

NEW SATANISM

Alert: TV series "Hazbin Hotel" promotes demons

CULTURE

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To rehabilitate the inhabitants of hell to save them from the extermination wrought by heaven: this is the new US TV series, *Hazbin Hotel*, which plays on the reversal of good and evil. Newly created for Prime Video by Vivienne Medrano (but preceded by a pilot episode in 2019), it is already available in other languages including Italian and has been received with great enthusiasm, judging by the comments on the sidelines of the trailer.

It is an animated series, albeit rated 18 plus due to the explicit and vulgar language. But, that's perhaps the least of problems.

More precisely, the almost soothing depiction of hell set against an evil avenging sky, is the main issue. It is basically one of the thousands variants of that 'excessive and insane interest' in devils (as opposed to the specular error of those who do not believe in them at all) mentioned by Clive S. Lewis: there is the insane interest of those who engage in do-it-yourself exorcism (with sometimes tragic results, such as the Altavilla massacre) and the equally insane interest of those who cultivate a somewhat imprudent familiarity with the 'under world'.

***Hazbin Hotel* takes its cue from a problem of overpopulation in hell** (with all due respect to those who think it is empty): it is solved annually by the exterminating angels led by Adam, also called 'exorcists' in the series, with periodic massacres. "Poor devils," the viewer will say.... The protagonist 'Charlie' Stella del Mattino, daughter of Lucifer and Lilith, saves them from the celestial carnage with her brilliant idea of creating a place - the *Hazbin Hotel*, in fact - where demons and the damned, who would never be accepted in heaven, can be rehabilitated. In this way they could go to heaven, instead of being annihilated. The enterprise is conducted together with his 'partner' Vaggie (a former exterminating angel, repudiated by heaven because, moved by compassion for a demon, she had refused to kill him) and Anthony 'Angel' Dust, an androgynous, gay demon and porn star and the hotel's first guest. In the end, it is the angels who are cast back into paradise: the exact opposite of the invocation at the end of the prayer to St Michael the Archangel: 'cast back into hell Satan and the other evil spirits who wander the world to lose souls'.

But no matter how "appealing" the idea may seem to the public, especially to the younger ones (and perhaps even to some theologians), Hell cannot be redeemed: this is made clear from the very title in a Note of the International Association of Exorcists, which defines *Hazbin Hotel* as "a planned distortion of the biblical narrative that mystifies the Christian message of salvation and offends the public conscience, especially children and young people". True, it is "formally forbidden to minors, but accessible to all (all the more so because it is animated and therefore sure to appeal to the youngest)", presenting "a narrative of the universe that is false and deviant on a theological, cultural and educational level". Incidentally, and at the risk of being repetitive, one cannot help but wonder why the only religion constantly - and with impunity - targeted is always Christianity, from television programmes to everyday life, while other beliefs, even the most abstruse, is habitually treated with respect and

tolerance.

The main problem highlighted by the IEA is the 'normalisation of evil' and the 'underestimation of its real danger', portraying 'demons and the damned in a humorous way'. In doing so, they are made familiar, domesticated, induce the viewer to feel sympathy towards the inhabitants of hell, even victims of that 'evil' paradise that mercilessly exterminates them, when they would really like to redeem themselves, in an "outrageous and searching contradiction with Catholic teaching on confession, repentance and true conversion of the heart towards God". Here is the 'diabolical' misunderstanding inculcated by the series: redemption without conversion. Better still, but even worse: without wanting redemption. Forgetting that even if, absurdly, heaven were to open its doors to demons and the damned, it would be the latter who would not want to enter it, by virtue of an irrevocable choice for evil made definitively by themselves.

Hell, St. John Paul II explained, "is the situation in which those who reject the Father's mercy even in the last moment of their lives are definitively placed", specifying that "damnation" consists precisely in the definitive distance from God freely chosen by mankind and confirmed with death that seals that option forever" (Hell as a definitive rejection of God, 28 July 1999). A tragic reality that this TV series instead "normalises", with a further risk, highlighted by the IEA Note: "Its move to pity demons and their fate (described as unjust) may foster a distorted conception of sin and encourage a normalisation of occultism, increasing the risk that people, especially young people, will approach magical practices, seek to interact with malignant entities to the point of adhering to a Satanist vision of reality".

Does this sound like an exaggeration? And why should it, if after all, evil is no longer scary and hell is transformed into a kind of toyland, inhabited by these seemingly harmless little devils, even playing the role of victims of a ruthless God, the true antagonist. Nicolás Gómez Davila wrote that "the greatest cunning of evil is to disguise itself as a domestic and discreet, familiar and reassuring god". So reassuring as to overturn redemption from a fight against evil to a fight against good, not with God's grace but against Him. An easy feat in our age that laughs at the 'archaic' fears of the devil, but manifests a real phobia towards Christ.