

The Dragon and the Beasts in Rev 12:1–13:18: Their Significance for the Contemporary World¹

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1. Introduction: Background of the Study

I was inspired to choose this topic because of the series of reports I came across from the BBC World Service News. I encountered the first report.

On the 6th of December 2016, the BBC News reported the arrest in Egypt of a human organ trafficking ring. These organs were to be sold in the black market and were destined for use in organ transplants. The ring consisted of doctors, nurses and professors suspected of involvement in an international organ trafficking ring. At least 25 people were arrested: among them were organ buyers and middlemen.²

In 2012, the then UN refugee agency chief, Antonio Gutierrez, disclosed an astonishing report that certain individuals or groups were killing some migrants from Egypt's Sinai Peninsula in order to buy and sell their organs. Indeed, migrants who could not pay the extortionate costs to travel illegally from Africa to Europe were often sold to the organ mafia or snapped up by Egyptian gangs who make vast sums of money from extracting people's innards.³ Even some citizens in the Middle East countries who could not pay their

¹ Paul Mosha was the 1st place winner in an essay contest that focused on the history of the Catholic Church in Tanzania.

² Cf. BBC, "Egypt arrests Organ trafficking Ring", *BBC News* (16 Dec 2016) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-38224836>, [accessed 10 Oct 2017].

³ Cf. BBC, "Egypt arrests Organ trafficking Ring".

debts were forced to sell some of their organs to traffickers to make up for their debts.

One Syrian man by the name of Abu Jaafar went to the extent of exploiting exhausted Syrian refugees. His job was to find people, mostly refugees, desperate enough to give up some parts of their body for money. Once he found willing candidates, he drove them blindfolded to a hidden location where there was a team of doctors who operated in rented houses transformed into clinics. The organs were later traded in the black market. Abu said that in the black market, they usually would ask for kidneys; but they once asked for an eye and were able to find a client willing to sell his eye.⁴

An Islamic State terrorist group was believed to involve itself in human organ trafficking to fund terror across the Middle East. It was revealed on 19th December 2014 that the group was recruiting foreign doctors to harvest internal organs from the bodies of their living hostages, including children snatched from minority communities in Iraq and Syria. The foreign doctors harvested some of the organs from injured people who were abandoned. This terror organization even set up a specialist organ-smuggling division whose sole responsibility was to sell human hearts, livers and kidneys through the lucrative international black market in order to raise funds to the tune of two million dollars in order to meet the annual costs of their terrorist activities across the Middle East. The organs were transported through networks who were specializing in human organ traffic.⁵ These networks smuggled the organs out of Syria and Iraq into neighbouring countries such as Saudi Arabia

⁴ Cf. A. FORSYTH, "Meeting and Organ Trafficker who preys on Human Organs", *BBC News* (25 Apr 2017) <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-39272511>, [accessed 15 Oct 2017].

⁵ Cf. M. BLAKE, "Blood money: How ISIS is selling human organs harvested from living hostages and its own dead soldiers to fund terror across the Middle East", *Mail online News* (19 Dec 2014), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2880815/Blood-money-ISIS-selling-human-organs-harvested-living-hostages-dead-soldiers-fund-terror-Middle-East.html>, [accessed 15 Oct 2017]. In the same report, it was noted that some corruptible funeral home directors forge death certificates and consent forms before the human remains are disposed of. They steal the organs from such bodies. Even some crooked doctors have gone to the extent of stealing some organs from some of their patients.

and Turkey where criminal gangs were selling them to shady buyers from across the globe. This kind of network normally consisted of economically and militarily powerful people. Some had infiltrated the political system to secure the doctors, politicians and police to protect their trade.⁶ Those who appeared to threaten their business were immediately disabled.⁷

Shocked by these news reports, I started to question myself: Why is all this happening? Who is behind all this evil? Is it possible that in the future, these evil businesses will continue to be tolerated and so be able to establish themselves as socially acceptable systems in the same manner as the slave trade was tolerated from the 15th to the 19th centuries?

With these questions in mind, I chose to use my time of meditation for focusing on the book of Revelation, especially chapters 12 and 13. I came to realize that the Dragon is still working, inciting the beasts to propagate evil in the world. The Dragon is still energizing some people to the end of overthrowing Christ's rule on earth, especially His golden rule concerning love and care for each human being as a sister and brother. The Dragon in Revelation 12 stands for any system of evil power. The two beasts are symbols that stand for any regime, movement, institution, political ruler, economic overlord, or website generator that support and give impulse to evil. What we observe from the two chapters is that the Devil always operates behind the scene, in disguise, investing people with great power either economic, social, political or military making them propagators of evil and hence pulling them away from loyal service to Christ.⁸

In fact, Satan has already invested some people with economic, social, political and military power by teaching them illicit and immoral business to generate billions of dollars which become the

⁶ However, this is just one side of the story since there are other kinds of bloody trade operations happening around the globe. I intend to discuss these later.

⁷ Cf. K. DILANIAN, "Al Qaeda Group is Operating on Ransom Money from the West", *Los Angeles Times* (21 Oct 2013) www.latimes.com.

⁸ H. LINDSEY – C.C. CARLSON, *Satan Is Alive and Well on Planet Earth, Scofield Reference Bible*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1972, 871.

great force for one to acquire economic, social, political and military influence and establish their own system.⁹

From the 15th to the 19th century, the slave trade proved itself to be a system that enabled some people and nations to amass a lot of wealth and to influence the politics of the world.¹⁰ Nowadays, some of such means are human organ trafficking, the smuggling and trafficking of human beings, sex trafficking, human kidnaping and ransoming, the selling of oocytes, spermatozoa and embryos, producing babies for cloning¹¹, the pornography industry, drug trafficking and casino enterprises. Some run clinics where people pay for abortion, contraceptives or euthanasia.¹² For instance, in May 2018, an Australian Scientist by the name of David Goodall traveled to Switzerland to end his life; supporters raised \$20,000 for his campaign to end his life.¹³ You can ask yourself, what inspires them to establish such clinics, clinics whose job is to kill or obviate life? What inspires these perpetrators of evil to raise such big amounts of money to enable one to end his or her life, to end the life of another, or to prevent one from conceiving life? It is important to understand that in some countries, some activists have successfully fought to make some of these blatantly immoral enterprises to be recognized by the state; and in some areas, they are now accepted as normal social institutions.

⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Recognizing the Satanic nature of slavery, Popes Eugene IV (*Sicut Dudum*, 1435), Paul III (*Sublimis Deus*, 1537), Urban VIII (*Commissum Nobis*, 1639), Benedict XIV (*Immensa Pastorum*, 1741), Gregory XVI (*In Supremo*, 1839) and others expressed with the utmost clarity that anyone who took another human being into his possession and deprived that person of his or her property was automatically excommunicated from the Catholic Church until the moment when he both freed the slave and returned to him his or her property. Paul III went so far as to say that anyone involved in slavery was a “coworker of the devil”. The connection to the Dragon is undeniable. (Ed.)

¹¹ There is a rise of network of scientists run a business of cloning human beings to act as spare human beings for the treatment of others.

¹² Cf. K. FLORIN, “Increase in Sex Trafficking of Minors getting local, State Attention”, *The Day* (28 Jan 2014), www.theday.com.

¹³ Cf. S. MCKENZIE – M. BELL, “104-year-old scientist David Goodall ‘welcomes death’ at Swiss clinic”, *CNN News* (09 May 2018) <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/08/health/david-goodall-australia-switzerland-intl/index.html>, [accessed 20 Oct 2018].

Most of the proprietors of such businesses are very influential in society, and their propaganda spreads fast. Some have used their money to set up a network of agents in the world who enable them to spread their empires, conceal their activities and occupy strategic influential positions in the society. Indeed, because of their fame, they have been able to infiltrate many places. They have infiltrated health departments, political institutions, security forces and media networks.¹⁴ They are capable of spreading their antennae of influence to many sectors of society. Some have resorted to the establishment of death-squads whose sole motive is to protect their businesses. Eventually, they emerge as invincible and consequently capable of drawing many to the evil one. They become educators in the sordid art of perpetuating evil and so aspire to end Jesus' rule of fraternal love.¹⁵

This paper is related to this crisis and it aims to specify the ways in which some people have seemed to befriend the Dragon and perhaps have allowed the Dragon to invest them with economic, military, social and political power in order to perpetuate evil in the world.

The ultimate goal of this paper is to alert not only Christians but all people of good will to the kind of evil trading that takes place throughout the globe and to the kind of power that some individuals have accumulated by their participation in such trades. Thus, the paper is also a warning to everyone not to participate in such acts, never to join party with such individuals or be inspired by them or admire them. Such individuals and groups are actually advocates of the Dragon on earth. Thus, everyone who wishes to remain faithful to their identity as human beings should recognize the tricks of the Devil, secure themselves with the help of God's grace, and fortify themselves against the Dragon's wiles by remaining faithful to the will of their divine Creator.

¹⁴ Cf. BBC News 16th December 2016, *Egypt arrests Organ trafficking Ring*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-38224836>, [Accessed 10 Oct 2017].

¹⁵ Cf. A. DELBANCO, *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil*, New York: Ferrar, Straus & Giroux, 125. Revelation warns us against naïve admiration for powerful and apparently invincible politicians.

2. Scrutinizing the Book of Revelation (12–13)

Texts from the Book of Revelation seem to be more preferable when treating this topic. I have chosen the texts that were the subject of my prayerful meditation, Rev 12:1–13:18. The circumstances surrounding the composition of these texts appear to be sadly compatible with some of the problems facing our contemporary societies.

The Book of Revelation was composed in the final decades of the 1st century towards the end of the reign of the Emperor Domitian (81-96 AD). It was a time when from local governors in Asia Minor gave a new impulse to emperor worship. Domitian had to invent emperor worship as a way to unify the Roman Empire. This is because the empire was so vast and had been acquired by force. Hence the Romans were struggling to cement a meaningful unity among the people. Domitian hoped to bring this unity to the empire through adoration of the Roman Caesar, i.e., himself, as their father and their god. Temples to worship Domitian were erected everywhere; and all the subjects of the Roman power had to cast a pinch of incense upon the altar, paying homage to the Caesar as to their god.¹⁶ It was a shrewd and cunning move; and the aim was to knit together the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood within his empire.¹⁷

John, the son of Zebedee, was an elderly man at this time and an important apostle for the entire Church of Asia Minor. He was not ready to bend the knee in his old age to a mere mortal after many years of consecration to Christ, the eternal Son of God, even if that mere mortal was a Roman emperor. However, Roman legates were shrewd administrators. They did not kill him on the spot because John's martyrdom could have invigorated the spirit and the spread of Christianity. Instead, they imprisoned him in a Roman prison, in an island lying off the coast of Ephesus, the

¹⁶ Cf. J. KALLAS, *Revelation: God and Satan in the Apocalypse*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress 1973, 53-55.

¹⁷ Cf. V. ZINKURATIRE – A. COLACRAI, eds., *The African Bible*, Nairobi: Paulines, 2093. These Christians were being persecuted by the half-mad Roman Emperor Domitian, considered to be another Nero, the first Emperor to persecute the Church of Christ.

island of Patmos.¹⁸ There he wrote a letter of comfort and assurance, a letter of encouragement and exhortation, to his persecuted fellow Christians back on the mainland.¹⁹

In fact, the people on the mainland were indeed discouraged and seemed to be on the brink of despair, ready to give up their faith because of the apostle's imprisonment. They asked, where is Jesus? Is he truly God? If so, why is He unable to protect us? If Jesus were truly ruler of heaven and earth, why did Rome prevail? Why was his apostle in jail? People were sinking into discouragement and despair, ready to abandon their faith and turn to the worship of Caesar instead. John had to write to these people who felt abandoned by God and were tempted to believe that they lived in a world ruled by the Devil himself and not by God. He had to tell them that the earth indeed belonged to the Lord; the ultimate power was that of God and not of Rome.²⁰

Another important point to remember is that Christians unwilling to compromise with the corrupt economic and political Roman power became marginalized in society. For instance, in Rev 13:17, John informs us about the sober reality of refusing to comply with the demands to venerate the Emperor. Christians seemed to be excluded from commerce, an important activity in cities like Laodicea. Coins during this time carried images of the emperor as a divinity. Thus, it was difficult for Christians to engage in commercial transactions with non-Christians without being willing to go along with customs which appeared to acknowledge the divinity and authority of the Beast, the Emperor. In this way, they experienced seclusion. In a word, the life of Christians in Asia Minor was really in a very great crisis. Social and political institutions were unfriendly to them. A number of them had already become martyrs (2:13; 6:9; 13:15). Others would soon be killed (13:14). Many of them were harassed by local authority or put in

¹⁸ Cf. J. KALLAS, *Revelation*, 53-56

¹⁹ Cf. L. MORRIS, *The Revelation of St. John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1987, 1, 5.

²⁰ Cf. P. PERKINS, *The Book of Revelation*, Colledgeville Bible Commentary: New Testament 11, Colledgeville: The Liturgical Press 1983, 9.

prison (2:9-10).²¹ They therefore needed encouragement and orientation.

Though not under direct physical threat, there were still others who suffered exposure to vices that could tempt them against their faith. Living in an affluent society of power thirsty people, they could be tempted by money and worldly pleasures (3:17-18; 13:16-17; 18:11). Their faith and morality could grow weak (2:4-5; 3:15-16). They could be tempted to make Christian living a matter of routine rather than a truly dynamic force in their lives. They could be tempted to abandon their Christian ideals and even their faith and focus on worldliness. Others were being led astray by false Christian teachers and prophets (13:11-13; 2:20). Again, some Christians were trying to escape persecution by keeping to Jewish customs (3:16-17). The Book of Revelation serves to prepare Christians to resist the temptations and to persevere in their loyalty to Christ and his Church.

A wholehearted fidelity to the grace of perseverance leads to eternal communion with Jesus. John's intention was to encourage all these people and instruct them in the path they were to follow. This instruction necessarily involved warnings against false teachers and misrepresentations of the faith.²² We can make the overarching observation that the book of Revelation addresses serious questions about how Christians are to live in a larger, often hostile society. It is a text to encourage Christians who struggle to sustain their hope and hence hover on the edge of the precipice precisely at the moments that evil menacingly extends its tentacles ever intent to trap them.²³ It is a perennially up-to-date literary masterpiece advising us to resist the evil with as much fortitude and reliance on grace as possible.²⁴

Today's Christians face temptations of this kind. They too live in a hostile society and can easily fall into the traps of the evil one. Thus, the similarities between the challenges faced by Christians in the Book of Revelation and the contemporary temptations that

²¹ Cf. P. PERKINS, *The Book of Revelation*, 11.

²² *Ibid.*, 9-10.

²³ Cf. M. MAXWELL, *Revelation*, Doubleday Bible Commentary, New York: Doubleday 1998, 122-123.

²⁴ Cf. P. PERKINS, *The Book of Revelation*, 9-10, 14.

gnaw at the hearts of human beings who seek to be upright makes the texts in the book of Revelation quite pertinent to the topic I wish to address.

Our text is going to run from 12:1–13:18. This is because there is a very special connection between the two chapters. For instance, the influence of the Dragon introduced in 12:3-4 extends to the end of chapter 13. This Dragon influences activities and the characters found in these two chapters: the Woman, the Child, the Angels, the Beasts, the witnesses of Christ and those who are not witnesses. The Dragon has some connection to each and every character in these two chapters.

In fact, in chapter 12, the Dragon fails in its plans to cause harm to the woman (12:13-17) or to eat the fruit of her womb, the child (12:4-6). Michael and his Angels inflict defeat on him: he is thrown down to the earth (12:7-13). On earth, its powers come to find an anchor hold in two beasts (13:1-18) and through these two beasts, the Dragon inflicts great pain on the other children of the woman and utters blasphemy against God (13:5-8, 16-17).

The Dragon manages to gain followers and imprint its marks on them (13:16). Thus, the activities of the Dragon unites these two chapters such that any analysis involving a single chapter that excludes the other will end up with an incomplete message. You cannot clearly understand the Beasts without the Dragon. One cannot appreciate the influence of the Dragon without the Beasts.²⁵

Again, the purpose of the Dragon and the Beasts is the same. The Dragon wants to eat the child of the woman but fails. It invests the two Beasts with its power so that they can wage war with the other children of the woman on behalf of the Dragon. The purpose of the Beasts is to destroy these other children. Thus, chapters 12 and 13 are united.²⁶

Chapter 14, on the other hand, talks about the Lamb and its followers, so it can be understood independently of chapters 12 and/or 13. One can accurately describe chapter 14 without necessarily referring to the previous two chapters. In the same way,

²⁵ Cf. W. NGOWI, *Maandiko ya Kiufunuo*, Morogoro: Salvatorianum 2000, 142-161.

²⁶ Cf. V. ZINKURATIRE – A. COLACRAI, *The African Bible*, 2110-1211.

one can meaningfully describe chapter 11 without necessarily referring to chapter 12 or 13.²⁷

3. Textual Analysis

The analysis of our text will focus on the structure of the text, contextual background, linguistic analysis and rhetorical analysis.

3.1 Structure of the Text

There is Anglican Evangelical expert in the area of Pastoral Studies who besides serving in Anglican Parishes as a Vicar or Curate has also studied the Bible and has published his suggestions about what he understands from the Bible. He proposes that there are six divisions for the structure of our text (12:1–13:18).²⁸

12:1-6	The Characters
12:7-16	The Plot and Wars
12:17	The Prelude
13:1-10	The Beast from the Sea
13:11-17	The Beast from the Land
13:18	The Number of the Beast

For Wilcock, the first part (12:1-6) offers the cast of the characters. This is because the three main influential characters of our text are found here: the pregnant Woman clothed with the sun, the Dragon and the Child. These characters appear on the heavenly stage and appear to be symbolic figures with meanings beyond the superficial ones. The rest of the characters found in the text are in one way or another related to these first three characters.²⁹

Wilcock subtitles the second part (12:7-16) “The Plot and Wars”. This is because here in this part, we find two plots. First, there is Michael’s plot to wage war with the Dragon and defeat it so that it is thrown down to the earth (12:7-8). Then there is the plot of the Dragon to pursue the woman who has given birth to the child. The woman, however, is given the two wings of a great eagle that she might fly from the Dragon into the wilderness to the place

²⁷ Cf. W. NGOWI, *Maandiko ya Kiufunuo*, 142-161.

²⁸ Cf. M. WILCOCK, *The Message of Revelation*, Bible Speaks Today, Leicester – Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity 1984, 117.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

where she is to be nourished for a time, and two times and half a time (12:13-16).³⁰

The third part (12:17) is called the prelude. This part serves as the connector between chapters 12 and 13. Here, after failing to harm the Child and the Woman, and after being thrown down to the earth, the Dragon empowers two beasts and begins to execute his operations through them. John describes the activities of the beasts in a typically stylistic manner in chapter 13.³¹

The fourth part (13:1-10) deals with the Beast from the Sea. This beast has ten horns and seven heads with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads. The whole earth follows the beast with wonder, and it is allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.³²

The fifth part (13:11-17) deals with the beast from the Land. This beast has two horns like a lamb but speaks like a Dragon. It receives great authority from the Dragon and serves the greater glory of the first Beast. The mandate of the beast is to see to it that people will worship the first Beast (13:14).³³

The sixth part (13:18) identifies the number of the Beast. The number concerns the first beast, the beast from the sea. This part forms the conclusion of our text.³⁴

3.2 Linguistic Analysis

The language used in our text is greatly apocalyptic. The author does not name anyone except the Dragon – his name is Satan. The author makes only allusions to the identity of the others. The Woman gives birth to a Child who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter, i.e., with Messianic authority. Thus, in this text, there is a need to pay attention to the meanings of phrases embedded in the text that seem to grant an identity to the characters.

Signs (Semeion) in heaven: there are three notable signs described in the book of Revelation: the sign of a woman clothed

³⁰ Cf. M. WILCOCK, *The Message of Revelation*, 119.

³¹ Cf. *Ibid*, 122.

³² Cf. L. VAN HARTINGSVELD, *Revelation: A Practical Commentary*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1986, 52.

³³ Cf. M. WILCOCK, *The Message of Revelation*, 126.

³⁴ Cf. *Ibid*, 128.

with the sun (12:1), the sign of the great red dragon (12:3) and the sign of seven angels with the seven last plagues (15:1). They are characterized as signs, marvels, that John sees in heaven. The first sign (the sign of a woman) is given the title of a great sign while the second sign is denied this title meaning, probably because it lacks importance in comparison with the first one.³⁵

The sign of the Woman: the woman is pregnant with the Child. The Child to whom she gives birth is male (cf. 12:5) and rules all nations with messianic authority, i.e., with an iron sceptre. This has led St. Pius X, Pius XII, St. Paul VI and St. John Paul II to identify her with Mary the mother of Jesus.³⁶ However, the woman's

³⁵ Cf. W. NGOWI, *Maandiko ya Kiufunuo*, 149.

³⁶ PIUS X, *Ad diem illum*, ASS 36, 458-59: "No one of us does not know that that woman signifies the Virgin Mary, who brought forth our Head with her virginity intact. But the Apostle continues: 'And being with child, she cried out, laboring in birth, and was in pain to be delivered.' Therefore John saw the Most Holy Mother of God already enjoying eternal happiness, and yet laboring from some hidden birth. With what birth? Surely ours, we who, being yet detained in exile, are still to be brought forth to the perfect love of God and eternal happiness."

PIUS XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, AAS 42:762-763: "We frequently find theologians and preachers who, following the footsteps of the Holy Fathers, use words and events from Sacred Scripture with some freedom to explain their belief in the Assumption... And furthermore, the Scholastic doctors have considered the Assumption of the Virgin Mother of God as signified not only in the various figures of the Old Testament, but also in that woman clothed with the sun, whom the Apostle John contemplated on the island of Patmos."

PAUL VI, *Signum Magnum*, 13 May 1967, AAS 59: "The great sign which the Apostle John saw in heaven, 'a woman clothed with the sun' is interpreted by the sacred liturgy, not without foundation, as referring to the most Blessed Mary, the Mother of all men [people] by the grace of Christ the Redeemer."

JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 15 March 1987. Vatican Translation, #24: "It is significant that, as he [Jesus] speaks to his mother from the Cross, he calls her 'woman' and says to her: "Woman, behold your son!" Moreover, he had addressed her by the same term at Cana too (cf. Jn. 2:4). How can one doubt that especially now, on Golgotha, this expression goes to the very heart of the mystery of Mary, and indicates the unique place which she occupies in the whole economy of salvation?... The words uttered by Jesus from the Cross signify that the motherhood of her who bore Christ finds a 'new' continuation in the Church and through the Church, symbolized and represented by John. In this way, she who as the one 'full of grace' was brought into the mystery

motherhood is not simply that of the Child Jesus. This is because the child brought forth by this woman never lived on earth but was snatched directly to God and his throne (cf. 12:5); Jesus, on the contrary, lived on earth for some time.

As Pope St. Pius X and Pope St. John Paul II emphasized, the woman who lives for one thousand, two hundred and thirty days, the whole period of church history from his first coming to the second coming, seems to be Mary, the Mother of the Church. When he saw the vision, the author certainly gave a place to Mary in his mind when he was writing this text.³⁷ She is in fact the Mother of the Church.

There seems to be, however, another level of meaning. In the Old Testament, God referred to His people as a woman whom He had dressed in honour and splendour and in Ezekiel 16, God uses a woman to symbolize Israel, a woman whom he rescued from her sinful ways. The imagery of the nation as a woman giving birth to the Messiah already appears in Isaiah 26:18.³⁸ The Woman is adorned with the splendour of the sun, moon and twelve stars which is a parallel Old Testament drama of Joseph in Gen 37:9-11 where the stars refers to the patriarchs of the tribes of Israel while the moon and the sun pointed the ancestors of these 12 patriarchs of Israel. Thus, the woman in this context represents the whole family of Israel.

One cannot underestimate the Church's conviction that Pope Benedict XVI expressed about the Woman clothed with the sun, namely, that she is the Church, our Mother, the new Israel whom he has now left in order to go back to His Father. Pope Benedict put it this way: "The early Church had no difficulty recognizing in the Woman, on the one hand, Mary herself and, on the other hand,

of Christ in order to be his Mother and thus the Holy Mother of God, through the Church remains in that mystery as 'the woman' spoken of by the Book of Genesis (3:15) at the beginning and by the Apocalypse (12:1) at the end of the history of salvation."

³⁷ Cf. M. WILCOCK, *The Message of Revelation*, 118-119.

³⁸ Cf. G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *The Book of Revelation*, The New Century Bible Commentary, New York: HarperCollins 1974, 197-198.

transcending time, the Church, bride and mother.”³⁹ In another context the same Pope said: “This Woman represents Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer, but at the same time she also represents the whole Church, the People of God of all times.”⁴⁰

Fleeing into the Desert and feeding in the desert (Rev 12:14): this is a recalling of Israel’s journey into the desert and the feeding with the manna (Exod 16). It also brings to mind Elijah’s journey to Mount Horeb (in the Sinaitic desert) where he was fed by the angel (angels, 1 Kgs 19:1-7). A desert is a place of temptation and strengthening of the faith (Luke 4:1-13). Is also a place where one meets God and fortifies one’s relationship with Him (Hos 2:16-20, 1 Kg 19:1-7). It is a place of sanctification and protection especially during difficult moments.⁴¹

Another concept in need of clarification is the time reference of “a year, two years and half a year” ($3^{1/2}$ years, Rev 12:14). The number 3.5 is halfway to seven, a perfect number. One can conjecture that the number points to an imperfect time, a broken time, a short period of time (Dan 12:11). This time reference exists again in Rev 13:5: 11:3 and Dan 7:25. In Dan 7:25 it shows the time of persecution and witness for the people of God. This exactly corresponds with the period of time within which the two witnesses have to prophesy and bear witness for the Lord on earth (Rev 11:3).

The witnesses of Christ faced persecution under the first and the second beast (Rev 13:7, 16). The consensus is that this time reference refers to the time of the Church’s existence on earth. This is a time of bearing witness for Christ and of facing persecution from the enemies of Christ. During this time, no peaceful co-existence can exist between the worshippers of Satan and the followers of the monster, on the one hand, and those advocating God’s power and sovereignty, manifested in that of the Christ, on the other. Thus, one decides either for God or for Satan, for the

³⁹ BENEDICT XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, II, Grand Rapids: Doubleday 2007, 222.

⁴⁰ BENEDICT XVI, *General Audience* (23 Aug 2006).

⁴¹ Cf. W. NGOWI, *Maandiko ya Kiufunuo*, 152-153.

Lamb or the monster, for Christ or for the Antichrist.⁴² But the hand of God will always protect and nourish the Church (12:14).⁴³

Michael (12:7): this is the first time Michael appears in Revelation. According to Daniel 10:21, Michael is the heavenly champion of Israel.⁴⁴ In Daniel, Michael is viewed as the protagonist of Israel against tyrannical gentile nations that oppress Israel (Dan 10:13ff; 12:1). In Dan 6:2 he is actually described as a mediator between God and man.⁴⁵ Here, in the book of Revelation, he is invested with this same role as he fights the Dragon, the slanderer and the deceiver of the whole world (cf. Rev 12:9).

In Rev 12:9, the Dragon: here he is given its full titles and its name (huge dragon, the ancient serpent, the Devil, the Satan) not in his honor but as an expression of the prophet's exultation that at last the ancient foe has been overthrown. The title 'the deceiver of the whole world' appears to reflect a global dimension to the devil's wiles described in the narrative of Genesis 3 (Wis 2:24: 'It was the devil's spite that brought death into the world, and the experience of it is reserved for those who take his side'). The title 'ancient serpent' doubtless is a reminiscence of Genesis 3, where the serpent is but a guise for the devil.

The Dragon is also called the Devil and Satan. Devil is from a Greek verb *diaballein* and refers to one who causes destruction, divides, calumniates, deceives.⁴⁶ Satan is the Hebrew word for accuser, adversary. Thus, the name Satan identifies the devil as the accuser, the adversary. He is a prosecuting counsel who brings charges against men.⁴⁷ For instance, Satan is the accuser (adversary) of Joshua the high priest (Zech 3:1, 2). Satan is also called a great seducer of men. For instance, he puts the terrible scheme of betrayal into Judas's mind (John 13:2), he is out to make Peter fall (Luke 22:31), he persuades Ananias to keep back part of

⁴² Cf. E. SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *Revelation: Vision of a Just Word*, Proclamation Commentaries, Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1998, 84-85.

⁴³ Cf. W. NGOWI, *Maandiko ya Kiufunuo*, 152.

⁴⁴ Cf. M. WILCOCK, *The Message of Revelation*, 120.

⁴⁵ Cf. G.R. MURRAY, *Revelation*, 201.

⁴⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *General Audience* (13 Aug 1986), n. 7.

⁴⁷ Cf. G.R. MURRAY, *Revelation*, 201.

the price of the possessions he had sold (Acts 5:2). The phrase ‘the Satan was thrown down to the earth’ in Rev 12:8 means that the Satan has no place in heaven. This represents an important victory won for the human being, since Satan is no longer able to accuse the human being before God.⁴⁸

Eagle’s wings (Rev 12:14): The fact that the woman receives the eagle’s wings is a metaphor. Eagle is the symbol of the Redeemer (Exod 19:4). The eagle metaphor of deliverance to safety is expanded in Deuteronomy 32:10-14 where God is compared to an eagle in His care for the Jews. God compares His deliverance of the Jews from Egypt to that of an eagle who carries her babies in safety when teaching them to fly. The woman’s act of receiving the two wings suggests the surety of the deliverance much like the way God delivered His children from Egypt.⁴⁹

The earth swallowed up the flood and saved the woman (Rev 12:16). The Church of Scotland Minister of Arian persuasion, William Barclay, conjectures that there is a natural phenomenon that coincides with the vision. This is because it quite often happened in Asia Minor that rivers were swallowed up in the sand only to reappear after travelling a distance underground. There was, for instance, a case of this near Colossae an area that John must have known well. This is a symbolism to mean that nature itself is on the side of the man who is faithful to Christ.⁵⁰ The earth came to the help of the woman: presumably the earth feels its kinship to the God of heaven and delights to serve Him (cf. Ps 19:1). In Exodus, waters of the Red Sea dried up to enable them to pass through (cf. Exod 14:15-18). God has resources in his creation to meet every crisis brought upon his people through the evil powers.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Cf. G.R. MURRAY, *Revelation*, 202.

⁴⁹ Cf. W. NGOWI, *Maandiko ya Kiufunuo*, 157.

⁵⁰ Cf. W. BARCLAY, *The Revelation of John*, II, 2nd ed., Louisville: The Westminster Press 1960, 86. The editor notes that Barclay was notoriously known for his refusal to believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ; nor did he believe that God is a Trinity. Hence there are discrepancies between his commentary and that of others, e.g., Wilcock.

⁵¹ Cf. G.R. MURRAY, *Revelation*, 205-206.

Blasphemous names on the heads of the beast (Rev 13:1): The haughty and blasphemous words echo descriptions in Daniel of the haughty and blasphemous words uttered by the emperor who is anti-God (cf. Dan 7:8, 20, 25; 11:36). For any man to call himself divine, was a blasphemous insult to God. Haughty and blasphemous words refer to the titles which the emperors granted to themselves.⁵² Frequently, the very name of God or Son of God was given to the emperors; and Nero on his coins called himself 'The Savior of the World.' None however exploited the cult to such a degree as Domitian who arrogated to himself the title *Dominus et Deus noster*, 'our Lord and God.'⁵³

The death wound and its healing (Rev 13:3): The healing of the mortal wound is interpreted in verse 14 as the resurrection from death. There is one person only whom this description can fit and that is Nero. He was said to have died but would return from the dead to lead armies against Rome. This idea is alluded to several times in the Sibylline Oracles. When John wrote his Revelation, these ideas were vividly present among his contemporaries.⁵⁴

The image that could speak (13:15): Statues were regarded as the natural means by which gods or demons could have intercourse with their worshippers and were accredited with the power of working miracles and of possessing supernatural energies and could be sought to heal the sick.⁵⁵ It was a belief in antiquity that cultic images or statues could talk or even move and that the priests of various cults could animate the images of their gods.⁵⁶

3.4 The Rhetorical Analysis

The first thing to consider in the rhetorical analysis is the fact that the author was writing to Christians living as a minority group inside a strong empire with strong leaders claiming to possess divine powers. Some Christians were in danger of considering God to be weaker than the Roman Caesars. Thus, John resorted to synthetic and antithetic parallelisms to show that the Devil is only

⁵² Cf. W. BARCLAY, *The Revelation of John*, 89.

⁵³ Cf. G.R. MURRAY, *Revelation*, 217.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Ibid*, 210-212.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Ibid*, 217.

⁵⁶ Cf. E. SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *Revelation*, 85.

posing as an impostor to God's rule; but at the end of the day God is above everything.

Synthetic parallelism exists in the story between the woman's flight into the desert (Rev 12:6, 13-14) and the story of the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt. When Israelites were liberated from slavery in Egypt, they spent forty years in the desert. God rescued them from the hands of Pharaoh (Exod 14:23-31), carrying them on eagle's wings (Exod 19:4; Dt 32:11), and fed them with manna in the desert for forty years up until their arrival in the Promised Land (Jos 5:12). In the same way, the woman in our text is carried out on eagle's wings and allowed to flee to the place of refuge (Rev 12:14). The woman stands for Mary, the Mother of God, the Mother of the Church, the people of God. Thus, there is a parallel apparent between the people of the Old Covenant, to whom God gave the gift of a leader, Moses, sheltered and sustained by God in the wilderness all the way to the Promised Land, on the one hand; and, on the other, the Woman, Mother Church, guided by Mary, the Redeemer's gift to the Family of God, during all the vicissitudes of the Church's history.⁵⁷ The church cannot avoid traversing a similar desert before possessing the fullness of the kingdom.⁵⁸

Antithetical parallelism exists between God and the Dragon, Jesus Christ and the first beast, the Holy Spirit and the second beast, the pseudo prophet. Indeed, M. Wilcock conjectures that the Dragon, the first beast and the false prophet form a kind of trinity of evil, demanding religious allegiance of mankind.⁵⁹ If Satan seeks to be recognized as God, the first beast (the Anti-Christ) is presented as the Christ of the Dragon. It has ten diadems 13:1, as the Christ has many diadems (19:2).⁶⁰ He has a blasphemous name

⁵⁷ See fn. 35. Further, in 1 Kings 19:1-7, Elijah as he was fleeing persecution, he received special nourishment from the desert. This story again finds some parallelism to this of the woman fleeing into the desert and receive some nourishment there.

⁵⁸ Cf. M. WILCOCK, *The Message of Revelation*, 121.

⁵⁹ The Dragon, the Antichrist and the False prophet are brought together in a single sentence in 16:13.

⁶⁰ Cf. M. WILCOCK, *The Message of Revelation*, 120-122. Wilcock notes again that the text has employed a lot of numbers to hide the identity of some

13:1, over and against the worthy name of Christ (19:11, 12, 16). It causes men to worship the Dragon (13:4), while Christ brings men to worship and serve his heavenly Father (1:6); it has had a deadly wound but lives 13:3, 12, 14, in a monstrous imitation of the Christ who died and rose from death.⁶¹

He has the power and throne and authority of the Devil 13:2 as the eternal God, the Christ, shares the power and authority and throne of His Father (12:5, 10). The second beast (called by John the false prophet 16:13) performs the kind of prophetic activity in relation to the Antichrist that the Holy Spirit does in relation to Christ. It is the instrument of the revelation of the satanic authority in parallel with the Holy Spirit who, as a divine Person, mediates God's Revelation. The Holy Spirit offers a grace that empowers men to embrace salvation while the false prophet offers signs to lead men to destruction.⁶² Accordingly, it demands that all should be marked on the right hand or the forehead with a mark that conveys the name or representation of the Anti-Christ (cf. 13:16).⁶³ This is clearly intended as a parody of the seal of God on the forehead of his servants (7:3).⁶⁴ The idea is to provide a parallel with the seal of the living God (7:2) stamped on the foreheads of

characters because the author was writing while in prison and so whatever he wrote was to be scanned. Numbers such as six, seven, ten and twelve and some halves have been used to hide the identity of the message (Rev 12:3). For instance, six, ten and halves have been used to describe imperfection while seven have been used to describe perfection. For instance, in the description of the Dragon, seven heads shows immensity of its power while ten horns and six diadems represents the dragon as an impostor, challenging the power of the Almighty and the Child. In Revelation 13:18, the number 666 is used to describe the name of a certain Roman emperor and the number 666 underlines the imperfection of this emperor.

⁶¹ Cf. G.R. MURRAY, *Revelation*, 210. Further, Murray notes that when the Christ of God rose, the world declared it to be a lie (Matt 28:13ff) or madness (Act 26:24). But the Christ of the devil comes from the death and the world worships him.

⁶² Cf. M. WILCOCK, *The Message of Revelation*, 128.

⁶³ W. FOERSTER, "Dragon", in G. KITTEL, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, II. 134-135.

⁶⁴ Cf. E. SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *Revelation*, 86. The mark on the foreheads and right hands of the beast's followers (14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4) functions as a counterimage to the sealing of the 144,000.

God's servants (7:1-8).⁶⁵ As the seal of God marks off its recipients as his people, reserved for his saving sovereignty, so the mark of the beast divides off those who receive it as the servants of the Antichrist.⁶⁶ There can be no doubt that this parallelism is deliberate; and for the Baptist scholar Murray, it is the first instance of the satanic imitation of the true God, namely, God the Father; God the Son, the Christ; and God the Holy Spirit, the source of the divine grace and love that reaches the human person through the redemption.⁶⁷

There is again an antithetical parallelism between the members of the community of Christ and the followers of the beasts. Just as the members of Christ's royal/priestly community come from all nations, tongues and peoples, so do the followers of the beast.⁶⁸ As the lamb has created the new royal or priestly community for God (Rev 5:9-10), so the pseudo-prophet (the second beast) seeks to transform the whole world into a cultic community of Satan worshipping the image of the first monster (13:12). He accomplishes this goal in three ways: by working pseudo-miracles, by making a cultic image of the first monster and by branding his followers with a mark on their forehead or right hand.⁶⁹

It should be remembered that John is writing to Christians who suffer persecution and may be tempted to think that the world is under the control of the devil as if God has no authority over some powers that act perversely in the world. They may be tempted to think that the Lord God has abandoned them. Thus, here in our text, John resorts to several parallelisms, including antithetic parallelism, to show that God exercises authority over all the powers in the world. Neither human nor demonic forces will succeed in dominating the faithful. If they put their trust in Christ's Easter victory, they will share in the triumph of Christ over the false pretences and promises of the Dragon, the Beast and the false prophet (13:11-16).

⁶⁵ Cf. A.Y. COLLINS, *The Apocalypse*, New Testament Message 22, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press 1990, 96.

⁶⁶ Cf. M. WILCOCK, *The Message of Revelation*, 128.

⁶⁷ Cf. G.R. MURRAY, *Revelation*, 209.

⁶⁸ Cf. E. SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *Revelation*, 83.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Ibid*, 85.

God is still present and is almighty. Jesus, our Lord and our God, is the ruler of the kings of the earth and has power over all human empires and will establish the eternal rule of God. In fact, John is intending to show that no political power that rises against Christianity can ultimately succeed. Christians who endure suffering even to the last days will share in that rule of Christ. Thus, in a world ruled by greed, money, sorcery, exploitation, sexual manipulation and even killing of the honest and upright faithful of Christ (Rev 13:15-17), Christians are still under the special protection of God. No matter how great the evil in the world is, God is still the Lord of history. Every power and principality are subject to him. In the end, evil will not succeed.⁷⁰

4. Figure of the Dragon in Contemporary Philosophy and Politics

It is clear, then, that the Dragon is the symbol of the Devil, the evil one that comes to influence the world at any time, to fight the good and spread evil. The Dragon acts as the impostor challenging the power of God; it makes itself the centre of attention and worship. It challenges the rule of God in the hearts, minds and lives of people. It wants all people to forget about God.

In a practical sense, this has been the plan of Satan at any age and not only during the time of the Roman Empire; and this is what the church is struggling against at any time. The focus of the devil is to eclipse the law of Christ's love and brotherhood in the heart of every human being. Throughout history, the devil has been inspiring the emergence of systems to achieve this purpose. In Revelation 12:1-7, the Dragon, i.e., the Devil, assumed a human countenance in the machinations of the Roman Empire. Influential people in the empire challenged the supreme God; it considered itself as self-sufficient, worthy of receiving praises reserved for God and for the Lamb, who is Himself Lord and God. The empire's rules controlled the social, political, economic and cultural lives of its citizens. The worst of it is that the empire went to the extent of

⁷⁰ P. PERKINS, *The Book of Revelation*, 9-10, 17.

composing rules limiting religious worship of the supreme God. It created temples for its emperors to be worshipped.⁷¹

After the fall of the Roman Empire, systems and philosophies have come into vogue that impose upon the world impostors to God's rule. They sublimate into their ways of thinking the motives and deceptions of the Dragon. This can be witnessed today. The nature of these systems can be readily understood when we utilize as our starting point the philosophy of the enlightenment.

4.1 Enlightenment

Enlightenment is the period that started in the 17th century. The period was characterized by the ideas of freedom and autonomy. It insisted on man as the measure of all things putting God at the periphery. This enlightenment philosophy started with the ideas of rationalists like Rene Descartes. He is famous for his principle of universal doubt: Doubt everything that can be doubted.⁷² By virtue of this principle, one should doubt even the principle of universal doubt.

One fact that cannot be doubted, said Descartes, is the fact that the human being is thinking when he or she is going through the process of doubting. Hence his famous dictum, "Cogito ergo sum" I think therefore I am.⁷³ Here, he meant that human reasoning becomes the starting point for truth, of what is reliable and what is to be trusted.

In response to an invitation issued to all thinkers and writers to express their opinion about the need for a priest or sacred minister to be present for a marriage to be valid, on the 30th of September, 1784, Immanuel Kant wrote a very famous essay, *What is Enlightenment?* He was opting for freedom from religious authority: hence he suggested that the institution of marriage need

⁷¹ Cf. *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers.*; <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/ellicott/revelation/13.htm>, [accessed 9 Sep 2017].

⁷² See B. LONERGAN, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, New York: Philosophical Library 1958, 408-411, for his insight that if one follows the principle of universal doubt, one should doubt the universal principle. (Ed.)

⁷³ Cf. R.Z. LAUER, "Enlightenment" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, V, 437.

not need an ecclesial authority to sanction it. Then he made a proposal that certainly arouses the suspicions of those who accept God's authority. He suggested that in the name of freedom to reason as one chooses, church pastors and ministers should be able to make a rational effort to "improve" the Creed, the basic formula of the Christian faith (he used early Christian terminology and called the Creed a "symbol"). Not to be able to change the Creed would be subjecting human reason to Church authority: Kant saw this as dehumanizing. The problem engendered by this enlightenment mindset was that of subjecting what God has revealed to the critiques of human reason – as if the authority of reason could prevail over God's own authority.

Kant's ideas were developed by humanists such as Voltaire and Jean Rousseau. These took the human person to be the center of everything and went to the extent of viewing the dogmas of religion as a hindrance to human development. Rousseau contended that no followers of Christ could make good citizens. Thus, figures influenced by the enlightenment insisted on freedom, liberty and equality. They also advocated for political systems where human persons become the center for all rational considerations and judgments.⁷⁴

4.2 Ludwig Feuerbach and the Denial of God

Extremists such as Ludwig Feuerbach embraced these enlightenment ideas. Dupré comments that in his *Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach declares God to be nothing more than human. He claims that God is an outward projection of the human being's inward nature. Without human beings, God cannot exist. At least, he lacks any importance because he, God, is only a creation of human beings to deal with their fears about life and about death. Thus, God for him is a manmade illusion which derives from the human's ability to feel and imagine and from the human's propensity to be afraid. Again, he added that it is humans who make religion divine and not religion that makes humans divine. Thus, "Feuerbach saw his mission as to restore to man all the qualities he has estranged from himself in religion and to make

⁷⁴ Cf. R.Z. LAUER, "Enlightenment", 437.

him aware of the fact that he is his own God.”⁷⁵ L. Dupré made the observation, too, that Feuerbach tended towards extreme materialism to the extent of viewing man as a physical being whose thoughts and feelings are determined by his material living conditions.⁷⁶ The influence of this philosophy was felt in the materialism of Karl Marx as well as the will to power of Frederic Nietzsche.

4.3 Karl Marx and Materialism

Karl Marx was the first influential person to piggyback Feuerbach’s ideas and apply them to politics. O. Hirmer made an observation that many others have made, too: Karl Marx views God as an obstacle preventing people from solving their own problems. He famously compared religion to opium.⁷⁷ Opiates are powerful painkillers but while they alleviate the symptoms they do not cure diseases. Likewise, religion makes people unconscious of their miseries and does nothing to get to the root cause of their miseries. Thus, Karl Marx advocated for the removal of God and anything to do with religion: his ideas have strongly influenced the contemporary world.⁷⁸ He argued that the working class should stand up and violently look for their rights from the bourgeoisie and not depend on Jesus to bring their rights to them on the table. He even prophesied that God and religion would die a natural death once the workers violently searched for their rights and overcame exploitation.⁷⁹ He advocated for collective and self-sufficient governments, a position that put the government very much in the godlike position of the Romans.

His ideas led to the spread of communism of the 20th century and systems which saw material wealth as the only measure of value. In Russia, people like Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin

⁷⁵ Cf. L. DUPRE, “Feuerbach Ludwig Adreas”, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, V, 905.

⁷⁶ Cf. L. DUPRE, “Feuerbach Ludwig Adreas”, V, 905.

⁷⁷ Cf. O. HIRMER, *Marx, Money, Christ: An illustrated introduction into capitalism, Marxism, and African socialism, examined in the light of the Gospel*, Gweru: Mambo Press 1982, 53.

⁷⁸ Cf. *Ibid*, 99-100.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Ibid*, 38-39, 55.

accepted his ideas; and they led to the spread of Russian communism. In Russia, Vladimir Lenin denied God and religion insisting that "religion and God were created by the capitalists for the people in order to make them docile and content."⁸⁰ He therefore advocated for militant action against religion in order to hasten the process of letting religion die because for him religion was hindering people from taking active part in solving the pressing problems of life.⁸¹ These ideas were fully embraced by his successor, Joseph Stalin. In Russia under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, the president and the communist party became gods of the state. Churches were destroyed and many religious leaders executed. The schools and media were flooded with anti-religious teachings.⁸²

This trend was revived again by Khrushchev during Khrushchev's ant-religious campaign in 1959-1964.⁸³ Trends that bore some similarities to Russian communism wove their way into China during 1949's Chinese Communist Revolution and in North Korea and in North Vietnam. The leader and the communist party became overall controllers of everything. People were commanded to be busy working and looking for material success. Citizens were considered as a collective group required to work and share everything in common. Their individuality and uniqueness as well as their spiritual life were no longer important.

If we base our description on the characteristics given by these authors, we can conclude that the spirit of the Dragon was perfectly seen operating in the communist systems that were erected by the Marxist philosophies. Surely, these systems were impostors to God's rule. Nowadays, North Korea and China are the only countries with strong communism where the president and the leader of the communist party are the only people to be respected and revered as gods. China is especially notorious for its attempt to control who may give birth and who may not give birth. Religions

⁸⁰ Cf. O. HIRMER, *Marx, Money, Christ*, 54.

⁸¹ Cf. *Ibid*, 55.

⁸² Cf. *Ibid*, 55.

⁸³ Cf. M. BOURDEAUX – K. MATCHETT, "The Russian Orthodox Church in Council 1945-1971". in B.R. BOCIURKIW – J.W. STRONG, eds., *Religion and Atheism in the USSR and Eastern Europe*, London: Macmillan 1975, 37.

such as Christianity are treated as threats to the unity and the survival of these nations.⁸⁴ Up to this time in China, religions such as Christianity are taken to be a threat to the survival of the nation.⁸⁵ Thus, communism is actually an impostor to God's rule.

In fact, even capitalism can become an impostor to God's rule especially when the intention shifts from the economic well-being of the country and its people to exploitation and social exclusion. Whenever we see that everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone, where we see nothing else but only ourselves, we become adherents to the materialist school of suspicion.⁸⁶ Here, the system fails to care for the social needs of the neighbors and leads to throwaway cultures.

Pope Francis follows Pope St. John Paul II in his understanding that the system involves a serious neglect of the rule of Christian brotherhood and love.⁸⁷ Where this system continues to encourage people to hoard lot of money and wealthy leaving the majority starving, it turns out to be an impostor, too.⁸⁸ Whenever capitalism is allowed to reach such an extent, the system itself turns out to be an impostor to God's rule and in that way it becomes a willingness to let the Dragon exercise his chicanery.

4.4 Nietzsche and the Will to Power

The philosophy of Karl Marx and his materialism influenced another philosopher, Frederick Nietzsche, who expressed his conviction that the will to power is the governing dynamic of the human heart. Nietzsche's notion of the will to power describes the main driving force in human beings: by means of achievements, ambition and prestige and the effort to reach the highest possible

⁸⁴ Cf. S. VIAZEY, *Hell for Christians in North Korea, Says Defector*, <http://www.ntd.tv/2017/10/26/hell-for-christians-in-north-korea-says-defector/>, [accessed 3 Jan 2018].

⁸⁵ Cf. T.B. WILLIAMS, *Report: China's New Regulations on Religion Designed to 'Annihilate' Underground Christian Communities*, <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/09/13/report-chinas-new-regulations-on-religion-designed-to-annihilate-underground-christian-communities/>, [accessed 3 Jan 2018]

⁸⁶ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Encyclical Letter "Laudato Si'"* (24 May 2015), 6.

⁸⁷ Cf. *Ibid*, 22.

⁸⁸ Cf. *Ibid*, 46.

positions in life the human being activates the will to power. By virtue of his conviction about the will to power, Nietzsche encourages people to struggle, to express themselves and to act in a manner that empowers them to achieve their ambitions, their highest goals in life and so become super-men. For Nietzsche, the superman is the only happy and fully developed man, and thus he should not be controlled by any morality or be answerable to anyone but be free to express himself with utmost freedom and strength.⁸⁹ The idea of the will to power motivated Hitler's Nazis in Germany and Mussolini's Fascists in Italy to phenomenally fanatic degrees.

The slogan for the Nazis was that "might is right."⁹⁰ This idea ended up creating systems and inspired leaders who were answerable to no one. These were people and institutions who simply ignored Christ's rule of brotherhood and love. The totalitarian systems that Hitler and Mussolini engendered, replete with arrogance, caused suffering to many people.⁹¹ They established secret networks of police intelligence, the *Gestapo* in Germany and the *Aura* in Italy. With these systems of police intelligence, they were able to suppress whoever they wanted and put countries under their control.⁹²

Even a cursory analysis of the German and Italian versions of fascism bring to light the sad fact that these individuals were imposters to God's rule and therefore acted in the spirit of the Dragon. The leaders themselves seemed to display the spirit of arrogance of the first beast. In recent times, the idea of the will to power assumes a concrete visage in groups like Boko-haram and Al-Qaida, ISIS and AL-Shabab. What drives them is the will to power and not the zeal to serve God. They are actually looking for power: to become supermen. Islamic state terrorists and Boko-

⁸⁹ Cf. K.F. REINHARDT, "Nietzsche Friedrich Wilhelm", in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, X, 463-464.

⁹⁰ Cf. G. ELEY, *From Unification to Nazism: Reinterpreting the German Past*, Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin 1986, 234.

⁹¹ Cf. *Ibid*, 255-256.

⁹² Cf. F.L. CARTSTEN, *The Rise of Fascism*, 2nd ed., Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press 1982, 73.

haram have gone to the extent of composing their own anthems. Their chief motive is power.⁹³

5 The Dragon and Democracy

It seems that in some localities what is called democracy nowadays appears to be an impostor to God's rule. Democracy is currently and popularly understood as the system whereby the power lies within the will of the people. In some countries, people have claimed to have power even on matters related to divine law. In many governments, parliaments have assumed the power of making decisions even on matters of life and death. Rules concerning abortion and euthanasia are being approved by the parliament. The judiciary in some countries like the USA presumes to make laws that seem contrary even to the country's constitutions in order to give the devil his say on the matter of abortion and homosexual behavior.

This is a serious violation of the law that finds its roots in the sacredness of human life and in the sacredness of human sexual behavior. These crimes violate the norms of brotherly kindness and love. Pope John Paul II in his *Evangelium Vitae* criticizes this spirit and urges that parliaments (and judiciaries) have no power to pass rules concerning death and life.⁹⁴ They must not attempt to exercise power to legalize euthanasia, abortion or homosexuality. This power is beyond them. However, in some countries now, the parliaments and the judiciaries have assumed power over everything. In this way, they act as impostors to God's rule. In some of these countries, the parliaments have formulated policies that attempt to secularize their states. Symbols of Christianity have been removed everywhere in the public institutions. Workers in various companies are no longer allowed to exhibit any symbol of faith such as the Rosary or the Cross. Systems of this kind are actually impostors to God's rule; they are an invitation to the

⁹³ Cf. W. DARYLMPL, "The ISIS Demand for a Caliphate is about Power, not Religion", *The Guardian* (13 Jul 2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/13/isis-caliphate-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-jihadi-islam>, [Accessed 3 Jan 2018].

⁹⁴ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter "Evangelium Vitae"* (25 Mar 1995), 59-60, www.vatican.va.

dragon to dwell among peoples and nations.⁹⁵ One has to be careful with the systems he or she joins.⁹⁶

6. Conditions Imposed upon African Countries

Some of these imperialist countries are determined to sell their social, political and economic systems to Africa; and they attach them as conditions aid packages. They inundate even African university students with global websites that advertise the consumer culture, display pornography, and introduce innovations in social networks that can become a gross waste of time. Some African countries have been forced to legalize homosexuality, abortion, contraceptives, lesbianism, pornography and divorce in order for them to receive aid packages and loans from some countries entirely driven by the will to power.⁹⁷ They insist that their aid should never be used in anything connected to religion.

Advocates of such policies are actually acting in the manner of the beasts we encounter in the book of Revelation. Their tactics vividly resemble policies exercised by the second beast, for instance that of preventing those without the mark of the first beast to involve themselves in commerce, buying or selling (Rev 13:16). In the Roman Empire, before receiving a loan, one had to take an oath that acknowledged the Emperor's divinity. In the same way, before some African countries can receive a loan or aid package, they have to accept some conditions. Abortion, contraceptives, pornography, homosexuality, lesbianism and divorce are the marks

⁹⁵ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 63.

⁹⁶ It is very important for one to analyse the evils encompassed by the system before he or she joins the system. It should be remembered that there was a time when slave trade was a socially accepted system and only the witnesses to the Lamb of God – the leaders of the Catholic Church – dared to reject it as diabolical. See footnote no. 9. Nowadays, slavery is reportedly taking place in Libya. CNN broadcast this news in December 2017.

⁹⁷ Cf. A. LEACH, "Talk point: should aid be withdrawn from Countries Violating LGBT Rights?", *The Guardian* (9 Jul 2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/jul/09/lgbt-aid-development-rights>, [accessed 3 Jan 2018].

of these news beasts and African countries are forced to conform themselves.⁹⁸

7. Mass Media and Intelligence Units

Mass media, intelligence units, social networks and other web facilities are some of the agents that have been employed by some nations and individuals to spread their propaganda. Even the most insidious pornographic websites get billions of hits per year. Some nations use their strong broadcasting companies and newspapers to spread what they want. Some of these corporations praise ideas of homosexuality, consumerism, secularism and globalization. One thinks of the Yahoo website. If a popular website is accustomed to enticing people with the glamor of contemporary lifestyles, with the supposed liberation and empowerment inherent in sexual deviations, and with the pleasure and convenience to be enjoyed by consumer products, that website may very well seek to tarnish the reputation of those people who advocate policies that defend the sacredness of the human person, of human sexuality, and of the human destiny within the Kingdom of Heaven. Those with a will to wealth, social pleasure and power seek to destroy the credibility of those who indeed bear witness to the truth.⁹⁹ Whenever people use the media in this way, they are acting in tandem with the example of the second beast, the false prophet.

Further, some countries and powerful individuals have been using their strong intelligence agencies to gather information that exposes innocent people to danger. In some countries death squads apply insidious methods of coercion to spread their propaganda and eliminate those who oppose them. Many people have been killed

⁹⁸ Cf. Southern Times, “Africa rejects Cultural Imperialism”, *The Southern Times* (20 Mar 2014) <https://southerntimesafrica.com/site/news/africa-rejects-cultural-imperialism>, [accessed 3 Jan 2018].

⁹⁹ Cf. S. MACMILLAN, “The Mainstream Media has always been a Propaganda Tool of the Establishment”, *Activist Posts* (10 Jul 2014) <https://www.activistpost.com/2014/07/the-mainstream-media-has-always-been.html>, [accessed 3 Jan 2018].

by these units.¹⁰⁰ Whenever a death squad places itself at the disposal of those who live by an ethic of profit seeking, pleasure seeking and power seeking, it resembles those who act in the manner of the second beast, the false prophet, serving its master, the first beast, and the overseer of the entire system, the dragon.

8. Beasts in the Syndicates that Perpetrate Evil

In fact, we heard that one becomes a beast when he severs from his reason the law of faith, i.e., the law of God in his or her heart. Nero and Domitian are examples of those who severed their souls from their sense of human morality and they became swift in shedding blood. They became as the beasts.¹⁰¹ When people leave the dictates of their conscience, when they leave God and their human morality aside and switch to the exclusive desire to satisfy their emotions like animals, they actually turn out to be like beasts. Nowadays, we have got people who have left their conscience, and allowed their emotions to drive them. Consequently they helped establish for themselves syndicates to earn money at the expense of the well-being of their fellow human beings. They violate in principle and in in action Christ’s rule of brotherhood and love. These people act in the character of the beasts we observe in Rev 13.

We have several examples to offer. Among the evil syndicates that people have inaugurated for the purpose of accumulating wealth, we may include human organ trafficking syndicates, human kidnaping networks, human smuggling and trafficking syndicates, ova and sperm selling syndicates, and drug trafficking syndicates. These have severed their souls from their conscience and have surrendered their wills to their emotions and self-centered desires.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. A. DAMON, “WikiLeaks Revelations and Crimes of US Imperialism”, *The Herald* (10 Mar 2007) <http://www.herald.co.zw/wikileaks-revelations-and-crimes-of-us-imperialism/>,

¹⁰¹ Cf. V. ZINKURATIRE – A.COLACRAI – *al.*, eds., *The African Bible*, 2111-2112. The four kingdoms represented by the animals in Daniel 7:4 were Lion-Babylon, Bear-Media, Leopard-Persians and Greece.

8.1 Kidnapping for Ransom

Kidnapping has been identified as one source by which terrorist organizations have been known to obtain funding.¹⁰² Kidnapping has nowadays become a global business for some groups especially in countries such as Mexico, India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Venezuela, North Africa and the Middle East.¹⁰³ This system goes into operation when criminal gangs kidnap a person and force the relatives or countries of origin to pay a certain amount of money for his or her release. These kidnaping gangs are estimated to make up to \$500,000,000 a year in ransom payments from kidnapping. In 2013, it was reported that the Mexican drug cartel Knights Templar was earning over six million dollars per month in various black market activities including kidnapping. The New York Times found that Al Qaeda and its direct affiliates have taken in at least \$125,000,000 in revenue from kidnappings since 2008 and \$91,500,000 was paid to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in the same year. The average ransom payment received by pirates in Somalia between 2005 and 2012 was \$2,700,000. To attract attention for their activities, these groups resort to persecution. They televise the atrocities they commit and send video pictures of their victims. They use them to terrorize the relatives, friends, and the home governments of the victims to extort the ransom. They call and send threatening texts and letters. At times, they will present some videos that show the beheadings of some members held by the group. One ostensible aim is to obtain the ransom.¹⁰⁴ One has to wonder, though, whether they are also expressing their aggressive hatred for those who do not tolerate their political or religious ideology.

¹⁰² Cf. M. PLAUT, "Eritrea's Military is Trafficking the Nation's Children, report says", *The Guardian* (3 Dec 2013) <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/dec/04/eritrea-military-trafficking-children-report> [accessed 02 Jan 2018].

¹⁰³ Cf. S. PERLBERG, "The 20 Countries Where People Get Kidnapped the Most", *Business Insider* (12 Dec 2013) <https://www.businessinsider.com/top-20-countries-by-kidnapping-2013-12?IR=T>.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. R. CALLIMACHI, "Before Killing James Foley, ISIS Demanded Ransom from U.S.", *New York Times* (20 Aug 2014) www.nytimes.com.

The ransom money obtained is used by the group to finance recruitment, training and purchasing of arms. It also allows the group to pay fighters and families of their comrades who die in combat.¹⁰⁵ Groups inspired by such evil intentions are greatly increasing and have reached the extent of instituting networks of agents recognized by everyone in the society who then act as brokers between them and the family or government of the victim.¹⁰⁶ These people act as couriers and negotiators between the families of the victims and the kidnappers; and they manage to take for themselves ten percent of the ransom and in this way create an incentive on both sides.¹⁰⁷

If we are to accept the reports issued by M. Plaut, R. Callimachi and S. Perlberg, we come to realize the extent to which the evil continues to engulf our societies. Perpetrators do not diminish; and their co-conspirators grow in number. These evil people and syndicates reveal to us the face of the new beasts and so manifest the worldly powers that try to corrode the law of Christian love and brotherhood so that selfishness rather than love becomes the ultimate driving force of the human heart. What is of the world is of the devil, not of the Father. More and more seem to embed themselves in the schools of suspicion.

8.2 Human Organ Trafficking

Human organ trafficking is the buying and selling of kidneys, livers, pancreases, skin, corneas, heart valves and bones for medical transplants. The World Health Organization says that more than 10,000 human organs are sold illegally every year. Billions of pounds are tied up in this trade, with the Middle East now considered the global hub.¹⁰⁸ These illegal organs are often obtained

¹⁰⁵ Cf. K. DILANIAN, "Al Qaeda group".

¹⁰⁶ Cf. C. ANDERSON, "Former Hostage Held by Al Qaeda Describes 6-Year Ordeal in the Sahara", *New York Times* (24 Sep 2017) www.nytimes.com.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. R. CALLIMACHI, "Paying Ransoms, Europe Bankrolls Qaeda Terror," *New York Times* (29 Jul 2014) www.nytimes.com.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. L. ROHTER, "The Organ Trade: A Global Black Market; Tracking the Sale of a Kidney on a Path of Poverty and Hope", *New York Times* (23 May 2004) www.nytimes.com.

from migrants who are trafficked into the country and are desperate to pay their way onto their next destination. Thus, they are advised to sell some of their organs to make up for their expenses. Methods used to obtain organs differ considerably: they range from inducing consent, using chicanery, coercion or outright theft.¹⁰⁹ Cases of theft occur when the so-called patient is treated for a sickness they do not have and the traffickers make off with the organ. In a similar manner, some dishonest doctors steal organs from their patients during surgical operations.

When people are poor and refugees are desperate, the ones interested in their organs may induce their consent. Human organ dealers trick the poor into selling their kidneys and livers so that these poor people can buy food or pay off debts. Desperate refugees are induced to sell their organs to obtain money for their survival.

Sometimes refugees and asylum seekers are kidnapped and their organs are removed forcefully. This practice is common in North Africa. For instance, residents of the Mir area in Asyut province Egypt have discovered the remains mostly of bones and skulls of adults and children. These people are thought to have been killed for their organs. In fact, organ traffickers have exploited and continue to exploit refugees and asylum-seekers who cross through Egypt on their way to Europe. Authorities in Egypt discovered an organ trafficking mafia in Egyptian hospitals, a network of physicians working with traffickers. This group included doctors, nurses and professors suspected of being involved in an international organ trafficking ring. It also included organ buyers and middlemen.¹¹⁰

If we accept these reports given by L. Rohter, and Alex Forsyth, we come to realize some of the ways by which some people join themselves to work with the devil. Christians should be aware of the way the devil is engulfing the world. This trade is one of the ways by which the devil is spreading its malice and making its kingdom grow. Even the Islamic State terrorists are said to be

¹⁰⁹ Cf. M. MIS, "Organ trafficking 'booming' in Lebanon as Desperate Syrians sell Kidneys and Eyes", *Reuters Magazine* (26 Apr 2017) www.reuters.com.

¹¹⁰ Cf. A. FORSYTH, "Meeting an Organ Trafficker".

earning most of their money from the selling of human organs.¹¹¹ They were reported cutting out bodily organs of captured Syrian and Iraqi soldiers as well as those of civilians and refugees who were still alive. These terrorists then sold the organs as a source of revenue.

ISIS is reported to be killing even its own seriously injured militants for organ harvesting and trafficking to make up for the cost of fighting its wars.¹¹²

It is reported that children are stolen from orphanages, or handed over through a fake adoption process but later on killed for their organs. At times, criminal organizations have engaged in kidnapping people, especially children and teenagers. Someone kills the victims and then either the killers or the co-conspirators harvest their organs for the illegal organ trade.¹¹³ In 2014 an alleged member of the Mexican Knights Templar cartel was arrested for kidnapping and killing minors, after children were found wrapped in blankets and stuffed in a refrigerated container inside a van.¹¹⁴ An adoption scandal also broke out in Italy in 1999 when 4,000 Brazilian children arrived in Italy for adoption during a period of four years. One thousand of them were located; however, the other three thousand had disappeared without a trace and were thought to have been sold to organ trafficking mafias.¹¹⁵ All these incidents remind us all that the world is suffering from the presence of beasts who pose as human organ traffickers.

¹¹¹ Cf. M. BLAKE, "Blood Money".

¹¹² Cf. M. KAKUTANI, "Need a Kidney? A Skull? Just Bring Cash", *New York Times* (16 Jun 2011) www.nytimes.com.

¹¹³ Cf. ASSOCIATED PRESS, "4 Charged in 'Virtual Kidnappings'", *ABC News* (9 Nov 2013).

¹¹⁴ Cf. AL ARABIYA, *Medical staff involved in Organ Trafficking arrested in Egypt*, November 28, 2017 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/features/2017/08/23/Egyptian-authorities-capture-a-network-for-trafficking-human-organs.html>, see the BBC article, [accessed 10 Jan 2018].

¹¹⁵ Cf. "The Deadly Trade of Child Organ Trafficking", *Aharq Al-Aswat* (20 Jan 2017) <https://eng-archive.aawsat.com/theaawsat/features/the-deadly-trade-of-child-organ-trafficking>, [Accessed 10 Jan 2018].

8.3 Human Trafficking and the Smuggling of Migrants

Human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants are among the most serious crimes in our contemporary world. The smuggling of migrants involves the facilitation of illegal entry of a person into a state of which that person is not a national or resident. Once that person reaches the destination, the smuggler, having received his payment, leaves him to go in his or her own way. But in this network of human trafficking, once a person arrives at his or her destination, he or she is held against his or her will. The person is not permitted to leave their point of entry; their passports are normally confiscated and the trafficker, after receiving his charges leaves them under the control of another master. The victims are promised freedom only after earning a stated amount of money. It is actually a modern day form of slavery whereby one works for the master as if he or she were his property. Humans that are trafficked are obtained either by force, fraud or deception. They are trafficked for sexual exploitation and forced labor at mines, in agriculture and in domestic work.¹¹⁶ The salary of those working in mines, agriculture and in domestic work goes to their owner while they themselves remain with only a small amount of money.¹¹⁷

Those forced to work in commercial sex are required to earn a fixed amount of money through prostitution every day and send it to their owners. They are told that the money is for their purchase price, as well as their travel and visa costs. Some are even tattooed by their traffickers to mark them as property such that even if a victim escapes, she gets caught.¹¹⁸ To get these tattoos removed

¹¹⁶ Cf. S. RAMOS, "Mexico: The fight to end kidnapping", *Latina Lista* (15 Apr 2014), <http://latinalista.com/columns/globalviews/mexico-fight-end-kidnapping>.

¹¹⁷ CNN reported again in 1st December 2017 on the existence of the slave trade in Libya whereby migrants were being auctioned as commodities in the Market. This, too, manifests the phenomenon that some people are ready to work with the Dragon and spread their malice in the world.

¹¹⁸ Cf. CNN, "Freedom Project: Ending Modern Day Slavery: Sex Trafficking: The Horror and the Hope", *CNN* (8 Mar 2016), <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/04/world/sex-trafficking-horror-hope/index.html>, [accessed 4 Nov 2017].

or covered-up can cost hundreds of dollars. The trade is now famous in towns in central Mexico and seems to involve cities like Atlanta and New York, although in the United States, such traffickers could spend their entire life in prison. The prospect of prison can act as a deterrent.

Nowadays, children are also trafficked mostly for child pornography.¹¹⁹ If we accept these reports, we come to recognize that there may be several kinds of dirty trades and that people are increasingly taking part in them. Therefore, everyone should be aware of these evil traders, of these new beasts and the way the devil is still active in the world through these traffickers.

8.4 Euthanasia and Abortion

During the five minutes it takes me to write these two paragraphs four hundred babies are killed because one or both of their parents have not accepted them. One pays a lot of money so that a woman may end the life of her beloved child. Often enough the mother is the victim of the child’s father or of her family who coerce her to abort the child.

Euthanasia is allowed in some countries. People pay a lot of money to end their own lives or those of a close relative. It is sad to hear that some pro-euthanasia supporters conduct searches for funds for those who want to end their own lives but do not have enough resources.

What is astonishing is the cold-hearted spirit that inspires people to establish abortion and euthanasia clinics to earn such dirty money; where is their conscience? Here is where we can see the spirit of the Dragon operating, a devil that tempts people by holding out the prospect of money, luxury and financial security. Those who earn billions of dollars often use the money to influence the politics of the world. Christians have to be careful with such people and avoid joining their party.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Cf. S. SIDNER, “Old mark of slavery is being used on sex trafficking victims”, *CNN* (14 Mar 2017) <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/08/31/us/sex-trafficking-branding/index.html> [Accessed 10 Jan 2018].

¹²⁰ Cf. S. MCKENZIE – M. BELL, “104-year-old scientist”.

8.5 Other Illegitimate Businesses

The selling of oocytes (ova) is another evil business taking place around the globe. Christians should be ready to see the image of the beasts in the people involved in such trades. In addition, the image of the beasts is realized in people engaged in other evil trades such as drug trafficking, the pornography industry and research activities aimed at raising children as clones to “donate” replacement body parts. All these should awaken people of good will to see the inspiration of the devil and the image of the beasts in those people.¹²¹

9 More on the Contemporary Beasts

In fact, Christians have to be careful while identifying the beasts. This is because the second beast is described as having characteristics resembling those of a lamb. It looks like a lamb but the voice betrayed it. This shows that it was hiding itself in the image of the lamb in order to snare many. Beasts actually come in the image of the lamb to hide their malice and attract followers. Many are today coming in the name of humanitarian aid and charity. For instance, we have already seen that many have started orphanages but their aim is to harvest and traffic organs from those children. Some pretend to be transporters but are human smugglers. Some pretend to adopt children but in the end they sell these children to the black market for organ trafficking or sexual exploitation.

Some hide under the cover of religion. For instance, ISS terrorists hide under the name of religion but in an actual sense, they are the evil doers, who at times encourage human organ traffickers.¹²² Some organizations may be pretending to work for charities and counselling services but in actuality they promote abortion, contraception and legalize sexual immorality. So, everyone should always be awake and identify the perversity of the activities undertaken by these new beasts.

Christians should be careful with the miracle workers. Some use miracles to hide their malice and attract people. The second beast

¹²¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 2-4, 63.

¹²² Cf. M. BLAKE, “Blood money”.

was performing great miracles with the intention of magnifying the first beast (Rev 13:13). This means that for John, in the context of the Book of Revelation, miraculous power in itself is not a sign of divinity or divine favor. Satan and his allies possess ostensibly similar power.¹²³ Leaders of some faith groups have gone to the extent of obtaining charms from witch doctors to perform signs and gain followers.¹²⁴ Many use the name of Christ and seem to bring forth many miracles but in an actual sense, they are malicious and want to obtain money for themselves. They aim at self-glorification, wealth and position in life. Anyone pretending to work miracles or use the name of Christ with the aim of self-glorification and prestige behave like the beast. Anyone employing the name of Christ for self-glorification acts as an impostor to the rule of Christ. This is because the wisdom which guides him or her is not divine but earthly, sensual, devilish wisdom and in that way is really an impostor to God's rule.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to show the understanding of the Dragon and the Beasts in the contemporary world and the way these figures have already invaded various worldly systems. To a great extent, the paper has cautioned about systemic evil and structural sins. Some systems which exist today already enclose some evils within them. A sin may start as an individual sin; then it is embraced by the whole society and becomes a systemic sin.¹²⁵ At this point, only a few are able to notice it. Eventually, it gains social acceptance as if it were ethically appropriate. For instance, the slave trade of the 15th-19th centuries started because of the demand for cheap labor on the plantations and in the mines in America and the Caribbean islands. But because people ignored the grave warnings of the Catholic Popes, slavery grew to become a normal means of production and seemed to be socially accepted by many. The generations which followed accepted and practiced the trade. Only

¹²³ Cf. A.Y. COLLINS, *The Apocalypse*, 96.

¹²⁴ Cf. I. DACHEN, "More Revelations Trail Pastor Using 'Jujū' for Miracles", *Pulse* (16 Dec 2015) <http://www.pulse.ng/gist/in-gods-name-more-revelations-trail-pastor-using-juju-for-miracles-id4468469.html>,

¹²⁵ Cf. E. SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *Revelation*, 85.

with the discovery of the machines and the advent of the industrial revolution did the slave trade start to be discouraged – centuries after the Popes had given their warnings. Further, other evils such as racism and communism evolved in the same way. They were initiated by the few who wanted to defend their interests but they grew to become a social practice and acceptable as ideologies even though they were unambiguously untenable from the point of view of sound morality.

Abortion, contraception and pornography might have started as a result of a few individuals but nowadays have been legalized in many countries. Generations may follow and embrace them without noticing any evil in them.

Thus, in a way, this paper is also a warning against the structural and systemic sins that occasion a social climate that tolerates injustice and fosters sinful attitudes as normal behavior. Such sins are not easy to notice. These attitudes are more deadly when they are socially acceptable than when they are found scattered among individuals. Thus, before one joins a system, one has to evaluate the principles he or she has to defend in such a system. One has to be genuine enough to discover the systemic and structural sin contained in such a system. The person who defends structural sins such as exploitation is actually becoming the agent of the Dragon.¹²⁶

In the world, one may be led into sin because he or she takes part unwittingly in evil systems. What other people do may lure us into sin. However, it is important to understand that our inner passions may drive us into sin, too (cf. Jas 1:13-15). St. James informs us that when we allow ourselves to be lured and enticed by our own evil desires, our desires conceive and bring forth sin; and when sin reaches maturity, it gives birth to death (cf. 1:14-15). All in all it is important to realize that the world is not totally engulfed by Satan; there is grace in the world. If we cooperate with grace and build on grace, we will be able to escape the snares of the devil.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Cf. E. SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *Revelation*, 85.

¹²⁷ Cf. G.R. MURRAY, *Revelation*, 217.