.<sup>187</sup> In Isaiah 51:9, the dragon and the ocean were overcome by Yahweh at the time of the Exodus. There is undoubtedly a connection between this ancient conception and the beast to come up out of the sea (Rev 13:1).<sup>188</sup> The author owed his source of the beast from the sea probably to Daniel 2:3, with a few modifications. Daniel used four beasts, but John seemed to have adapted them to fit his historical situation.<sup>189</sup> Additional passages which referred to the destruction of a sea-monster linked the redemption of Israel with control of the sea gained at the Exodus. The passages can be found in Isaiah 51 and Psalms 89.<sup>190</sup> There were many other creation myths that existed in the Near East which could have been available to the Hebrew writers. In Egyptian, Sumerian, and Babylonian sources there were similar references to a destruction of a monster of the deep.<sup>191</sup> It

seemed justifiable that a Mesopotamian New Year Festival contained a ritual defeat of an evil chaos-monster from the sea which preceded the creation of a new and ordered cosmos. Psalms 74:12-14 gives possible repercussions of this ritual enactment.<sup>192</sup>

In Revelation, the sea beast had a purpose. This objective involved the persuading of the faithful saints to worship both him and the dragon.<sup>193</sup> Yet, most scholars support that the sea beast represented the whole of the power of the Roman Empire and not just one emperor. This sea beast, nonetheless, has had a long history. A special insight into the nature of this sea beast was that the rising from the sea was not an even, but a natural part of its character. The beast of the sea, thus was a myth which demonstrated an inevitable problem in the political power which men obtained in a lifetime.<sup>194</sup>

The second beast referred to in Chapter 13 was the earth beast. This beast was masked in innocence, but represented evil in its worst form.<sup>195</sup> This beast has been held to symbolize the double role of civil and religious administration in the province of Asia as well as the heathen priesthood of the imperial cult.<sup>196</sup> References have also led to the belief that the earth beast represented the hostile Jews of the synagogue or the "false" Christian prophets who advised the churches to accept the idolatrous commands of the Emperor cult and its empire.<sup>197</sup> Whichever view is accepted, the main emphasis is that the author traced the power of this earth beast to the dragon; that is, to Satan.

The religious philosophy of history exists between the birth of the Savior and the Day of Judgment when the Messiah returns. Within this time frame, the Devil acts as a part of history attempting to add as many souls as possible to his

following.<sup>198</sup> This time also involves God and the Devil combating each other for the possession of these souls.<sup>199</sup>

The Book of Revelation dealt in connecting these events of religious history to each other in presenting an apocalyptic plan for the faithful in obedience to God. This plan not only involved the interaction of good and evil forces, but it required the free will of individuals to be executed. Violence, both human and divine were a part of the apocalyptic writing of Revelation and were antecedent to the establishment of the new cosmos.<sup>200</sup>

The nature of suffering was also sacred to the writer. The author felt that only through the suffering of the saints that they would gain a unique likeness to the sacrifice of Christ and his redemptive work as the first martyr.<sup>201</sup> The saints suffered in Revelation because they were saints.<sup>202</sup> Thus, the closing of the New Testament canon with St. John's Revelation was fitting in the sense of the happiness that awaited the saints who endured the suffering to the end for the cause of righteousness.<sup>203</sup>

The word "almighty" was found only in the Book of Revelation and nowhere else in the New Testament. This usage of "almighty" referred to the power of God which was a sovereign power on par with no other (Rev 11:15 and 12:16). God was totally sovereign, but not fully revealed until the present age was replaced by the coming age. This was the reasoning behind the various times that the word "almighty" was found in the Book of Revelation.<sup>204</sup>

With great confidence, the role of evil most assuredly played a major part in the objective that the writer of Revelation set forth in his letters. The revelation was recorded in order to call an oppressed people into union and obedience with their God. St. John stopped at nothing to communicate his message and its

importance in the age of such messianic expectations. Understanding the nature of evil and the fashion in which the author utilized the power in imagery and suggestion of evil, is a great step towards knowing the motivations of humanity and God's reponse to their actions.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>4</sup>Ibid. p. 13.
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- <sup>6</sup>Paul Carus, The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day (Open Court Publishing Company, LaSalle, 1974), p. 440.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid. p. 6.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid. p. 14.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid. p. 439.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid. p. 1.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid. p. 1.
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- <sup>13</sup>Carus, The History, p. 482.
- <sup>14</sup>Jefferey Burton Russell, Satan: The Early Christian Tradition, (Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 32.
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- <sup>16</sup>Edmund F. Sutcliffe, Providence and Suffering in the Old and New Testaments (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.: London, 1953), p. 127.
- <sup>17</sup>Ferré, Evil and The, p. 8.
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- <sup>19</sup>Ferre, Evil and The, p. 1.
- <sup>20</sup>Russell, Satan: The Early, p. 16.
- <sup>21</sup>IBID, p. 17.
- <sup>22</sup>IBID, p. 17.
- <sup>23</sup>Tsanoff, The Nature, p. 12.
- <sup>24</sup>Anshen, The Reality of, p. 78.
- <sup>25</sup>Tsanoff, The Nature, p. 11.
- <sup>26</sup>IBID, p. 19.
- <sup>27</sup>IBID, p. 13.
- <sup>28</sup>IBID, p. 27.
- <sup>29</sup>Russell, Satan: The Early, p. 48.
- <sup>30</sup>IBID, p. 52.
- <sup>31</sup>IBID, p. 54.
- <sup>32</sup>IBID, p. 55.
- <sup>33</sup>Tsanoff, The Nature, p. 19.
- <sup>34</sup>IBID, p. 16.
- <sup>35</sup>IBID, p. 16.
- <sup>36</sup>Russell, Satan: The Early, p. 48.
- <sup>37</sup>Tsanoff, The Nature, p. 19.
- <sup>38</sup>IBID, p. 20.
- <sup>39</sup>IBID, p. 14.
- <sup>40</sup>IBID, p. 15.
- <sup>41</sup>Russell, Satan: The Early, p. 49.
- <sup>42</sup>Tsanoff, The Nature, p. 20.
- <sup>43</sup>Russell, Satan: The Early, p. 72.
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