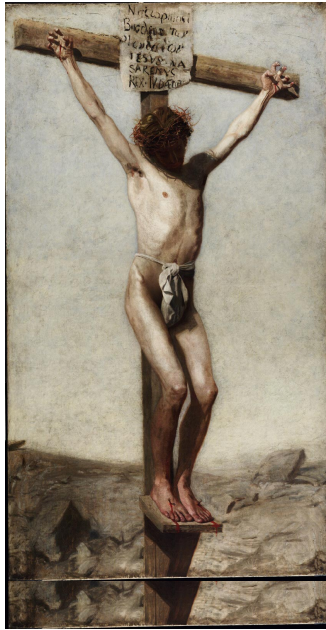




FALLEN ANGELS

FRANK ARUNDELL



“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ‘Father, glorify Your name.’” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him.” Jesus answered and said, “This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”

Crucifixion: Thomas Eakins (1844-1916)
Cover: “Paradise Lost” Simon Bisley

FALLEN ANGELS

Forward:

The quote on the Front Piece of this short essay from John the Evangelist, chapter twelve, condenses the whole meaning of the Incarnation. An explanation of why God entered creation in Jesus of Nazareth at the fullness of time. In v. 31, Jesus tells us that the “ruler of this of this world will be cast out.” Who should we say the “ruler of this world” was in the time of Jesus? Was it Tiberius, the insane recipient of the power of the Roman State? Was it Herod Antipas, who bore the title of tetrarch and was referred to as both “Herod the Tetrarch” and “King Herod” in the Bible— no two people legitimately held the title of “ruler” more than than these two? Tiberius died in Misenum on 15 March AD 37, in his seventy eighth year. Antipas died in exile in 39 AD. “Scholars have provided estimates for the year of the crucifixion in the range 30–33 AD, with the majority of modern scholars favoring the date April 7, 30 AD. Another popular date is Friday, April 3, 33 AD. (Wikipedia- modified)

It seems obvious that Jesus was not referring to either of these men regardless of the few years separating his crucifixion and their own demise. However the word “ruler” from the quote gives one pause for thought.

Who was Jesus referring to as “ruler” of this world? For those of us who consider the Holy Bible the word of the living God promulgated and interpreted by the Church, founded by Jesus of Nazareth, there can be no doubt that he was referring to the historic, anthropomorphic evil spirit or demons known as, Beelzebub, Lucifer, Satan, the Devil or the demons etc. Of all

the incomprehensible works Jesus performed there are those where it is said that he spoke directly to the demons he was exorcising from those who were possessed. “When exactly God created angels is open for debate, but what is known for sure, on faith, is that God created everything good because God, in His holiness, cannot create something sinful. So when Satan, who was once the angel Lucifer, rebelled against God and fell from heaven (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28), one third of the angelic host joined his insurrection (Revelation 12:3-4,9). There is no doubt these fallen angels are now known as the demons.” It seems a bit preposterous that we have a civil war in heaven.

“We know that hell was prepared for the devil and his angels, according to Matthew 25:41: ‘Then He will say to those on His left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ Jesus, by using the possessive word ‘his’ makes it clear that these angels belong to Satan. Revelation 12:7-9 describes an end-times angelic battle between Michael and ‘his angels’ and the devil and ‘his angels.’ From these and similar verses, it is clear that demons and fallen angels seem to be synonymous.” (got questions.org)

There is quite a bit of scholarship about “Fallen Angels” on the web. It’s the kind of story that interests the literati as well as the clerisy because it’s so wild that it would tend to put another nail in the coffin of God, since secularism and science are becoming the new religion. We probably shouldn’t be too hard on them, though, the story in itself is fascinating, like reading science fiction. We should pick up a little bit of it here so we have a broader picture as it relates to our point. That point being that certain sons of men can and do choose evil and perversity over the good. It’s a little tedious but it has to be said.

Scriptural Origins of Fallen Angels:

“The New American Bible commentary draws a parallel to the Epistle of Jude and the statements set forth in Genesis, suggesting that the Epistle refers implicitly to the paternity of nephilim (nef-fal-eem) as heavenly beings who came to earth and had sexual intercourse with women. The footnotes of the Jerusalem Bible suggest that the biblical author intended the nephilim to be an ‘anecdote of a superhuman race’.

Some Christian commentators have argued against this view, citing Jesus's statement that angels do not marry. Others believe that Jesus was only referring to angels in heaven.

Evidence cited in favor of the ‘fallen angels’ interpretation includes the fact that the phrase ‘the sons of God’ (Hebrew, בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים; literally “sons of the gods”) is used twice outside of Genesis chapter 6, in the Book of Job (1:6 and 2:1) where the phrase explicitly references angels. The Septuagint's translation of Genesis 6:2 renders this phrase as ‘the angels of God.’”

Second Temple Judaism:

“The story of the nephilim is further elaborated in the Book of Enoch. The Greek, Aramaic, and main Ge'ez manuscripts of 1 Enoch and Jubilees obtained in the 19th century and held in the British Museum and Vatican Library, connect the origin of the nephilim with the fallen angels, and in particular with the egrégoroi (watchers). Samyaza, an angel of high rank, is described as leading a rebel sect of angels in a descent to earth to have sexual intercourse with human females”:

“And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and

lusted after them, and said to one another: 'Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children.' And Semjaza, who was their leader, said unto them: 'I fear ye will not indeed agree to do this deed, and I alone shall have to pay the penalty of a great sin.' And they all answered him and said: 'Let us all swear an oath, and all bind ourselves by mutual imprecations not to abandon this plan but to do this thing.' Then swear they all together and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it. And they were in all two hundred; who descended in the days of Jared on the summit of Mount Hermon, and they called it Mount Hermon, because they had sworn and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it...

“In this tradition, the children of the Nephilim are called the Elioud, who are considered a separate race from the Nephilim, but they share the fate as the Nephilim.”

“According to these texts, the fallen angels who begat the nephilim were cast into Tartarus (Greek Enoch 20:2), a place of 'total darkness'. However, Jubilees also states that God granted ten percent of the disembodied spirits of the nephilim to remain after the flood, as demons, to try to lead the human race astray until the final Judgment.

In addition to Enoch, the Book of Jubilees (7:21–25) also states that ridding the Earth of these nephilim was one of God's purposes for flooding the Earth in Noah's time. These works describe the nephilim as being evil giants.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan identifies the nephilim as Shemihaza and the angels in the name list from 1 Enoch. b Yoma 67, PRE22 and 1 QapGen ar ii 1 also identify the nephilim as the angels that fell.”

“There are also allusions to these descendants in the deuterocanonical books of Judith, Sirach 16:7, Baruch 3:26–28,

and Wisdom of Solomon 14:6, and in the non-deuterocanonical 3 Maccabees 2:4.”

“In the New Testament Epistle of Jude 14–15 cites from 1 Enoch 1:9, which many scholars believe is based on Deuteronomy 33:2. To most commentators this confirms that the author of Jude regarded the Enochic interpretations of Genesis 6 as correct, however others have questioned this”.

Descendants of Seth and Cain:

Orthodox Judaism has taken a stance against the idea that Genesis 6 refers to angels or that angels could intermarry with men. Shimon bar Yochai pronounced a curse on anyone teaching this idea. Rashi and Nachmanides followed this. Pseudo-Philo, Biblical Antiquities 3:1–3 may also imply that the "sons of God" were human. Consequently, most Jewish commentaries and translations describe the Nephilim as being from the offspring of "sons of nobles", rather than from "sons of God" or "sons of angels". This is also the rendering suggested in the Targum Onqelos, Symmachus and the Samaritan Targum which read "sons of the rulers", where Targum Neophyti reads ‘sons of the judges’”.

“Likewise, a long-held view among some Christians is that the "sons of God" were the formerly righteous descendants of Seth who rebelled, while the ‘daughters of men’ were the unrighteous descendants of Cain, and the nephilim the offspring of their union. This view, dating to at least the 1st century AD in Jewish literature as described above, is also found in Christian sources from the 3rd century if not earlier, with references throughout the Clementine literature, as well as in Sextus Julius Africanus, Ephrem the Syrian and others.

Holders of this view have looked for support in Jesus’ statement that ‘in those days before the flood they [humans] were... marrying and giving in marriage’ (Matthew 24:38). Some individuals and groups, including St. Augustine, John Chrysostom, and John Calvin, take the view of Genesis 6:2 that the ‘Angels’ who fathered the nephilim referred to certain human males from the lineage of Seth, who were called sons of God probably in reference to their prior covenant with Yahweh (cf. Deuteronomy 14:1; 32:5); according to these sources, these men had begun to pursue bodily interests, and so took wives of the daughters of men, e.g., those who were descended from Cain or from any people who did not worship God.”

“This also is the view of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, supported by their own Ge'ez manuscripts and Amharic translation of the Haile Selassie Bible—where the books of 1 Enoch and Jubilees, counted as canonical by this church, differ from western academic editions. The ‘Sons of Seth view’ is also the view presented in a few extra-biblical, yet ancient works, including Clementine literature, the 3rd century Cave of Treasures, and the ca. 6th Century Ge'ez work *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*. In these sources, these offspring of Seth were said to have disobeyed God, by breeding with the Cainites and producing wicked children ‘who were all unlike’, thus angering God into bringing about the Deluge, as in the *Conflict*:”

“Certain wise men of old wrote concerning them, and say in their [sacred] books, that angels came down from heaven, and mingled with the daughters of Cain, who bare unto them these giants. But these [wise men] err in what they say. God forbid such a thing, that angels who are spirits, should be found committing sin with human beings. Never, that cannot be. And if such a thing were of the nature of angels, or Satans, that fell,

they would not leave one woman on earth, undefiled... But many men say, that angels came down from heaven, and joined themselves to women, and had children by them. This cannot be true. But they were children of Seth, who were of the children of Adam, that dwelt on the mountain, high up, while they preserved their virginity, their innocence and their glory like angels; and were then called ‘angels of God.’ But when they transgressed and mingled with the children of Cain, and begat children, ill-informed men said, that angels had come down from heaven, and mingled with the daughters of men, who bear them giants.”(Wikipedia, Fallen Angels)

There many other sources as well as these, but these from Wikipedia seem to be the most comprehensive we have found and correspond fairly well with most orthodox opinion.

A Different View:

There are not too many people in the world who do not believe evil exists. We have seen it with our own eyes, or categorize, as negative behavior, that which goes against our innate sensitivity toward the good. Having said that, we can not deny that there are certain individuals who appear to have no concept of the good. There are, at least in our opinion, two ways to conceptualize the good. “The good,” meaning the universal norm of personal and communal activities that meet a standard, model or pattern of behavior approved of and acceptable by the populace. (1) For about two thirds of the worlds population, adhering to the tenets of religious principles and rules, such as the Ten Commandments or the rubrics of a given church or cult on behalf of a belief in God, affords them the guidance needed to retain the good in their personal lives.

(2) For non-religious people, adhering to the principles of right and wrong based on socially acceptable motivations, or personal, conscience-driven conduct on behalf of secular law. This satisfies their inherent need— generally known as ethics. As human beings, we all know how both these avenues of behavior are susceptible to relative judgements and erroneous consciences. “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” (Matt. 26: 41)

Order in a society is maintained because more people do what is right than what is wrong. If you drive a motor vehicle you can see the differences among us every time you go out on the road. We’ve always thought that character shows up behind the wheel, on the golf course, the tennis court or on the shooting range. There is surely a difference between doing things out of ignorance or doing them with a purpose; still, whether out of ignorance or purpose, we all have to accept the responsibility for what we cause, or what we put in motion that harms others or harms the greater good. Nothing can be more true than the truth itself, in fact the truth is, of itself, only good. It is universally accepted that an offense against the truth is a serious “wrong” because it turns good on it’s head no matter what reason one gives for doing it. However, we all recognize that sometimes limiting what is true to prevent a greater wrong has become acceptable even though manipulating the truth for whatever reason can have unintentional consequences. Conversely we may limit our personal good when it gets in the way of a greater good. We see this in the military, the police, firemen and women, etc., when they jeopardize their own safety for the safety or the rescue of others lives and property. Consideration of the greater good in truth in any population is the key to a peaceful and a secure society.

Unfortunately not all adhere to that principle; sometimes it's our leaders, both in private enterprise and government, that are the transgressors. Where there is a considerable underclass who historically have been cheated or are made to feel cheated by political predators; or are taken advantage of because of their "class"—even in a free and opportunity oriented society, crime persists. Those who place themselves above others for selfish or psychological reasons, or for nefarious and prurient purposes, disturb the societal order and become subject to the laws society makes to protect itself.

Now, of course, all this seems to be “boiler plate” but there is a caveat. Both philosophically and theologically we need to ask: since we would agree there is “evil” in the world and God is the absolute good, why is there evil; where does it come from; what is it made of? Are there really evil spirits; who is Satan; is there such a thing as sin without religious rules, and so on?



Walt Kelly (1913-1973) & Pogo (0000-0000), provided us with a stunningly simple answer. The reason it intrigued us is perhaps it connected with a naive thought we've had for quite a few years; simply put, the “devil” could just very well be the dark side of humanity without the light of Christ.

When Teilhard de Chardin came up with a unique mixture of science and theology for his version of Original Sin, our initial

impression was that he was quite right. That conclusion started us off on our journey out of the neo-scholasticism we were taught. It was not until Benedict XVI said the following that we were more convinced than ever that Teilhard had hit the nail squarely on the head:

“In the writings of Teilhard de Chardin, we find the following ingenious comment on this question: “What distinguishes a materialist from a spiritualist is no longer, by any means (as in philosophy, which establishes fixed concepts), the fact that he admits a transition between the physical infrastructure and the psychic superstructure of things, but only the fact that he incorrectly sets the definitive point of equilibrium in the cosmic movement on the side of the infrastructure, that is, on the side of disintegration.”

“Certainly one can debate the details in this formulation; yet the decisive point seems to me to be grasped quite accurately:”
(Benedict XVI)

Rightly or wrongly we extrapolated and added the Matter/Anti-matter of Dirac (1902-1984) and saw that it conformed to Teilhard’s statement about Original Sin which said:

“It is the unanimous opinion of theologians (I believe) that the necessary and sufficient reagent for the existence of original sin in the world is death That is why, quite logically, the unhappy originators of retrogressive evolution try to date the Fall before any known fossil, that is to say in the Pre-Cambrian. Yet, if we are to get to the bottom, not, perhaps, of death, itself, in the strict sense of the word, but of its roots, should we not look much further back – infinitely further back, as far as the first origin of things? Consider a moment: Why do living beings die, if not in virtue of the tendency to*

disintegration essential to every corpuscular structure? Taken in the widest and most fundamental sense of the word, death (that is, disintegration) begins in truth to become apparent as early as the atom. Being built into the very physico-chemical nature of matter, all it does is to express in its own way the structural atomicity of the universe. It is impossible, therefore, to escape from the 'mortal' (and in consequence from the influence of domain of original sin) without escaping from the world itself. Located and tracked down in nature by its specific effect, death, original sin cannot therefore be assigned to any particular place or time. What it does do is to affect and infect the whole of time and space. If there is an original sin in the world, it can only be and have been everywhere in it and always, from the earliest of the nebulae to be formed as far as the most distant. This is what science tells us; and, by a most reassuring coincidence, this is what is even now being confirmed (if we carry them to their logical conclusion) by the most orthodox requirements of Christology."

*Man's death, pre-eminently, of course; but in consequence all death – since, by the inexorable demands of physical homogeneity, man could not have been alone in a system of essentially mortal animals in escaping organic decomposition." (Père Teilhard de Chardin)

This didn't leave much room for Lucifer, Satan or the Demons. Original sin was the "down-side", decomposition, built in to creation itself, the matter/antimatter in the Big Bang— put in motion by the Divine Mind, proven by the order of creation and reversed by the Savior at the "fullness of time" as the new Adam, where Creation and Redemption is connected. §338 the

Catechism of the Catholic Church says: *“Although to some extent the People of God in the Old Testament had tried to understand the pathos of the human condition in the light of the history of the fall narrated in Genesis, they could not grasp this story's ultimate meaning, which is revealed only in the light of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We must know Christ as the source of grace in order to know Adam (MAN) as the source of sin.”*

Teilhard's concept does not make God the creator of evil, but instead the creator of the “tree of good and evil;” the tree of life; life itself. A marvelous metaphor given in Genesis in terms of man's freedom by which he is made in God's image. The choice between life and death both physically and spiritually is something which we all obviously possess. We may commit ourselves to the goodness of God in this incredible “Garden of Eden” where we live, but we also have the tendency to side with the built-in negative options called actual sin, a free choice to forgo the good. As humans we know the difference between good and evil, if we didn't— we would not nor could not be free creatures. Problems still exist in today's society as in times past where “false prophets” teach good is evil and evil is good— and many follow them to their own destruction. This is how it has always been in a world where life continuously becomes cheaper when we choose to live outside the available life of God. A state of being where nothing is considered sacred, and love, the essence of life, can be totally misunderstood or rejected and replaced by pure selfishness.

We made this case because we believe it makes sense in a world of porous faith to connect the dots, an ability built into the human intellect, to appreciate all the more our biblical references. Let's have a look at what it says about “fallen angels,” once again in the Catechism.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

II. The Fall of the Angels

391 Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called "Satan" or the "devil." The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: "The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing." (2538)

392 Scripture speaks of a sin of these angels. This "fall" consists in the free choice of these created spirits, who radically and irrevocably rejected God and his reign. We find a reflection of that rebellion in the tempter's words to our first parents: "You will be like God." The devil "has sinned from the beginning"; he is "a liar and the father of lies." (1850, 2482)

393 It is the irrevocable character of their choice, and not a defect in the infinite divine mercy, that makes the angels' sin unforgivable. "There is no repentance for the angels after their fall, just as there is no repentance for men after death." (1033-1037, 1022)

394 Scripture witnesses to the disastrous influence of the one Jesus calls "a murderer from the beginning," who would even try to divert Jesus from the mission received from his Father. "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." In its consequences the gravest of these

works was the mendacious seduction that led man to disobey God. (538-540, 550, 2846-2849)

395 The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries—of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature—to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but “we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him.” (309, 1673, 412, 2850-2854)

Vatican II Post Conciliar Documents

Vatican II is very well documented and in this computer age mostly everything is available online. The two volume Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents by Austin Flannery OP, Revised Edition 1992, was published before the New Catechism (1994). In volume II, Section 5, Current Problems, 108, is Christian Faith and Demonology. It is beautifully written and easy to read. We can't give you the whole thing, but we will swipe a few paragraphs that are pertinent:

INTRODUCTION:

“The many forms of superstition, obsessional preoccupation with Satan and the demons, and the different kinds of worship of them or attachment to them have always been condemned by the Church (1). It would therefore be incorrect to hold that

Christianity, forgetful of the universal Lordship of Christ, had at any time made Satan the privileged subject of its preaching, transforming the Good News of the Risen Lord into a message of terror. Speaking to the Christians of Antioch, Saint John Chrysostom declared: “It certainly gives us no pleasure to speak to you of the devil, but the teaching which this subject gives me the opportunity to expound is of the greatest use to you” (2). In fact it would be an unfortunate error to act as if history had already been accomplished and the Redemption had obtained all its effects, without there being any further need to conduct the combat spoken of by the New Testament and the masters of the spiritual life.”

“Satan, whom Jesus had confronted by his exorcisms, whom he had encountered in the desert and in his Passion, cannot be simply the product of the human faculty of inventing fables and personifying ideas, nor can he be an erroneous relic of a primitive cultural language”.

“Paul never identifies sin with Satan. In fact he sees in sin first of all what it essentially is, a personal act of men, and also the state of guilt and blindness which Satan seeks effectively to cast them into and keep them in. Thus he makes a clear distinction between one and the other, between Satan and sin”.

“It is in effect the Book of Revelation which by revealing the enigma of the different names and symbols of Satan in Scripture definitively unmask his identity. He is active in all the centuries of human history, under the eye of God”.

...“The Fathers of the Church, convinced from Scripture that Satan and the demons are the adversaries of the Redemption, have not failed to remind the faithful of their existence and activity”.

“Patristic teaching substantially and faithfully echoed the doctrine and directives of the New Testament”.

“The existence of demonic reality and the affirmation of its power are based not only on these more specific documents, but they find further expression, in more general and less rigid terms, in Conciliar statements whenever they describe the condition of man without Christ.”

“It is to faith in fact that the Apostle Saint Peter leads us back when he exhorts us to resist the devil, “strong in faith”. Faith teaches us that the reality of evil “is a living spiritual being, perverted and corrupting”. Faith can also give us confidence, by assuring us that the power of Satan cannot go beyond the limits set by God. Faith likewise assures us that even though the devil is able to tempt us he cannot force our consent. Above all, faith opens the heart to prayer, in which it finds its victory and its crown. It thus enables us to triumph over evil through the power of God.

“It certainly remains true that the demonic reality attested to in the concrete by what we call the mystery of Evil, remains an enigma surrounding the Christian life. We scarcely know any better than the Apostles knew why the Lord permits it, nor how he makes it serve his designs. It could be however that, in our civilization obsessed with secularism that excludes the transcendent, the unexpected outbreaks of this mystery offer a meaning less alien to our understanding. They force man to look further and higher, beyond the immediate evidence. Through their menace which stops us short they enable us to grasp that there exists a beyond which has to be deciphered, and then to turn to Christ in order to hear from him the Good News of salvation graciously offered to us”.

“Christian teaching makes no concessions in vigorously defending the freedom and the greatness of man and in emphasizing the omnipotence and goodness of the Creator. It has condemned in the past and will always condemn the too easy use of temptation by the devil as an excuse. It has forbidden superstition just as much as magic. It refused to capitulate doctrinally in the face of fatalism or to diminish freedom in the face of pressure. What is more, when a possible demonic intervention is suggested, the Church always imposes a critical assessment of the facts, the same as in the case of miracles. Reserve and prudence are in fact demanded. It is easy to fall victim to imagination and to allow oneself to be led astray by inaccurate accounts distorted in their transmission and incorrectly interpreted. In these cases therefore, as elsewhere, one must exercise discernment. And one must leave room for research and its findings”. (Vatican II Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Austin Flannery OP, 1982)

The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church

On April 23, 1993 The Pontifical Biblical Commission presented a report to Pope John Paul II titled: *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. In its preface it stated:

“The study of the Bible is, as it were, the soul of theology, as the Second Vatican Council says, borrowing a phrase from Pope Leo XIII (Dei Verbum, 24). This study is never finished; each age must in its own way newly seek to understand the sacred books.”

“The church, as the people of God, is aware that it is helped by the Holy Spirit in its understanding and interpretation of

*Scripture. The first disciples of Jesus knew that they did not have the capacity right away to understand the full reality of what they had received in all its aspects. As they persevered in their life as a community, they experienced an ever-deepening and **progressive clarification** of the revelation they had received. They recognized in this the influence and the action of "the Spirit of truth," which Christ had promised them to guide them to the fullness of the truth (Jn. 16:12-13).*

The Church today journeys onward, sustained by the promise of Christ: 'The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will make you recall all that I have said to you.' ' (Jn. 14:26).

Now we must pick up from our earlier essay *Wrestling Grace*. What is interesting is that our thoughts on the subject haven't changed very much since then.

From Wrestling Grace:

Most of the Sacred texts remain in the category of mystery, though much of the Bible checks out almost perfectly vis-a-vis other historic writings surrounding it. The Bible is a unique and blessed combination of revelation and history, and certainly the most important spiritual work of "art" of all time. I have always thought that all true art is more or less spiritually inspired, and certainly the Bible is chiefly that. What is meant by "spiritually-inspired" is a very personal thing—what is meant by religious-conviction is something else. When spiritual-inspiration and religious-conviction come together—that's faith inspired by grace.

Let's take the event known as the Temptations of Christ, and try to analyze it on the basis of revelatory-history. Three of the

evangelists recorded the event. Mark, considered the oldest of the four gospels, writes of the event briefly. (Mk:1,12-13):

“And at once the Spirit drove him into the desert and he remained there forty days, and was put to the test by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels looked after him.”

Matthew and Luke write more extensively of the event. (Matt: 4,1-11) and (Luke: 4,1-13). Since they are both very similar, we will stick with the Lucan version. It must be noted that all three Evangelists placed the event after Jesus’ baptism and just before his public ministry.

“Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert, for forty days being put to the test by the devil. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry.”

“Then the devil said to him. ‘If you are Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf.’ But Jesus replied, ‘Scripture says: Human beings live not on bread alone.’”

“Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, ‘I will give you all this power and their splendor, for it has been handed over to me to give to anyone I choose. Do homage, then, to me and it shall be all yours.’ But Jesus answered him, ‘You must do homage to the Lord your God, him alone you must serve.’”

“Then he led him to Jerusalem and set him on a parapet of the Temple. ‘If you are Son of God,’ he

said to him, ‘throw yourself down from here, for scripture says: ‘He has given his angels orders about you to guard you’ and again, ‘they will carry you in their arms in case you trip over a stone.’ But Jesus answered him, ‘Scripture says; ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

“Having exhausted every way of putting him to the test, the devil left him, until the opportune moment.”

The story of the Temptation of Jesus is the Lucan way of explaining the importance of steadfastness and obedience to God. If you are somewhat superstitious, and take the words of Luke literally you can imagine a wily, animal-looking character, finding a bewildered Jesus stumbling around in the desert perhaps looking for some shade. Knowing of his weakness, Satan offers him what would be more than satisfying to his physical needs. Making quick-spirited trips to a high mountain, then a parapet in Jerusalem, the devil fails in his attempts to coerce the Son of God to pay homage to him. The story is complete in its emphasis on being faithful, and doing diligence to God by using references to the words of Psalm 91, Deuteronomy 8,v-3, and Deuteronomy 6, vv 13 and 16. If you are more curious than superstitious and turned to the workings of your own mind, you are fully aware of the dynamics between good and evil, which we have spoken of earlier as being a condition of human development through evolution.

Both Luke and Matthew take you to situations in the Old Testament which emphasize God’s revelations to the Israelites. Deut. 8:3 has us intelligently understand that God is known by human beings (a priori) and we do not simply live by (bread alone), that is, physically eating, but also by the spirit which is our life, body and soul together.

In Deut. 6: 13, we are taught that to love our Creator God is the essence of all law, and that we should not treat the love of “earthly” possessions as a substitute for the love of God.

In Ps. 91, the story tells us of God’s promise of protection for those who seek him, even under the most trying natural circumstances.

Finally, Deut. 6: 16 admonishes us not to test God’s goodness by refusing his grace. It warns that our stubbornness and laziness could be the cause of our own spiritual suicide.

Conclusion:

Whether or not this wilderness event ever historically took place is irrelevant. What is most relevant is that the teachings of Jesus, the man; and Christ the Son of God, are made known to those who read the texts either literally or metaphorically. To paraphrase the famous saying of Pogo “We have met the enemy and he is us.” One can say, whichever way you read the texts, the message is loud and clear. Psalm 95 dumps it right in our laps when it says:

“O that today you would listen to his voice!
Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
when your ancestors tested me,
and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.
For forty years I loathed that generation
and said, ‘They are a people whose hearts go astray,
and they do not regard my ways.’”

It is God who speaks through the prophet to the Israelites. Great art always speaks universally because it is nearer the truth.

Though revelation is more to the point than history in this “event”, it is still important to try to make the historical connection as well.

The January/February issue of Biblical Archaeology Review includes a very good article with regard to Jesus’ baptism having taken place at Beth Abara, the biblical (Bethany-beyond-the-Jordan). Bethabara, meaning House of the Crossing, lies on the east side of the river about “a forty minute drive from Amman and two hours by car from Jerusalem.” (Bethany-beyond-the-Jordan (Jm 1:28) should not be confused with Bethany on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.)

“Roman and Byzantine archaeological finds help to identify the site as that of Jesus’ baptism.” “in the Jubilee year 2000, John Paul II visited the site, and it has been designated by the Catholic bishops of the Middle East as one of five pilgrimage sites in Jordan.”

It is interesting to note that “Bethabara” is not far from the site of Quamran, where in 150 B.C.E, the Essenes split from the Jerusalem Temple Cult and settled in the “wilderness”; (the desert of the temptation story). “Under the leadership of a deposed high-priest they moved to the solitude of the desert to prepare for the advent of the Messiah. This is the area, scripture tells us, where Jesus wandered for 40 days. The Lucan narrator is careful to make a direct comparison to

the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the Sinai. It is unlikely that any human being could do without food for 40 days and survive. The Lucan writer knew well of the penitent fasting which was the custom of the holy men (the prophets) of Israel. As a man fasting, and in a weakened state, Jesus had to have been completely aware of the severe physical and mental stress, and his “temptations” would have been as real as yours and mine under the circumstances if in fact the story relates to an actual event.

Luke, was born in Antioch, by profession, was a physician. He had become a disciple of the apostle Paul and later followed Paul until his [Paul's] martyrdom. Having served the Lord continuously, unmarried and without children, filled with the Holy Spirit he died at the age of 84 years. (*Wikipedia, Luke*)

Matthew’s and Luke’s story of the temptations are very similar in detail. One would have to believe that Luke got the story from the writings of Matthew or was told the story by Paul who got it from Matthew’s texts or the other apostles. We surely would have to think that Satan was the loose evil spirit believed to exist as a person in those days by the Jews. They certainly saw demons in the abnormalities and diseases of human life such as epilepsy, mental disorders, leprosy, etc. We would not understand the gospels very well if we took them literally, as the Muslims believe the Koran to be, the unequivocal, direct word of God. If we did, we would be cutting off hands and gouging out eyes in the name of God even today, as they appear to be doing. The gospels are sacred because they teach the lessons of Jesus’ promises both historically and metaphorically so that humanity of every age; past, present and future, from the Incarnation to the Apocalypse, can truly understand the reality of Redemption in the person of Christ in every age. They were written by fallible human beings,

witnesses to Jesus' life among us, inspired by the Spirit of truth—as they knew the truth to be in the first century environment.

Let's hope in some small way we have taken the emphasis off the "fallen angels" mythology, and that the scales, as it were, have fallen from our inner eyes; helping to see the Savior of the world in the Spirit of Truth, as the special creatures of God we have become.

With regard to "Satan" and the other "evil spirits" we would whole heartedly defer to the thoughts of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, (Benedict XVI) in his book written in 2005 and re-issued in 2011 by Ignatius Press: *Dogma and Preaching*, Ch. 15, pg. 204: Farewell to the Devil? A Critical essay in which he says:

"If someone asks whether the devil is a person, we would probably have to answer more accurately that he is the Un-person, *the disintegration and collapse of personhood*, and that is why he characteristically appears without a face and why his being unrecognizable is his real strength. In any case, the fact remains that this 'in between' is *a real power, or, more precisely, a collection of powers and not just the sum of human selves*. The category of the 'in between', which thus helps us to understand in a new way the nature of the devil, performs yet another, parallel service: it enables us to explain better the real contrary power that has likewise become ever more foreign to Western theology: the Holy Spirit. From this perspective, we could say: He is that "In between" in which the Father and the Son are one as the one God; in the power of this 'In between', the Christian confronts that demonic 'in between' which 'interferes' everywhere and obstructs unity."

We find this not at all to be in conflict with the Coincidence of
Opposites as is the nature of man. On the razors edge of
temptation and grace.

Thursday of week 33 of the year
(St Elizabeth of Hungary, Religious)

Gospel Acclamation:
Alleluia, alleluia.
If today you hear his voice,
harden not your hearts.
Alleluia, alleluia

Re-write dedicated to Fr. Louis J Cameli