

God and His Demons

Michael Parenti

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Author Michael Parenti offers compelling historical evidence that the world's religions have "served as instruments for promoting intolerance, autocracy, and atrocity," and details how, in order to cope with "the brutish uncertainties of a seemingly indifferent universe," humans have, from time immemorial, created gods of various types, each requiring some form of propitiation in order to keep from unleashing wrath and fury upon creation.

Parenti identifies two traditions in Western theism, the first of which is Hegel's "self-manifesting spirit," or, the "god of the rational totality, immutable and cosmic, impersonal and without deliberate demands, a pure creative force with an evolving design." The second tradition, and the one which has the greatest following in American culture, is that of "the Judeo-Christian god and other personalized godheads who act directly and anthropomorphically upon history with moods of love, jealousy, favoritism, and judgmental rage." It is this god and his "intolerant, furiously proselytizing, and often corrupt and evil adherents" that are the object of the author's critical attention in this work. His energetic romp through history catalogues the atrocities committed in the name of this vengeful and murderous god.

While honoring those who actually live by the tenets of their faith and work for peace and justice while respecting the rights of others to live and worship (or abstain from doing so) as they wish, Parenti is relentless in his drive to shatter illusions about the world's various religions and their leaders. He notes that the "histories of Christianity and other religions are heavily laced with violence and repression," as well as sectarian slaughter that often morphed into full-fledged wars in which Christians killed members of rival denominations, calling the massacres "acts of moral cleansing in God's name."

Parenti has crafted an indictment of the evils and abuses of religion that is biblically informed and anchored in historical record. He exposes the deepest, darkest secrets of religious leaders and politicians who use religion and authority to mask child abuse, slavery, the appropriation of community funds for personal gain, adultery, murder, and war, tracing their failings back to what can be read as obvious flaws in creation and in the very character of the Judeo-Christian god.

Michael Parenti is an internationally known award-winning author and lecturer, and one of the nation's leading progressive political analysts. He has written more than twenty books, including *Contrary Notions: The Michael Parenti Reader*, *The Assassination of Julius Caesar*, and *The Culture Struggle*.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May / June 2010)

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