

The Devil and Satan

A letter from

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Produced in fond memory of Des, who is now
awaiting the resurrection.

Dear Glen and Jilly,

I am sorry that you had trouble getting the wood; we had an unexpected visitor and I was called away to another part of the farm. Next time I will show you where you can get wood without getting stuck, however you will need a chain saw.

I have enjoyed our scriptural conversations but as I suggested to Glen it is very hard to reach definite conclusions in a short discourse, and points that we bring up for consideration sometimes must be investigated and considered in great depth, above all without bias and a sincere hope that Truth will emerge. We have perhaps spent most of our time discussing the “Devil” and “Satan” which you regard as titles of a fallen divine angel – a supernatural being, while I submit that the two words are imperfect translations of language as our Heavenly Father’s name Yahweh or Jehovah are set down as LORD to shore up preconceived doctrines and theology.

I do not deny that there is a real Bible doctrine concerning the devil and satan and that it is important that we should understand it – *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil”*¹. We have both agreed that the real translation of the word devil is Slanderer, traducer², false accuser, calumniator, and is taken from the Greek words diabolos and daimonion. The latter signifies “demon”, Satan adversary or opposer.

There are many appalling and savage doctrines concerning devils and demons and a search will reveal that they stem from a miasma³; fantasies of pagan and heathen mythology. It is closely related to the doctrine of “immortality of the soul” and the Roman Church like the Greeks etc welded them together and proclaimed a doctrine that calls in question the omnipotence, justice, and love of Jehovah. Most of the protestants that abandoned Rome have carried over the supernatural devil, his demons and everlasting hell fire with them. Some

¹ 1 John 3:8

² To cause humiliation or disgrace to by making malicious and false statements.

³ A noxious atmosphere or influence

denominations have cleaned up the devil's act a bit, and given him major surgery, removing his horns, hooves, and tail, and a fact lift insofar that now he is a beautiful looking being capable of deceiving the very elect.

Two things that we both probably do agree about is that since Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit, good and evil becomes part of all our lives and is known to all mankind throughout the world; and it is from this fact that we should very well try and discover what the devil and satan really is. There are all sorts of theories on evil. Some say it serves a useful purpose and postulate that what seems to be evil is really good in the long run.

Another offering is that "there is no such thing as good or evil but thinking makes it so", but unfortunately this does get rid of the grim facts of a bereavement, infantile paralysis, cancer, insanity or a famine. Treatment of the problem this way is merely an evasion of it. It may be possible to argue from an armchair that typhus is a benefit to eternity but the victim is unimpressed and one suspects the philosophy would not long survive if the fever attacked the philosopher even if he recovered.

Then we have the agnostics, the evolutionist and the atheist and their solution. To them evil is an ugly fact but not a problem; abandon the idea of an all-powerful and loving God and there is no need to explain how He can allow so much trouble in the world. To the atheist evil is nature's unpleasant side – a necessary process of an evolving universe. Beauty is a fortunate accident and the cholera bacillus an unfortunate one, and the progress of human society must similarly be attended by happy and tragic episodes. If we complain that this philosophy is hopeless, holding out no promise of personal relief nor of final emancipation from evil we are told that the truth must not be rejected because it is unpleasant, and may as well make the best of it.

Briefly the answer to this is that life is not always ruthless, might is not always right, and self is not always paramount. Greed, cruelty and selfishness may fit into the atheists' view but what can he make of kindness, generosity and Christian love. To love one's friends is understandable to him but how can he explain a Christian that loves his enemies?

The natural evolutionist evades the problem of evil by creating a problem of good.

The apostle Paul was a good man counting the things of God greater than life; there have been many like him. Of course the greatest of good men was Jesus Christ. His love was such a condemnation of self-interest, and self-satisfied materialism that He was removed from the earth as a danger to it. Herod was unable to kill him as a baby but when the authorities finally caught up with Him at the age of 33 years the damage was done.

No one since has been completely comfortable in the presence of Christ unless they have surrendered to Him. Christ is evolutions greatest embarrassment; he will not allow us to consider evil apart from Jehovah. So our problem is back again more intractable than ever.

“Why does the All Powerful Jehovah allow such terrible suffering and evil, while His character as revealed to us in Christ is compassionate and loving, grieving at pain, and weeping at death?”

Perhaps the most popular attempt to solve this problem argues that there is a God of Evil (if you will pardon the misnomer) in the universe as well as a Good God.

I am compelled to approach this suspiciously because it seems to be a further running away from the problem. I have ‘tried’ to show that the foregoing ideas were evasions, and now an attempt to solve the problem by denying one of its elements is no solution.

To introduce a supernatural Devil either denies the omnipotence or love of Jehovah.

If the Devil is immortal and he would have to be if he were an angel because scriptures state that angels cannot die and as such Jehovah could not be all powerful. If on the other hand the Devil is a monster co-existent with mortal man to plague him and entice him to damnation and death then Jehovah’s love is in question.

The facts of the situation might be pictured this way. We have a triangle with one side labelled “Evil”, the second side “God All

Powerful”, and the third “God All Loving”. If we cover up or take away the “evil side” then common sense rebels. Evil is real we all admit.

Cover up the other two sides and how can we explain good?

Introduce another factor by putting D in front of evil making Devil and we immediately lost God All Powerful, or the God All Loving sides. Thus we see that the solution so far depends on suppressing one of the facts.

However this Devil Hypothesis has a long tradition behind it and I don't want to be guilty of over simplifications. Very few people will contend for an immortal Devil when the implications are pointed out. Jehovah is master in His own Universe. A long lived Devil rather than an immortal personal Devil is usually contended for, so let us consider the possibility introducing both with some mythology, and scripture.

The ancient Persians believed in a god called Ahura Mazda – The Wise Lord, and another God called Ahriman – the Author of Evil. They explained the state of the World as due to a constant struggle between the powers of light and darkness. Zoraster, the prophet of this religion predicted and taught that ultimately Ahura Mazda – the Wise Lord would prevail.

Isaiah chapter 45 is an instructive commentary on this religion. This chapter introduces us to Cyrus the great king of Persia who restored the Jews to their own land. Jehovah through Isaiah addresses him. *“For Jacob my servant’s sake and Israel mine elect I have called thee by thy name. I have surnamed thee though thou hast not known me. **I am the LORD and there is none else, there is no God beside me.** I girded thee though thou hast not known me, that they may know from the rising of the sun and from the west that **there is none beside me. I am the Lord and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.**”*⁴

Jehovah God reiterates here five times that He is God, and God alone and there is none beside Him, and exposes the Persian dualism of two gods as an illusion, and the modern dualism imputing God and

⁴ Isaiah 45:4-7

Devil must be included in this condemnation. Let us note that the Devil repudiated in Isaiah 45, according to Zoroaster's own teaching, is to perish eventually. Thus Ahriman corresponds with the popular notion of the Devil – powerful but not immortal. The passage in Isaiah excludes both inventions.

We must not confuse the word sin with the evil that God created in Isaiah 45.

Paul says in Romans 5 verse 12

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”

Man, on the whole, is responsible for moral evil as sin is called; slums, sweated labour, brothels, anti-Semitism, racial hatreds, and all other products of man's lust and folly.

Jehovah on the other hand is responsible for physical evil, such as subjecting sinful mankind to death by both natural and catastrophic means; visiting the flood on the ungodly in Noah's day, destroying Sodom with fire and desolating Jerusalem for her crimes. The prophet Amos sums this up when he says, *“Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?”* Amos 3:6

If all the evil in the world can be attributed to man's sin, in the suffering he causes his fellows and in the wrath of God which it calls forth, what purpose does the Devil serve? If the answer is to “make man sin”, the answer comes at once. “Why then is man held responsible?” The Bible is implacable and intractable on this point. Sin is laid firmly at man's door, and he is never allowed to pass the blame. The Bible says, *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”*⁵ What ever the truth may be about the Devil, he cannot be blamed or used as an excuse for our wickedness. Yet if there is indeed a supernatural marauding tempter it is difficult to see why the fact could not be urged in mitigation of man's

⁵ Ezekiel 18:20

sin. Surely those who contend for a personal Devil must experience some strain in maintaining God's justice and love at the same time?

God has promised that no man who comes to Him will be tempted above that which he is able to bear. This would involve a severe curbing of the tempter's powers. His only legitimate function would be to put man to the test to see whether he had made full use of his spiritual resources and training available: to discover if he were fitted for God's use.

This might be the right place for us to go to the Garden of Eden of which we discussed and you asked me valid questions. I think that we both agreed that because man had been given a power of choice, because he could obey or disobey it was necessary that he should be proved. Shortly after Jehovah had created His greatest work He applied a test, as we should expect. Genesis 3:1-6

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

[2] And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: [3] But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. [4] And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: [5] For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. [6] And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her;”

There is no need here or warrant to import a fiend in the guise of a serpent; to do this is putting something into the record that is not there, we would be entering the realm of guess work. The text simply reveals that the serpent had the power of speech and an order of intelligence subsequently lost.

This reading is borne out by the fact that it is the serpent itself which is punished – surely unfair if it were the victim of a monstrous impersonation.

The first humans were innocent, their intercourse with God (Elohim) and their delightful environment suggested absolute trust in a loving Father. But they had to be brought to the test. The serpent's subtlety served the purpose. His lie perverted Eve's lawful appetites. The human pair would not have been "very good" if they had not eyes to behold beauty, but to covet beauty which is forbidden is unlawful: appetite for prohibited fruit is lust, and to desire wisdom by a wrong means is a perversion. Thus we are introduced to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and mechanism of perversion.

That the serpent should thereafter be used as a figure of sin is to be expected. In Numbers 21, we read that God punished the murmuring Israelites by sending fiery serpents amongst them. There is a strong suggestion here that sin symbolized by the serpent had the power of death. When Moses made a serpent of brass, it implies and anticipated a means being found of rendering sin impotent through Jesus Christ. Most probably it also recalls the part played in man's downfall by the literal serpent, illustrating its symbolic use.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:33 "*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*" All those who oppose God are styled "the seed of the serpent" because the mischief they work is akin.

One example of this warning against God is pictured in Revelation 12:7-9 where the forces of good and evil are in conflict. The latter are referred to as "*the great dragon, the old serpent called the Devil and Satan*". If we take for granted that the Bible devil of popular fancy is here being referred to, this only supports the idea that the devil sometimes adopts the disguise of a serpent. But later on in the chapter (verse 10) the devil is further described as the accuser of our brethren, which accused them before God. This is no part of the popular devil's activity, and the great dragon, the old serpent called the Devil and Satan is more sensibly understood as some mass movement of human

wickedness in opposition to the servants of God presented in picturesque language.

Once the Edenic serpent had invited man to pervert his natural appetites and man had responded it is difficult to understand why some supernatural monster should be needed continually on duty to keep the process going. It would gather force under its own momentum. By disobedience man had gained a knowledge of good and evil, he was removed from the benign influence of the Garden and placed in an environment where the rigours of existence were an obstacle to obeying his better nature. The murder of Abel is completely explained by the plain circumstances without introducing invisible machinations. With the growth of the human race temptations from within were supplemented by temptations from without due to the daily intercourse of mankind the struggle for existence. All the necessary tests of character were provided within the race. This is what the Scriptures actually teach:

*“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: [14] But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of **his own lust**, and enticed. [15] Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”* James 1:13-15

The appointment of a super human tempter would be superfluous, and would reflect upon God’s love, for such a being could only exist with God’s permission, and thus Jehovah would be the real tempter on the premise that He is creator and sustainer of all things.

After God had sentenced our first parents to death for sin, mortality took affect at once, involving a gradual decline to the grave. The physical consequences of sin preclude the longevity claimed by some for the “fallen angel” they postulate. God does not act whimsically in these matters; the punishment of sin is not administered with partiality. A supernatural devil would be the arch sinner.

John 8:44 says, *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and*

abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

If the devil referred to here is one mighty individual, he should and would be in the grave. No saviour could be provided to cover his sin. The only excuse for him being alive would be that he was indispensable for testing man’s obedience. But the evidence is that all such tests arise in the human race itself – in the lust of the heart⁶ and in man’s intercourse with man.

To the best of my knowledge all who contend for a supernatural personal Devil trace his origin to a rebellion of certain angels. See Revelation 12:7-9 *“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, ^[8] And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. ^[9] And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan”*.

This passage is linked with Isaiah 14:12 *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!”*, again 2 Peter 2:4⁷ is brought in for further weight.

The first quotation comes from Revelation, which Jesus gave *“to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass”*. So the Dragon here referred to, called the Devil and Satan, was ejected from heaven after or as a result of Christ’s ministry on earth.

⁶ Matthew 15:17-20

*“Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? ^[18] But **what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.** ^[19] For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. ^[20] **These are what defile a person.** But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”*

⁷ 2 Peter 2:4

“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment”

The fall of the dragon is therefore too late to account for the origin of the devil of popular belief. If this dragon prompted the serpent of Eden then Jehovah must have given him access to heaven again. Yet scripture forbids this in declaring “*neither was there place anymore in heaven*”.

The mysterious Lucifer of Isaiah 14 is plainly addressed in verse 4. “*thou shalt take up this **proverb** against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!*” The chapter compares the downfall of the king of Babylon to the headlong descent of a falling star (Lucifer) actually the planet Venus to be precise, “*the evening and morning star.*” There is no justification for seeing anything more than this in the poetic language. To do so, one must come to the chapter with ideas already in one’s mind before they can be extracted.

Who ever the angels were in 2 Peter 2:4 and whatever their sin it is evident and definite that they are now impotent in “*chains of darkness, to be reserved unto the day of judgment*”. This is definite language and signifies chains of death. Sons of God can refer to both divine and human angels (messenger, agent) and is used of humans in the following places: Matthew 11:10; Luke 7:24-27; Luke 9:52; James 2:25⁸. Why

⁸ Matthew 11:10 (ESV)

*This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send **my messenger** before your face, who will prepare your way before you."*

Luke 7:24-27 (ESV)

*When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ^[25] What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts' ^[26] What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ^[27] This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send **my messenger** before your face, who will prepare your way before you."*

Luke 9:52 (ESV)

*And he sent **messengers** ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him.*

James 2:25 (ESV)

*And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the **messengers** and sent them out by another way?*

must this “*Sons of God*” refer to divine angels? It refers to humans in Deuteronomy 14:1; Psalm 82:6; Hosea 1:10; Luke 3:38; John 1:12; 1 John 3:11. The angels in this passage were human not divine angels. This is proven by the following: “*The wages of sin is death*” Romans 6:23. Therefore if divine angels were sinners they would die. But Jesus said angels do not die. Luke 20:36⁹.

I suggested to you that these human angels could be the 250 princes of the Israelitish congregation which were led in rebellion by Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

1. They were angels since they were assigned to minister to the congregation.
2. Their “*first estate*” or “*principality*” (Jude 6 margin) was that of princes or leaders.
3. They left their “*former estate*” when they sought the priesthood.
4. They were delivered into chains of darkness when they were swallowed alive by the earth.
5. They were sinners in arrogating to themselves the priesthood.
6. The judgement is that which will be administered by Christ. 2 Timothy 4:1¹⁰

You questioned me Glen, and rightly so, as to who was the Satan who treated Job so spitefully. The first thing that impresses me in

⁹ Luke 20:36 (ESV)

for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

¹⁰ 2 Tim. 4:1 (ESV)

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:

reading the Book of Job, is that it is a magnificent piece of literature equal to anything that Shakespeare or Tennyson or the like wrote and actually the episode of Satan in it, is a small bit of cheese in comparison to the full message the book imparts, and it is to be regretted that the doctrinal legacy of the devil and Satan inherited from the Roman Church has made it the most well known or the only bit that the average person knows about it.

If after digesting the prologue and 2nd chapter describing the testing of Job, if I personally believed the Satan was a supernatural being who had the extraordinary discourse with God Almighty, I would feel extremely embarrassed when I happened upon Habakkuk 1:13 where we are told that God is *“of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity”*. I would have to ask myself *“How then could Job’s Satan, if he were in fact the very embodiment of evil and wickedness, have stood in God’s presence, let alone converse with him?”* *“For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity”*.¹¹ I suggest to you here again Glen that a fallen angel, Satan, would be the greatest fool of all time to usurp his high position in an effort to be greater or steal a march on Jehovah.

We know the word *satan* is adversary, and does not always have an evil connotation as it is applied to the angel that withstood Baalim. It is applied to the Apostle Peter, and to God Himself in various parts of scripture.

It is not specifically revealed who the *satan* was in Job. It has been variously suggested that Job’s adversary was a man, or an angel, or a poetic personification of the affliction which God allowed for the perfecting of the patriarch. I have personally thought that maybe the *satan* was very weak, and envious human son of God who met together with others to present themselves before the Lord as we do in worship, God who is the reader of the heart and mind knew the thoughts and character of the adversary, and for the long term benefit of Job and

¹¹ Psalm 5:4-5

maybe the adversary also He allowed the calamities to come upon Job. This is only guesswork and I only regard it as a possibility.

Nevertheless there is nothing in the record which allows us to transform Job's enemy into a foul fiend the archenemy of all mankind. However we view the operation of Job's Satan the result is beyond question – a good man was turned into a better. The adversary had his place in starting a chain of events, which left Job doubly blessed, and a better appreciation of his blessing.

In our last discussion, Matthew 4:1-11 "*Then Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil ...*" was touched upon.

This is one of the stock proof texts cited in support of the theory or dogma that Satan is a personal being – a fallen angel.

If the devil which confronted Jesus were a fallen angel, why would the Holy Spirit lead the Son of God into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil? The essence of temptation rests in its subtlety, not in its obviousness. If Jesus had been confronted by a fallen angel he would have been on his guard, the obviousness of the temptation would have vitiated its power.

"Jesus was tempted in all points as we are", Hebrews 4:15, but who today is ever engaged in discussion with a fallen angel devil?

A temptation to be a temptation must be plausible, but if a fallen angel offered to Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, Jesus would have at once known that he was a fake God. Daniel 4:32 "*the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.*" Jesus knew his Old Testament. "The God of this World" (age) which you quoted to me as being a personable Devil would break the Scriptures and render it valueless, and is better understood as the desires of the flesh at all costs in opposition to the will of God. It is better understood as personification. There is considerable evidence that the temptations were subjective, that is, the conflicts within Jesus in the narratives are as if there was a dialogue between Jesus and an adversary a liar and slanderer when in effect the satan or devil is only the

personification of the pull of the desires afflicting Jesus. Adam succumbed to this but Jesus triumphed. Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, he was enticed by lusts, but those desires did not conceive and give birth to sin. We will look at the other temptations. Mark states that Jesus was “*there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan*” Mark 1:13, but at least one of the temptations is said to have taken place in the holy city – Jerusalem. If Jesus literally went to the holy city then the accounts appear contradictory.

Where in the wilderness is a mountain high enough to view all the kingdoms of the world and their glory in a moment of time. If as you suggested, the angel power of the devil made it possible for Jesus to see them, why did they bother to climb a mountain at all. Actually the message here to be learned has nothing really to do with the definition of who the devil was. Jesus was baptised by John and given the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:16¹² How was that power to be used?

- To make life easy by using the power for selfish purposes - making stones into bread?
- By converting Israel by dazzling displays of divine power – by casting himself down from the temple?
- By avoiding the agony and humiliation of crucifixion and death by taking the kingdoms of the world?

John 6:14-15 *“Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.”*

¹² Matthew 3:16 (KJV)

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

The power and the miracles that Jesus had at his disposal was adequate for him to have attained World rule. Thus the true nature of the temptations is revealed as a vivid dramatization of a struggle in his own mind.

No second party seen or unseen was needed to point out to Jesus all the abuses he could make of his Sonship. The Devil here is sufficiently explained by a dramatic presentation of the human heart which Jesus shared with us all. Before passing on, this may be the place to look at the sentence passed upon the serpent which Glen you brought up for me to consider, Genesis 3:14-15¹³. As I have said, Jesus knew his Old Testament, he knew that he was the Son of God and the Son of man; and as such was the seed to be bruised by the serpent in the heel (or being put to death by the Romans at the instigation of the Jews) the grave could not hold him if he died without sin – which he did. Furthermore he knew that he was the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent in the head (signifying a fatal wound). How did Jesus do this? Hebrews 2:14 tells us - *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Jesus) also himself likewise took part of the same; **that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.**”* If the devil here is a strong mighty supernatural being, how could the death of Jesus destroy him. It would have needed the physical strength of Jehovah himself not the weakness of a sinless mortal man. And yet Jesus has destroyed the slanderer, the grave could not hold him and at the appropriate time of his return he will bestow upon his faithful brethren everlasting life, fulfilling the words of Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:25 & 26 *“For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”* This is the main theme of the Gospel message.

¹³ Genesis 3:14-15

And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Evil Spirits

The existence of a spirit world of evil is sometimes deduced from the New Testament references to Demons. You quoted to me Glen, from Mark 5, where a mad man claims to be possessed by legion of demons and appealed to Jesus to cast them out into a herd of swine. Jesus grants his request and appears to accept the view held about evil spirits.

The ancient pagans believed in immortal souls, and the Greeks, Romans, and many of the current denominations, and some Jews share this view with them supposing that at death they floated around in the air and had the power to pass into humans and animals. These demons were or are necessarily all supposed to be bad but the mortals believed their influence played a large part in the good and evil in the world around them. The bad souls or spirits were supposed to cause sickness and lunacy. Language crystallizes popular ideas and so afflictions came to be referred to as demons. In the first century it would have been difficult to speak of mental derangement in current medical terms. It was necessary to use the current terms of that period of time. We still sometimes use the words lunatic meaning moonstruck, and St Vitus' dance, falling disease for epilepsy without supporting the ideas from which they have sprung. We are not committed to moon worship or Junolatry by heading a letter "Monday the 2nd of June". Indeed we should have some difficulty in avoiding the irrespective of the fact they are of pagan origin.

I might say a little girl is as dainty as a fairy, but this does not mean that I believe in pixies. We know that the Christmas and Easter festivals stem from pagan origins, and we do not keep them as sacred. I do not think the Jehovah's Witnesses do also, because we are not instructed to do so from scripture. However to be fair to the people who do, they are sincere in thinking that in so doing they are acknowledging and honouring Christ, and are not devotees of the "Feast of Saturnalia" or the "Queen of Heaven". Most would never have heard or considered these pagan feasts which were grafted into Christianity by early

missionaries to help convert pagans to their faith. So one answer therefore to those who say that Jesus shared the popular views about demons is that he did not; he only used the popular language about demons.

Jesus also spoke of Mammon¹⁴, which is an idol of evil influence, and it personified riches. Also Beelzebub, the Philistines God of the Flies without believing in their material existence. In other words, Jesus accommodated his language to that of the times without committing himself to the popular delusions.

One of my Plymouth Brethren friends told me that the Devils greatest triumph is to persuade people that he does not exist. This is a stock argument of the Seventh Day Adventists and mostly those who believe he is a supernatural being. My efforts in the foregoing pages which has turned out to be a much longer letter than I anticipated is not to prove the devil's non-existence, but rather to show that he does not exist in the traditional form of a supernatural fiend, a demon, an infernal being. The Bible is emphatic that the devil is real, loathed of God, the curse of man, and responsible directly and indirectly for all the trouble in the world.

Let me say here that the true answer to any doctrinal or theological matter is not necessarily to be found in any denomination or Church, whether they be Roman, Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist, Pentecostal, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Christadelphians. These are all human organizations. They may be worthy of respect but none of their leaders or laymen are infallible, and all have had changes and differences of opinion within their organizations. Therefore the hierarchy above all of any of these should not be feared and the last court of appeal regarding any of their pronouncements is the Bible. The truth of the Bible alone can make us wise unto salvation and possibly it might have been a better starting point if we were to have discussed in depth the Bible itself; what it is, how to understand and how to interpret it. It is in "oriental" language couched with high metaphor, figure, which includes personification, symbols and hieroglyph such as in

¹⁴ Mammon = The personification of a false god of greed, riches and material values

Daniel and Revelations. The base of these styles all have a sound and literal meaning and the bulk of the book, or the 66 books, are written in straightforward language. It must be approached and read a little child with a desire to learn. To read it with or to prove preconceived ideas and notions is fatal. Some denominations use a gratuitous and indiscriminate rule of interpretation which by a process called “spiritualization” obliterates almost every original feature in the face of Scripture and makes the Word of God of none effect. To show you the Bible Devil I must try and illustrate to you the principle of personification. We use it every day in conversation without perhaps realising what we are saying. Here are two examples. I might say to my wife, “Look out the window, dear, and see the heavy frost we have this morning”. She might reply and personify this by saying, “Yes there’s no doubt about it, Jack Frost really visited Dorriggo last night.” Another one. “Spring is really here now that all the flowers are blooming.” Personified, “Spring goeth everywhere dresses in white, red, yellow, and gold.” There is only an apparent conflict here because we recognise the language of personification and appreciate its dramatic force.

Now let us go to the Bible. Genesis chapter 4. Cain slew his brother Abel, and lied to God in that he knew not where Abel was. The Lord replied (in personification) – *“the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.”* Here the Lord, as you would be aware, is informing Cain in a dramatic fashion that he knows that Abel has been murdered, and no-one would postulate that the blood in the days of old had the power of speech, although one could argue that is what Jehovah’s reply to Cain actually implies.

Now let us pair some Bible passages directly concerned with the foregoing subject matter. In James 1:13-15 we read *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”*

In Matthew 4:1 it says *“Jesus was driven into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil”*.

This does not mean that Jesus was tempted by one agency and man by another for he was tempted in all points as we are. The plain meaning of *“tempted of the devil”* is tempted through his own lusts or appetites. Jesus of course did not yield, so lust did not conceive to bring forth sin as it often does in us.

Another Bible pair: Psalm 81:10-12, *“I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust”*.

Now in John 8:44 & 47, *“Then said Jesus to them (that is the Jews) Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. ... that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”*

Israel's failure to hearken in one place is attributed to their own heart's lust, and in another to the Devil: evidently the two are one and the same. See Matt 15:9 and Jer 17:9 for confirmation.

Temptation of course is not always from within, as the following passages will show. In 2 Peter 2:18 *“For when they (that is false teachers) speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.”* And in 1 Cor. 7:2-5 *“Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.”*

In both cases the enticement is external. In one the agent is plainly stated. In the other the dangers of the situation is personified as the work of Satan.

Let me sum it up this way. As an imaginary Father Christmas (to those who keep the feast) is a very real spirit of goodwill abroad at Christmas time, so the terrible power of sin working within us and without is pictured as the Devil. Because of man's sin it is as though he has a fiendish enemy engineering his destruction.

The Bible has performed a great service by making sin objective, but man has turned a device intended to assist him in grappling with the enemy into a scape-goat for his sin.

The following two passages neatly identify the Devil, and summarize the reasoning: Romans 6:23 "*The wages of sin is death*". And Hebrews 2:14 "*him that has the power of death, that is the Devil*". There is only one power of sin (Sin).

We are all put in the grave for our own sin, and not through the activities of an evil being outside ourselves. Whenever man opposes Jehovah and slanders his word he becomes a Satan (1 Tim 3:11 where slanderers mean Devils). The operation of millions of human devils throughout thousands of years is vividly represented as though there was a supernatural evil spirit co-existent with man. When Peter said: "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8) he was encouraging the believing Jews to remain steadfast in the Faith despite the fierce persecution of the Roman authorities (2 Tim 4:17¹⁵). The arresting language signifies not some mysterious occult power but human organised villainy.

The true devil, sin, is the most dreadful thing in existence and the vivid and pungent language of the Bible is fully justified in bringing the horror of it home to us. So in a nutshell, evil, which we have been considering, can be broadly understood as sin, its affects, and God's

¹⁵ 2 Tim. 4:17 (ESV)

*But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from **the lion's mouth**.*

judgement on it. The Bible by the most pungent description helps us to recognise dimly Jehovah's utter loathing of it. Yet God risked or allowed its ugly appearance in order to produce a creature bound to Him by love, and not by force. Jehovah could have made the most scrupulously obedient robot. But there is no merit in being obedient because we have to be. People sometimes say, "Why doesn't God stop this, or make this happen?" Others have declared that He is dead. But if God compelled man, He would turn him into a machine. Man's greatness and God's joy is in willing obedience. The price paid however is the sin of the unwilling. Thus evil is seen in its true perspective as the price of human freedom, and we can anticipate that God will abolish it only when He has achieved His purpose with man – when man has learned to use his freedom conforming to His requirements.

In 1 Corinthians 15:22-26, Paul says, *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."*

In the meantime God tolerates evil while the number of those who respond to His love are made up. Acts 15:14 says, *"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."* Actually, this has been going on since the fall of Adam and Eve. We read in Hebrews 11 of Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and many others who died in faith not having received the promises, but are all reserved for the time when Jehovah's book of Remembrance is completely made up. When this process is complete the time for men of the World to exercise their will to do good or evil will be gone. Jehovah will then solve the problem of evil by removing it from the earth and He will be *"All in all"*. Pending that time Christ is our complete and only answer. *"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."* It is important to remember the rest of that verse which says *"take my yoke upon you and learn of*

me". If we can do this we can look forward with hope to the glorious promise in the 21st chapter of Revelation: "*And I saw a new heaven (Power, ruler or Government) and a new earth (peoples or population), for the first heavens and the first earth had passed away: and there was no more sea (signifying turbulence). And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.*"

On the other hand if the Bible Devil is really a "fallen angel supernatural being" how are we to know that maybe sometime in the future all this wretched business of temptation, sin, and death will not break out again? The destruction of the present hypothetical fallen angel devil would not guarantee this will not happen again. The whole proposition implies that Divine Angels live under the heavy weight of temptation as humans do now and if as the doctrine suggests, that some have already yielded in the past, what insurance is there that this will not again happen at some time again during eternity? There would appear to be a flaw in God's plan of salvation in abolishing sin and death. I do not write this last part facetiously and I would be most truly grateful if you would explain it all to me.

I am sorry that I could not have condensed this letter, but we both regard that matter as a serious subject therefore I thought it worthwhile to answer the questions you brought up – those at least that I could remember. I invite you, indeed I hope you will give what I have written the greatest scrutiny against the background of Scripture. It is a very big subject, there may be quoted few more points and questions that I have not touched upon. Please feel free to criticize and bring them forward. I know that some of the points I have made do run counter to Watchtower theology, but they themselves have made adjustments in their philosophies over the years and have altered pronouncements accordingly in their writings. I am the first to acknowledge that much of

what they have written is truth and has given me an urge to search deeper into Scripture than I normally would have done. In what ever way we may endeavour to help one another, and I believe that has been your aim in coming to see me, we neither of us should abandon that God given right of the noble Bereans in searching the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so.

Trusting this finds you both well.

With kind regards

Desmond White

P.S. You are both welcome to call and see me at any time. You mentioned that you had not a lot of experience of farm life but was interested in it. I have found it a good life with a scope for achievement of things which I have considered worthwhile. It calls for a sound business head a capacity for hard work, and perseverance. Those who make the life a success could probably earn a bigger income at some other job, but a real farmer never regards it just a way of making money. There are many other better rewards, and I would be happy to drive you around the farm and show what its all about, the land, the cattle and young stock, also where you can get plenty of wood.