

**THAT OLD SERPENT
CALLED THE
DEVIL AND SATAN**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The propositions and conclusions presented in this book are not original to the author. Had it been left to myself, it is unlikely that I would have ever untangled the skein of twisted Scriptures which tradition has woven together to form its doctrine of a fallen-angel devil.

My knowledge and understanding on the subject of that old serpent called the devil and satan has been gained from various books and magazines written by others who had the ability to independently study the Bible in depth without prejudice, and discern the difference between divine truth and human tradition.

Due to a need that arose for something a little more comprehensive than what was available in one volume, the decision was made to write this one. Of particular help and assistance in researching the subject have been books such as “Elpis Israel” by John Thomas; “Christendom Astray” by Robert Roberts; “The Devil - the Great Deceiver” by Peter Watkins, and articles in “The Christadelphian” and “The Testimony” magazines.

Some of the “words fitly spoken” in these books and magazines were jotted down years ago in lecture notes before the writing of a book was even contemplated, and have been incorporated in this book. Because a record was not kept of the particular book or magazine that the various statements came from, specific acknowledgement cannot be given to them when they are made, so the general acknowledgement given above will have to suffice.

However, the ultimate source of all truth is the God of truth Himself, and it is more important to give acknowledgement to Him than the human instruments He uses to reveal it.

Barry C. Hodson

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INTRODUCTION

There are many references in the Bible to the devil and satan, making it clear that a very real force is involved which tempts and induces people to think and act contrary to the will and way of God. No one claiming to be a Christian would doubt or question this.

What is questionable however, is the origin, nature and identity of the devil, and there is a need in many circles for an open and deeper investigation into this aspect of the subject.

For centuries the church has taught that the devil is a fallen angel, and therefore a supernatural being. On the basis of certain Scriptures, it is believed that his name is Lucifer or Beelzebub, and that he was originally perfect and of very high rank - an archangel. But, due to pride, he sinned by rebelling against God, resulting in being cast out of heaven to earth with one third of God's angels who supported his rebellion. Since that time, these rebel angels have been roaming the earth using their power to influence people against God, commencing at the very beginning of human history by using a serpent to bring about the fall of man.

Unfortunately, a careful and more critical analysis of the foundation verses used to support this view, reveals they have been taken out of context and misapplied. There is, in fact, as shall be pointed out, no foundation for this particular concept of the devil.

This does not mean, of course, that there is no devil. No! All it means is that the origin, nature and identity of the devil is different from what has been thought. But this difference does not alter or diminish the evil influence which proceeds from the enemy! In fact, it brings him closer to home and requires us to be more on guard against him!

In any warfare, it is important to know who the enemy is and be able to identify him. For this reason it is of fundamental importance to have a correct concept of the devil. The fundamental nature of the doctrine is particularly evident in the fact that the main mission of Christ's sacrifice was to destroy the devil (Heb. 2:14). A false concept of the devil therefore, inevitably leads to false concepts on the nature and sacrifice of Christ.

In view of this, the doctrine of the devil is clearly not a trivial or unimportant matter, and an investigation of it could hardly be regarded as a pointless academic exercise.

In presenting another view of the devil, it would be good to be able to launch straight into a positive explanation of it, without reference to the

traditional view. However, those who hold to the traditional view will naturally react, saying, “What about the angels that sinned, Lucifer, the anointed cherub, the great red dragon, and the serpent etc?” The ground therefore needs to be cleared first by addressing those issues. The first few chapters will therefore relate to those foundation verses upon which the traditional view has been based, showing how they have been taken out of context and misapplied.

* * * * *

CHAPTER ONE THE ANGELS THAT SINNED

Reference is made to the angels that sinned in 2 Pet. 2:4 and Jude v 6. These parallel verses teach us that:

1. Angels sinned.
2. The sin involved not keeping their “first estate”. (RSV: “position.” Berkley: “office”). The Good News Bible says “They did not stay within the limits of their proper authority.”
3. They left their own habitation, i.e. they departed from their dwelling place or home.
4. God did not spare them. They were punished.
5. The punishment involved being cast down to hell where they were delivered into everlasting chains under darkness. They are reserved there for the judgement of the Great Day, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude v 7).

Now, notice what these verses do not say.

1. There is no mention of the words “devil” and “satan.” To affirm that these angels who sinned became the devil is an assumption. The text does not teach that.

2. There is no mention of heaven being their home, or the place from which they were cast down.

3. There is no mention of being cast down to the surface of the earth, where they could live and mingle with the inhabitants of the earth.

No! They were cast down to “hell,” which has been translated from the Greek word “tartaros” and relates to the deep abyss - the lower regions of the earth - the place of the dead not the living.

One does not have to be in heaven to be cast down into the deep regions of the earth. One could be living on the earth and be cast down into its depths!

4. No mention is made of the angels freely and actively roaming the earth, tempting people to sin. Quite the opposite. They have been delivered into everlasting chains, reserved for judgement.

5. Nowhere in the text is it stated or implied that the sinful angels were divine supernatural beings.

NOT ALL ANGELS ARE SUPERNATURAL

Initially, some will find this hard to accept because it is commonly believed that the word angel means a divine supernatural being. This is

not so.

The word “angel” has been translated from the Greek word “angelos”, which simply means “messenger.” The word denotes an “office” or “agency,” but not the nature of the agent. The messenger (angel) could be human or divine. The same word equally applies to both. Realizing this, some translations of the Bible have tried to help make a distinction between the two, by translating “angelos” two different ways. When they thought that the reference was to a human messenger, they simply translated it “messenger.” But when they thought it referred to a divine messenger, they transliterated it, i.e. they removed the “os” from “angelos,” and carried the remaining letters over into the English, giving us the English word “angel.” “Angelos” has been translated “messenger” many times in the New Testament in reference to human messengers. See the following verses: Matt. 11:10. Mk. 1:2. Lk. 7:27. Lk. 7:24. Lk. 9:52. Jam. 2:25. The same applies in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word “Malak” is translated “angel” 111 times and “messenger” 98 times.

Now, the translators no doubt meant well when they gave us these two different words from one and the same Greek and Hebrew words, but the question is; did they get it right every time? Did they give the right sense when they gave us “angels that sinned” instead of “messengers that sinned”? “Angels” conveys divine beings. “Messengers” conveys human beings, and there is a profound difference between the two.

Some translations do actually render it “messengers that sinned.” For example, The emphasized Bible by Rotherham, The Concordant Literal New Testament, The Restoration of Original Sacred Name Bible, The Emphatic Diaglott.

It is rather unfortunate that in this particular case, the choice between “angel” and “messenger” makes such a profound difference to the meaning of the statement.

The same choice was left open to the translators in Pr. 13:17 and 17:11 where reference is made to “wicked messenger” and “cruel messenger.” In both cases, the word “messenger” comes from the Hebrew “malak,” elsewhere translated “angel.” But the context of the statements indicate that the reference is to humans, so the translators made the right choice, giving us “wicked messenger” instead of “wicked angel.”

CHECKING THE CONTEXT

A careful analysis of the context of 2 Pet. 2:4 also indicates that the reference is to humans and would be better translated “messengers

that sinned.” From verse 1, this chapter relates to occasions in Old Testament times when evil men were judged and punished by God. The whole section is dealing with the sinfulness and judgement of human beings - fallen man, not fallen angels.

The question is therefore, to what incident in the Old Testament does the sinful messengers refer?

It is not too difficult to establish their identity if we follow the guidelines provided in the text. They were: 1. Men who did not stay within the limits of their proper authority. 2. They departed from their dwelling place. 3. They were cast down to the lower regions of the earth.

No. 3 is the most significant clue. There is only one incident in the Old Testament that fits this description; namely, the rebellion led by Korah, recorded in Numbers 16.

Korah was from the same priestly tribe of Levi as Moses and Aaron. But Moses and Aaron had been singled out from the Levites to perform special and exclusive tasks. They were given more authority.

Korah however, and his fellow Levites, although subordinate priests, had a very important office. They had been given considerable authority in relation to the service of the Tabernacle and ministry of holy things, and their dwelling place was near the Tabernacle on the south side.

Now, in Mal. 2:7 the Levites are referred to as “The messengers of the Lord,” and the word “messenger” comes from the same word elsewhere translated “angel.” The Levites were the “angels” of the Old Testament church! (Princes and leaders from other tribes are also called “messengers” (angels) in the Old Testament as well).

In connection with this, it is interesting to note that leaders of the New Testament church are also called angels in Rev. 1:20. 2:1, 8, 12, 18. 3:1, 7, 14.

It is also interesting to note that the marginal reference in Mal. 2:7 refers back to Ecc. 5:6, which says it should never be declared before “the angel” that a vow was a mistake. The fact that the translators have connected this verse with Mal. 2:7 indicates they believed the angel was a Levite - a priest. The Good News Bible actually translates it “God’s priest.”

ANGELS CHARGED WITH FOLLY

Job 4:18, which speaks about God charging His angels with folly, can be understood in the same light. As in the other cases, it can be applied to priests or leaders who had become corrupt.

If it be insisted that the reference is to divine angels, it should be pointed out that the reliability of the statement is questionable, because it was made by Eliphaz, not Job. Eliphaz and his two friends had a lot to say to Job, and God's verdict on their utterances is expressed in 42:7-8: "The Lord said to Eliphaz, I am angry with you and your two friends, because you did not speak the truth ...". In view of this, it would be a mistake to base a doctrine on any of their utterances.

EXERCISING SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

It should be evident from these examples that spiritual discernment needs to be exercised in deciding whether references to "angel" relate to human or divine messengers.

Coming back to Korah, we read in Num. 16 that he and others with him, sinned. They did not stay within the limits of their proper authority. They became jealous of Moses and Aaron, resentful of the fact that they had more authority.

So they stirred up a rebellion against them. They left their dwelling place south of the Tabernacle and went up to accuse Moses and Aaron of assuming too much authority. They claimed they were just as entitled to do the things Moses and Aaron had been appointed to do, like offering up incense etc.

Moses therefore invited them to attempt it and see the outcome. So they did. The result was, "God did not spare them, but cast them down to hell." The ground opened up under them and swallowed them up, then closed over them. "They were delivered into chains under darkness, reserved for judgement of the great day."

WE SHALL JUDGE ANGELS

Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 6:2-3: "Know ye not that you shall judge angels?" could very well be interpreted in the light of the foregoing. Various Scriptures do teach that the church will ultimately judge the world when ruling with Christ. Such judging will not merely pertain to small matters or insignificant people of low social status, but corrupt leaders in higher places.

There are certainly no Scriptures which categorically state that divine angels will be judged by the church. We do read however, that divine angels will assist Jesus on the day of judgement (Matt. 13:47-50).

Now, in response to the suggestion that the angels that sinned refers

to Korah's rebellion, some might object, pointing out that in 2 Pet. 2, reference is made to the event before Noah's flood and Sodom and Gomorrah, whereas Korah's rebellion happened after that.

In answer to this it should be pointed out that it is common for events to be listed out of chronological order in the Bible. For example, Ps. 106:16-18 lists Korah's rebellion out of sequence.

Jude v 5-7 refers to the Exodus out of chronological sequence by putting it before the destruction of Sodom. It actually took place afterwards. However, Jude does refer to the angels that sinned in the proper order by putting the event after Israel's departure from Egypt.

DIVINE ANGELS CANNOT SIN

The general teaching of the Bible about divine angels is that they cannot sin. Ps. 103:20 says they excel in strength, obeying God's commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word. To affirm that they can sin, and have, undermines some elementary aspects of the hope of the Gospel.

For example, Jesus taught that "Those who shall be accounted worthy to obtain the age to come and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage, neither can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels."

From this we learn that angels cannot die; which means they are immortal; which means they have divine nature. Now, if angels cannot die, it would be reasonable to conclude they cannot sin, because death comes as a result of sin. And if they cannot sin, they cannot be tempted; because the process of sin always starts with temptation, as we read in Jam. 1:14-15. And if they cannot be tempted, their nature cannot be capable of carnal lusts and desires, which cause temptation and sin in fallen man, as we also read in Jam. 1:14-15.

Angels are not flesh like man, which contains sinful propensities which lead to temptation and sin. Angels are "spirits" - "spiritual bodies" - partakers of divine immortal nature which cannot be tempted, sin or die.

A WONDERFUL HOPE

Now, the wonderful hope that Jesus gives us is to be equal with the angels and partake of the same divine nature which cannot die (2 Pet. 1:4. 1 Pet. 1:4). This will involve, as taught elsewhere, the discarding of our present mortal carnally inclined body, replacing it with an immortal

body which has no sinful propensities.

Jesus himself experienced this and was the first man (“firstfruits” 1 Cor. 15:20) in history to do so. In his resurrection, as a result of victory over temptation and sin, he discarded his mortal flesh which, being the same as ours, (Heb. 2:14), was tempted like us, (Heb. 4:15), and he became clothed with the divine immortal nature which cannot be tempted, sin or die (James 1:13).

And so we read in 2 Cor. 5:16: “Though we have known Christ after the flesh, we no longer thus regard him.” Instead, he is, as 1 Cor. 15:43-45 says: “a life-giving Spirit” - a “spiritual body.” And the hope of a Christian is to share immortality with him. As we read in 1 Jn. 3:2 “We shall be like him.” And again in Plp. 3:21 “He shall change our lowly body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

This is the great hope of the gospel - to be set free from our present weak, mortal, temptable, sin-prone body, and live endlessly without temptation sin and death, with Christ.

THE HOPE UNDERMINED

But, if angels in this ultimate state of divine nature and glory, can still be tempted, sin and rebel, and be cast out and ultimately perish, then what hope is it to be equal with them? If sin can still occur in the angelic state, the hope is immediately undermined and ceases to be a one hundred percent positive assurance. It becomes a hope with a question mark over it - a hope containing a serious element of doubt.

Let’s face it; if one third of God’s holy angels were able to be tempted into sin, so might we! And if this is the case, then the divine immortal state is no better than the present, as far as isolation and insulation from sin is concerned. The view, therefore, that the sinful angels were divine beings and became the devil, creates some serious and fundamental problems, not to mention being insulting and offensive to the angels themselves.

PUZZLING PERCENTAGES

Sometimes it is said that we can take heart because only one third of the angels rebelled; for every bad angel there are two good ones! But it is natural to wonder that if one third could turn against God and man, how can we be sure that the other two thirds won’t do the same?!

It is also natural to wonder that if sin and wickedness is largely due to

the evil influence of the bad angels, why is it that the good angels don't have greater influence for good, seeing there are supposed to be twice as many of them. If all angels have equal power, and the ratio is two good ones to every bad one, surely the good ones would have greater influence and success in combat. Why is it then, that evil has the greatest influence?

The whole concept of divine holy angels sinning and rebelling has the unfortunate effect of undermining and weakening confidence in their integrity and dependability, not to mention the stability and depth of righteousness of God's order in heaven.

Heaven is supposed to be the pinnacle of perfection and peace, and if rebellion and war can break out there in God's family, resulting in division and rejection, then it would not be surprising if this caused some to wonder about the merit of praying the Lord's prayer: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven."

CONTRADICTION OF TERMS

Even if angels could and did sin, it would seem to be contrary to divine principle to allow them to continue living as immortals, perpetuating their sin and rebellion. An immortal sinner is really a contradiction of terms. All who rebel against God's authority and sin, incur the death penalty, no matter how close to God they have been.

If a great man like Moses came under the death sentence for an isolated mistake of smiting the rock instead of only speaking to it, and if Uzzah was struck down dead on the spot for committing sin under the sincere impression he was doing good, reaching out to steady the ark of the covenant to stop it from falling, then one would expect that an angel who deliberately sinned with malicious intention, would also come under the death sentence. His highly exalted position would surely make him more responsible for his actions than mortal men like Moses and Uzzah.

God is no respecter of persons, and it is a divine law that "the wages of sin is death." There are no double standards with God. His ways are uniform and unvarying. He surely would not run His government in heaven upon different principles from earth.

If an angel sinned against God, he would forfeit his life, lose his power and die. To believe that angels could rebel against God, and then as a punishment, be banished to earth to teach men to rebel, is not credible. This would hardly be a punishment; it would be more like a reward! Giving a rebel an open playing field to sow his seeds of rebellion against God among others is the very thing a rebel would want to do!

Would a wise loving father wanting to dispose of a cage full of unruly lions, release them on to a playing field among his weaker vulnerable children? Would a General, dealing with a rebellion in his army, send the rebels away in possession of their guns and ammunition into the territory that he is wanting to be under his control?

When the wise king Solomon ascended the throne, one of the first things he did was to eliminate the rebels. He knew that righteousness, peace and unity were impossible as long as they were allowed to live.

God, of course, is more loving than any father, and wiser than Solomon or any army General. The concept of such a God releasing rebel angels upon earth and allowing them to use their superior power to attack His children and cause paradise to be lost, is exceedingly hard to believe.

HOW DID THE CHAIN START?

It has been suggested that our first parents were so good, that only a powerful supernatural fallen angel could tempt them and bring about their fall. If this were the case, how much more powerful must the tempter have been who caused this angel to fall. There must have been, surely, an even bigger devil behind the fallen-angel devil, who started the whole process off. But wait on! Was he really the one who started it all off? Surely he must have been deceived by an even stronger devil still!

ONLY ONE SOURCE OF POWER

One of the major difficulties that the concept of a fallen-angel devil creates is that the power he uses to tempt and deceive people would have to be God's power. This is an unavoidable conclusion because there is only one God - one source of supernatural power in the Universe. This is a fundamental teaching of the Bible. For example, Rom. 13:1: "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." God is the source of angelic power. Angels do not originate or generate it themselves. They derive it from the one and only fountain - Almighty God.

If a fallen angel had a separate independent source of supernatural power, he would be another God - a rival God. This is what the polytheism of paganism believed and taught, and the traditional doctrine of the devil gets dangerously close to this in some instances.

Now, if angels possessing the power of God sinned, would God, in banishing them, allow them to retain His power and use it against Him to inspire rebellion in others? Would not this be a kingdom divided against

itself?

When Samson sinned against the Lord, the Lord withdrew His power from him and left him powerless. When king Saul rebelled against God, the anointing of divine power was taken away from him. When Israel sinned, the divine power and glory was withdrawn. This is a divine principle taught many times in Scripture. Divine power will not indwell those who sin and rebel against God, be they angels or men.

If angels could, and did sin, they would be stripped of divine power, and rendered incapable of using it against God.

WOULD ANGELS PREACH ANOTHER GOSPEL?

To support the view that divine angels can sin, Gal.1:8 is sometimes quoted: “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel ... let him be accursed.” But it should be noted that the apostle Paul is presenting an hypothetical proposition here. This is indicated by the word “though.”

It is difficult to imagine Paul ever preaching a false gospel, yet he includes himself in the hypothetical proposition. It is even more difficult to imagine an angel from heaven preaching a false gospel, but Paul goes to the extreme of using that example to emphasize the seriousness of the matter.

An incident recorded in 1 Kin. 13:18 may account for Paul’s warning. A prophet gave a false message to another prophet under the pretence of being told to do so by an angel. An angel had not spoken to him at all, and the message contradicted the divine message, deceiving the prophet into disobeying God.

False teachers in Paul’s day claimed to be inspired by the Spirit, or to be under angelic guidance, and Paul’s warning in Gal. 1:8 would cover this.

THE SONS OF GOD TOOK WIVES

Another passage of Scripture that is regarded as supporting the view that angels sinned is Gen. 6:1-4. Reference is made here to the sons of God being attracted to the daughters of men, and marrying them. It also says that there were giants in those days.

From this it has been concluded that the sons of God were angels, and the giants were the product of their marriage with the daughters of men.

Now, it is true that angels are sometimes referred to as sons of God in the Bible, but so also are men. So how do we decide between the two? Quite easily, because Jesus plainly taught that angels do not marry (Lk. 20:35-36). The sons of God in Gen. 6 must therefore be men.

It is natural to ask the question: Why are the sons referred to as “of God,” and the women “of men”? The answer is that “of God” signifies spiritual birth, and “of men” signifies natural birth, i.e. of the flesh. For example, Jn. 1:13 says that those who are converted and spiritual are “born, not of man, but of God.”

At the very beginning, in Gen. 3, God indicated that the world would be divided into two groups, the woman’s seed and the serpent’s seed, i.e. the church and the world - those who lived according to the Spirit, and those who lived according to the flesh. This division was seen very early in Adam’s two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain was carnal and Abel was spiritual. Cain killed Abel but his brother Seth replaced him.

Seth and his descendants “called upon the name of the Lord” (Gen. 4:26). They, like Abel, were spiritual. Cain’s descendants were violent and vindictive, as can be seen in Lamech (Gen. 4:23-24).

We read in Lk. 3:38 that Adam was a “son of God” and his genealogy through to Christ is traced through Seth, not Cain. Seth’s line constituted the holy line and consisted of many great holy men of God who were sons of God.

Noah and his family were descendants of Seth. They were “of God” - sons of God. There were others also, but they started mingling and intermarrying with the descendants of Cain. They were attracted to the beautiful women of the world. Drawn away by the lust of the eye and flesh, they abandoned the divine principle that the holy seed should not mingle with the unholy, nor be unequally yoked together in marriage.

This led to a great apostasy - a “falling away” from the faith, resulting in eight people - Noah and his family, being the only ones left who faithfully walked with God. This situation contributed towards the great judgement of the flood.

It is interesting to note that the footnote in the Berkley Bible says the sons of God were not angels, but sons of Seth. Gen. 6:3 clearly states they were “flesh” not spirits, and that their life would terminate within a period of one hundred and twenty years.

Elsewhere in Scripture it is taught that the “flesh” of fallen man is the source of all evil thoughts, and the point is made in Gen. 6:5 that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” “All flesh had corrupted

God's way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them." (v 12-13). Verse 6 says God was sorry He had made man.

It is clearly emphasized that man's own heart was the source of the evil which incurred the judgement of God. No suggestion is made in the narrative that a force external to man such as a fallen angel was responsible for the evil thoughts and wickedness.

Would a wise and righteous God inflict wholesale destruction upon the world's population and let the real cause and culprit escape and remain free to repeat the same wickedness in succeeding generations? Any doctrine that is forced to answer this in the affirmative is a reflection on the wisdom and justice of God, for it presents Him as an unwise physician who only deals with symptoms instead of the cause. Rather than be sorry that He had made man, it would have been more appropriate to be sorry for casting angels out of heaven!

Regarding the reference to the giants: a careful reading of Gen. 6:1-4 reveals that they were not the product of marriage between the sons of God and daughters of men. The record clearly states that there were already giants in existence beforehand.

* * * * *

CHAPTER TWO LUCIFER

Isaiah 14:12 is another foundation text used to support the view that the devil is a fallen angel. In the A. V. it reads: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut to the ground, you who have weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.”

A TEXT WITHOUT A CONTEXT IS A PRETEXT

There is a saying that “a text without a context is a pretext” and it is particularly true in this instance. By not taking into account the context of the statement, it has been misinterpreted and misapplied.

The fourth verse is the key to the interpretation. It reads: “Take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer” (v12). We learn from this that two key points govern the interpretation: 1. The discourse is a “proverb.” 2. It concerns the “king of Babylon” not an angel. The word “angel” does not occur.

A careful examination of the Lucifer passage reveals in a number of ways the inappropriateness of applying it to a fallen angel.

For example v 16 refers to Lucifer as “the man (not angel) who made the earth to tremble.” And the humanity and mortality of this man is reinforced in v11, 15 where, as a result of his fall, he is depicted lying down helpless in a grave as a rotting useless corpse, covered with worms and maggots. Did this happen to the sinful angels of tradition as a result of their fall?

Isa. 14:10 says that as a result of Lucifer’s fall, he became weak and powerless like various kings he toppled from their thrones. Once again, this weakness and powerlessness of Lucifer as a result of his fall is not consistent with the lively, active, powerful devil who is supposed to have been roaming the earth since his fall, seeking to devour like a lion.

In the first three verses of Isa. 14, reference is made to Israel receiving God’s mercy as a result of the enemy falling. Verse three says it results in “rest” for Israel and “rest, quiet, singing and rejoicing” for the rest of the earth v 7-8. Was this the result of the devil being cast out of heaven? According to tradition, quite the opposite was the case.

CHOIR LEADER?

Isa. 14:11 says “Your pomp is brought down to the grave, with the music of your harps.” On this basis it has been claimed that the devil was originally chief musician or leader in heaven’s choir. The unprejudiced reader, however, uninfluenced by the traditional concept, would not squeeze that meaning out of it. “Harps” is plural and refers to the musicians of the king of Babylon. There is no record of him playing an instrument himself or of conducting a choir.

The verse simply teaches that music, feasting, partying and all gaiety will cease in Babylon when God’s judgement falls. Music formed an important part of Babylon’s life style, as well as feasting, partying and drunkenness, as we read in Dan. 3:5-10. Ch 5. The cessation of all this signified judgement and trouble. For an example of this, see Isa 24:8-11.

PROPHETICAL NOT HISTORICAL

A careful reading of Isa. 14 reveals the discourse is prophetic, not historical, relating to the future, not the past. The prophecy was given around 700 BC and relates to the fall of Babylon which took place 160 years later, in 539 BC. It has nothing to do with rebel angels being cast out of heaven over 3000 years beforehand. Isa 14 is at least 3000 years too late to be predicting such an event!

Of particular significance also, as in the case of the angels that sinned, there is no reference to the words “devil” or “satan” in the passage. To affirm that Lucifer is the devil, is an assumption.

A PROVERB

In attempting to interpret the passage, it is particularly important to appreciate, as already pointed out, that the discourse is a “proverb.”

A proverb is an extreme and hyperbolic method of conveying truth, sometimes involving exaggerated statements and language of a highly descriptive and metaphorical nature - language that cannot be accepted on face value and is not expected to be interpreted literally. To do so can result in reaching some rather bizarre conclusions.

This is evident in v 8 which refers to trees rejoicing at Babylon’s fall, speaking out and saying: “Since you have been cut down (fallen), no woodcutter has come against us” (i.e. to cut them down and make them fall). The “trees” represent nations which Babylon had attacked and

chopped down, and they are depicted as rejoicing over the fact that Babylon, like a tree, has also finally been chopped down, and since that time, no other nation has attacked them.

LUCIFER IS VENUS

In its context, the name “Lucifer” is clearly applied to the king of Babylon. Why? What does it mean? It has been translated from the Hebrew word “heylel” which means “brightness,” and relates to the morning star, i.e. the planet Venus.

Even the Authorised Version margin points out that it means “day star,” and many modern translations of the Bible render it that way, rather than give “Lucifer.” The Good News Bible, for example reads: “King of Babylonia, bright morning star, you have fallen from heaven. In the past you conquered nations, but now you have been thrown to the ground.”

ORIGIN OF THE WORD LUCIFER

It would be natural to enquire as to where the word “Lucifer” came from and how it came to be used. Well, there is an interesting history behind it.

As pointed out, the original Hebrew word is “heylel” which means bright morning star and refers to Venus. But, during the third century B.C. the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, at the instigation of Ptolemy Philadelphus, a Greek ruler of Egypt. This translation became known as the Septuagint or LXX (70), because it was done by about 70 translators.

Now these men translated the Hebrew word “heylel” into the Greek word “phos,” from which is derived the word “phosphorous,” which means brightness, luminous. “Phos” was the name given by the Greeks to Venus.

Then, about 650 years later, during the fourth century A.D., Jerome, the renowned Roman Catholic theologian, translated the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures into Latin. This translation became known as the Vulgate, and was accepted as the authentic text of the Scriptures by the Roman Catholic church.

Jerome translated the Hebrew “heylel” and the Greek “phos” into the Latin equivalent which was Lucifer, which was the Latin name for Venus. This is how the word originated. It is a Latin word, chosen by a Roman Catholic theologian, and first appeared in print in a Bible 300 years after

New Testament times!

Most authorities agree that it was from around that period of Jerome, in the third century A.D., that Lucifer started to be regarded as the name of satan - an angel cast out of heaven. But it is clear that the New Testament Christians and those after them during the next few centuries, never used that name!

During the sixteenth century, England broke away from the Roman Catholic church, resulting in the formation of the Church of England. Naturally, they wanted a Bible in their own language, so they translated the Vulgate into English.

Now, the English people had, for centuries, espoused the Roman Catholic doctrine of Lucifer being the name of the devil, so it was inevitable that they would want to retain the name in their translation. And so they did! Instead of translating Lucifer into English and giving "bright morning star" or "daystar," they left it as it was and transliterated it, i.e. carried it over letter by letter, thus superimposing a Latin word on the English translation.

And so the name Lucifer was retained and perpetuated, resulting in millions of people throughout the ensuing centuries believing it was the name of a fallen angel devil.

But the simple truth is that Lucifer refers to the planet Venus and is applied metaphorically to the king of Babylon. Many modern Bible dictionaries and commentaries agree with this, not to mention encyclopaedias.

The footnote to Isa. 14:12 in the Amplified Bible is worth quoting: "Light-bringer" or "shining one," was originally translated "Lucifer," but because of the association of that name with satan it is not now used. Conscientious students agree that the application of the name Lucifer to satan, in spite of long and confident teaching to that effect, is completely erroneous Nowhere in the Bible is satan called Lucifer. The misapplication of the name has existed since the third century A.D."

WHY VENUS?

The reason for the king of Babylon being likened to Venus is due to the movements of the planet which have been known and observed since ancient times.

Apart from the sun and moon, Venus is the brightest object in the sky, brighter than all other planets and stars. It appears low in the sky just before dawn and climbs higher and higher in the sky until unseen in the

daylight. It is also an “evening star,” seen at sunset and going lower and lower until lost beneath the horizon.

If it is watched night by night, or morning by morning, at the appropriate time of the year, it would be seen climbing higher and higher, each day a little higher than before. But, unlike Jupiter for instance, it never reaches the zenith. After climbing fairly high in the sky, it hesitates, and then day by day it sinks back to the horizon and disappears from sight. The sinking or falling takes place at a faster rate than its ascent.

In view of this, it can be seen how it is appropriately likened to the king of Babylon. In his pride he had a soaring ambition to rise above all nations and be brighter, and appeared to attain that position. But he slipped back and fell into oblivion, and great was his fall.

In the words of the New Bible Commentary: “The picture is of a highly metaphorical nature, and deals with the eclipse, overthrow and death of the Babylonian tyrant. The colours of the taunting poetry and imagery are superb and awesome ...”

I WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN

The metaphorical nature of the proverbial discourse in Isa. 14 is further apparent in v13 where the king of Babylon is referred to as saying in his heart: “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.”

It should be fairly obvious that the king of Babylon did not imagine he could ascend into literal heaven and rise above the literal stars. There were no rockets in those days!

And if Lucifer was an angel, why would such a supposed highly exalted arch-angel, already living in heaven, able to ascend above the clouds and stars, say: “I will ascend into heaven ...?” Why ascend to heaven if he was already in heaven?!

Being the highly intelligent beings that they are, can it seriously be conceived that an arch-angel could be so foolish as to imagine he could steal a march on Almighty God, the Omnipotent Creator Himself, and actually usurp His throne? If angels can be that thick and senseless, how could God trust them to be His ministering spirits, and what kind of a hope is it for Christians to become equal with them?! In view of these considerations we are brought back to the unavoidable conclusion that Isa. 14:13 is metaphorical language, not to be interpreted literally, and applies

to the king of Babylon.

It is evident from other verses in the Bible that the word “heaven” is sometimes used in a figurative sense to signify an exalted place or elevated position of power and authority. As the physical heaven is literally over and above the earth, so the word is also used to signify the position of power and authority of human rulers. As the sun rules in the heavens over earth by day, and the moon by night, so various rulers and nations are referred to figuratively in those terms.

This kind of language may be foreign to us and we might never use such metaphors, but those in Biblical times did, and it is important for us to know and accept it, and interpret it in that light if we want to understand the true original significance of the statements. It is vital to let Scripture interpret itself, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:13). Otherwise we will end up superimposing our own natural human thoughts and ideas upon the statements of Scripture and end up with “private interpretations.”

SOME EXAMPLES

Here are some examples of the word “heaven” being used metaphorically to signify the rise of an earthly ruler to power and exalted position of authority:

Dan. 4 is a particularly good one because it relates personally and directly to the rise and fall of a king of Babylon in almost identical terms as Isa. 14. It involves a dream which the king of Babylon had concerning a tree which grew to a great height, reaching up into heaven, but which the Lord later caused to be cut down and fall to the ground.

The prophet Daniel interpreted the dream to the king and explained that “the tree you saw, which grew, and was strong, whose top reached to heaven and was seen throughout the earth it represents you, O king, for you have become strong; your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth. But the Lord will send a holy one from heaven and cut the tree down and destroy it.”

It is not difficult to see how this relates to the Lucifer passage. Attention has already been drawn to the fact that in Isa. 14:8 kings and nations are referred to as trees chopped down by the king of Babylon. But his “tree” eventually gets chopped down and falls from heaven as well, as Dan. 4 narrates.

It is evident that “heaven” in this instance, represents the political power and greatness of the king - his lofty exalted dominant position, not

to mention the human pride that went with it, which is mentioned in Dan. 4:30.

Speaking about the pride and soaring ambition of the ungodly, Job. 20:6 also uses the metaphor of clouds and heaven: “Though his pride mount up to the heavens, and his head reach to the clouds, yet he shall perish forever.”

Significantly enough, the fall of Jerusalem and its king is described in Lam. 2:1 as “cast down from heaven upon earth.” Jerusalem, in the time of the kings, represented the Lord’s throne on earth. At the height of its power the kingdom was exalted and exercised authority over all the surrounding nations, towering above all. But, due to pride, it was “cast down from heaven upon earth.”

Similar language is applied to Babylon in Jer. 51:53: “Though Babylon should mount up to heaven and though she should fortify her strong height, yet from me shall destroyers come to her, says the Lord.”

Also Capernaum: “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell.” (Lk. 10:15).

The way in which heaven is used in Scripture to signify rulers is further indicated in a parallelism in Isa. 1:2 and 10. Verse 2 says: “Hear O heavens and give ear O earth.” Verse 10 says “Hear the word of the Lord you rulers - give ear to the law of our God you people.”

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

This concept of “heavens” signifying rule and power is carried over into the New Testament, where it is used in relation to both political and ecclesiastical authority, i.e. secular and religious - the world and the church.

For example, in Eph. 1:3, 10, Christians are referred to as being in “heavenly places,” even though their feet were still very firmly on the ground. Because they “reign in life” (Rom. 5:17), being heirs of the kingdom of God and having power and authority in Christ over sin and death, they are referred to as being in “heavenly places.”

But the same expression is also used in Eph. 3:10 and 6:12 in relation to political and secular rulers, i.e. governments and authorities, referred to as “principalities and powers.” They too, due to the power and authority they exercise, reigning in life over the kingdoms of the world, are referred to as being in “heavenly places.”

PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

Unfortunately, it is a widespread belief that “principalities and powers” refers to fallen angels. But a little research on the words, checking their original meanings and how they are used elsewhere, soon reveals they have nothing to do with invisible supernatural phantoms. More will be said about this in a later chapter when dealing with Eph. 6:12, but suffice it at this stage to give a couple of examples.

1. Eph. 3:10 refers to the church preaching to the principalities and powers to convert them. But the New Testament church was not commissioned to preach to fallen angels. It did, however, try to convert people in high places - kings and queens, princes and princesses, presidents and prime-ministers, tetrarchs, governors and senates.

2. In Tit. 3:1 Christians are told to “be subject to principalities and powers.” Does this mean they have to submit to, and obey sinful fallen angels? No! The following statement explains the meaning: “obey magistrates, to be ready for every good work.” Rom. 13:1 puts it like this: ‘Let everyone be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained by God.’

The “higher powers” are, of course the governments and authorities, referred to as “principalities and powers in heavenly places.”

“Principalities” refers to principal or primary secular power, and “powers” refers to secondary or lower secular powers, under the authority of, and delegated by the principal powers.

WAR IN HEAVEN

It seems evident, then, that there is a political (secular) “heavens,” and an ecclesiastical (religious) “heavens.” Power and authority has been vested by God in the State for rule in secular matters, and in the church for rule in spiritual matters.

Sometimes there can be “war” in, or between these heavens, i.e. conflict between the church and State. This should be kept in mind in relation to Rev. 12 which refers to a conflict in heaven between a “woman” and a “dragon,” and then between the dragon and Michael.

The “woman” signifies the church and the “dragon” signifies secular powers opposed to the church.

In Cicero’s speech to Mark Antony he said “You have hurled your colleagues down from heaven.”

This quotation outside of Scripture is interesting because it shows

that the expression was a commonly accepted figure of speech even in the secular world in New Testament times.

Even today, when some important person falls from a position of power or prominence, it is not uncommon for a newspaper headline to read “A Star falls from heaven.”

ANOTHER ASPECT OF HEAVEN

In view of what has been said so far, the words “I will ascend into heaven” in Isa. 14:13 can be viewed as the proud boasting of the king of Babylon who had a towering ambition to be supreme ruler of the nations. Like many ancient pagan kings, he probably wanted to be deified and regarded as a god, superior to Israel’s God.

There is also another way in which the word heaven is used in Scripture which can be applied. Sometimes it is used in a general sense, denoting the firmament, i.e. the expanse or space between earth and the clouds (Gen. 1:6-8). Many Scriptures use the word to simply refer to the air or horizon.

For example, various verses refer to the birds of heaven (Jer. 4:25. 8:7. 15:3). Gen. 11:4 refers to men wanting to build a tower at Babel “whose top may reach into heaven.” Deut 9:1 says the cities of the Canaanites were “walled up to heaven.” High waves in a fierce storm are said to “mount up to heaven” in Ps. 107:26. The Edomites, who lived high up in the clefts of the mountains are referred to in Obadiah:3-4 as “flying high as an eagle, setting her nest among the stars.” And, because of the height of their dwellings, the army of the Edomites is referred to in Isa. 34 as “the host of heaven.”

On the other hand, the Medes (who lived in a mountainous area south of the Caspian sea) are referred to in Isa. 13:5 as coming “from the end of heaven,” which is explained in the same verse to mean “from a far country.” And similar to this is a reference in Deu. 30:4 to Israel being driven to the uttermost parts of heaven, referring to dispersion to far distant horizons.

These usages of “heaven” applied to the words of the king of Babylon: “I will ascend into heaven,” could therefore mean “I will go into a far country - to the far distant horizon - up into the remote mountains.” If so, the question is: What place did he have in mind? A clue is given in the words that follow: “I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north I will be like the Most High.”

THE MOUNT OF THE CONGREGATION IN THE SIDES OF THE NORTH

In Ps. 48:1-2 the same words are used to describe Jerusalem, the city of God. This is how it reads: “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, His holy mountain, beautiful for elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king.”

The phrase “on the sides of the north” links up with the same phrase in Isa. 14:13, and there is no doubt that mount Zion (Jerusalem) was the “mount of the congregation,” being the place chosen by God for the tribes of Israel to congregate for worship.

Being situated among the mountains of Judah, the city of Jerusalem itself was on an elevated site consisting of a number of mountains, and the temple of God was built on one of these. This is referred to in Ps. 68:15: “The hill of God is an high hill” Ps. 78:68-69 is also interesting: “God chose the tribe of Judah, mount Zion which He loves. He built His sanctuary like the high heavens ...” (Revised Standard Version). This calls to mind the description of the destruction of the sanctuary in Lam. 2:1: “cast down from heaven to earth, the beauty of Israel.”

Zion’s sanctuary was also built like heaven in the sense that it was made after the pattern of things in heaven. The New Testament (Heb. 9) teaches that the most holy place in the temple represented heaven. The Good News Bible translation of Ps. 78:69 is consistent with this: “There He built His temple like His home in heaven.” As David’s throne at Jerusalem represented the Lord’s throne on earth (1 Chr. 28:5), so the temple represented heaven, for God met and spoke with man there.

In view of all this, it is not difficult to see Isa. 14 as a prophecy foretelling the time when the king of Babylon would cast his proud and ambitious eyes to the far distant horizon of heaven, to the heights of the mountains of Judah, and ascend there to the mount of the temple of the Lord, and sit there imagining himself to be like the Most High.

ABOVE THE STARS OF GOD

Isa. 14:13 also says the king of Babylon’s ambition would be to exalt his throne “above the stars of God.” In its context, this relates to ascending up to Jerusalem and sitting on the holy mount.

The stars are not to be taken literally, as in the case of the “day star” (Lucifer) which represents the king of Babylon himself.

Stars are often used in the Bible in a metaphorical sense to signify people. In this particular place they are associated with “the mount of the congregation” in Jerusalem, and must therefore involve Israelites to whom the city belonged and who were eventually conquered by the Babylonians.

A good example of stars representing Israelites is in Dan. 8. In verses 9-10 it refers to an enemy attacking “the army of heaven, the stars themselves, casting some of them to the ground and trampling upon them.” We don’t have to guess what this means because it is interpreted for us in verses 23-24. These verses tell us that the stars represent “the holy people” who will be destroyed by a certain king. The context indicates the “king” is a gentile and “the holy people” are Jews.

Notice that Dan. 8:10 refers to the holy people not only as “stars,” but also “the host of heaven.” Their defeat and destruction is therefore signified in terms of stars being cast down from heaven to the ground and trampled upon. Common sense requires that the stars cannot be literal, nor could they refer to fallen angels!

The concept of stars being used as a metaphor for Israel started very early in her history. Back in Gen. 37:9-10 we read that Joseph was given a dream in which stars represented the sons of Jacob who ultimately became the tribes of Israel.

It is helpful to keep these thoughts in mind for the next chapter which relates to Rev. 12, because similar terminology is used there and is based on Old Testament metaphor such as we have been looking at.

WAS LUCIFER A TYPE?

Now there are some who will concede that the primary reference in Isa. 14 is to the king of Babylon, but claim that it does not refer solely to him. They believe that the fall of the king of Babylon was a type of the fall of an angel-devil, and therefore involves a double fulfilment.

It is true of course that some things in Scripture are a type, and some prophecies have double fulfilments. But in all cases the type precedes the antitype. A type or foreshadow must occur before the event to which it points. For this reason, for example, Moses and David etc had to live before Christ to be a type of him. The Tabernacle and temple had to exist before Christ’s church to be a type of it. Types always point forward to things in the future, not backwards to things in the past.

The fall of the king of Babylon could not therefore be a type of the fall of angels which was supposed to happen over three thousand years beforehand. For Isa. 14 to be a type of the fall of angels, their fall would

have to occur after seven hundred B.C. when the prophecy was given. And this would mean having no fallen angel devil for the first three thousand years of history.

Whenever Scripture goes to the trouble of providing important types, it also makes clear reference to the antitype, i.e. the person or event to which it points. We are not left to imagine and assume things or take it out of context by squeezing and forcing it out of irrelevant and unrelated statements of Scripture. Clear categorical statements are made, leaving us in no doubt as to the origin and nature of the antitype.

BEGGING THE QUESTION AND REASONING IN A CIRCLE

This is where the traditional concept of a fallen angel devil falls down rather badly. It claims that Isa. 14 (and Ezk. 28 which will be covered in a later chapter) are a type of the fall of an angel-devil, but cannot provide an antitype in the Bible to back it up. Not one Scripture can be quoted which clearly and specifically refers to the fall of such an angel and states he is the devil.

The common mistake has been made of begging the question to begin with. It has been assumed the devil is a fallen angel, and on that basis, Isa. 14 has been regarded as a type of the supposed event. It is like assuming a word has a certain meaning, then quoting the word to prove the meaning. We call this reasoning in a circle. The meaning of a word must be proved first, before quoting it to prove anything. Likewise, the concept of a fallen-angel devil must be proved first from Scripture, before claiming that certain verses are a type.

One exponent of the traditional view of the devil wrote these words: "If Isa. 14 and Ezk. 28 are not accepted as types of the fall of the devil, we would be left in the dark concerning the entrance of sin into the universe, and with little information concerning the history and ambitions of the enemy of God and man."

This is quite an admission and very true! Take away Isa. 14 and Ezk. 28 as types and the doctrine has no foundation to stand upon. It is based on self-appointed types. It is a concept that has no origin in the word of God.

TYPE OF MAN OF SIN

If Isa. 14 is a type of anything, it could be of the end-time leader of the anti-Israel armies which invade the land of Israel and bring about the

battle of Armageddon.

As in the case of Lucifer, this leader will ascend to the heights of the land and plant himself on the holy mountain in Jerusalem (Dan. 11:45). During this period we believe a Jewish temple will be standing there, and, as we read in 2 Thes. 2:4, he will sit in it acting as if he were God. This will be, according to 2 Thes. 2, the last sign of the second coming of Christ. The return of the Jews to their land and repossession of Jerusalem are important steps towards this event.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE GREAT DRAGON - THAT OLD SERPENT

Revelation chapter 12 is another portion of Scripture which forms part of the foundation upon which the fallen-angel devil belief is based. It refers to “war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon ... and the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and satan, who deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (v 7-9). Verse 4 refers to “the third part of the stars of heaven” being cast to the earth, and they are normally linked with the angels in v 9 and regarded as a third of God’s holy angels who sinned and were cast out.

THE SAME KEY POINTS

In approaching this section of Scripture, the same key points mentioned in relation to the Lucifer passage need to be kept in mind, namely:

1. The chapter is prophetic not historical.
2. The language is symbolic, not to be taken literally.
3. “Angels” means “messengers” and can refer to either human or divine agents.
4. “Heaven” does not always refer to God’s dwelling, but is also used to signify an elevated place or an exalted position - a state of political or ecclesiastical power and authority.
5. “Stars” can signify the people of God.

BASED ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

It soon becomes apparent after reading Rev. 12, that aspects of the language are very similar to the Lucifer passage. Careful research reveals that much of the book of Revelation is based on Old Testament Scriptures. In fact, it contains over seven hundred quotations from the Old Testament. This is not surprising because the Spirit which inspired the Old Testament prophecies is the same Spirit that inspired the prophecies given through Jesus in the book of Revelation. Jesus actually makes this point in Rev. 19:10: “The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.”

Much of the metaphor used in Revelation has its roots in the Old Testament. It is therefore important to have a measure of understanding of Old Testament prophecy before attempting to understand the book of Revelation. Unfortunately some read the Bible backwards by starting at

Revelation, before firstly acquainting themselves with what precedes and leads up to it. The result is that they have no Scriptural basis upon which to interpret the metaphor and symbology, resulting in assumptions and private interpretations. Jesus' advice is relevant here: "Every Scribe who is instructed brings forth out of his treasure, things new and old."

PROPHETICAL NOT HISTORICAL

The opening statement in the book of Revelation states that the message is primarily prophetic, not historical. It says in 1:1: "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him, to show his servants things which must shortly come to pass." This is also repeated in the last chapter (22:6). 1:3 clearly states it is "prophecy" and 4:1 says it relates to "things which must be "hereafter," not "heretofore!"

This means that the prophecies would take place after they were given, i.e. after the first century A.D. This immediately disqualifies any interpretation which applies Rev. 12 to any period of history prior to New Testament times. Rev. 12 is therefore at least 4000 years too late to account for the origin of tradition's fallen-angel devil!

SYMBOLIC NOT LITERAL

The fact that Revelation is largely symbolic is also indicated in the opening statement. Having said that the message is prophetic, 1:1 then says the message was sent to John and "signified" by an angel. This means that the message was indicated by sign, i.e. by symbol and metaphor.

What the apostle John saw were not real literal things, but signs or symbols of real things. For example, seven stars in 1:20 signified seven Asian Churches. A slain lamb in 5:6 signified Jesus Christ, and seven horns and eyes signified the seven Spirits of God. A beast with seven heads and ten horns in chapters 13 and 17 signified a confederacy of anti-God nations, and a beast like a lamb which had two horns and spoke like a dragon in 13:11 signified a false prophet.

LITERAL INTERPRETATION CAUSES PROBLEMS

As far as Rev.12 is concerned, let's consider the problems that are created if we take it literally and apply it to the fallen angel devil. Let's start at the beginning and look at it in its context.

Verse 1 says: “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman, clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” To interpret the sun, moon and stars literally would be ludicrous. They are obviously symbolic. And if this be the case, then surely the “heaven” is symbolic also. It would be inconsistent to say the heaven is literal, when everything else connected with it are symbolic. And if this is the case, the same would apply to the references to heaven in the following verses, including the heaven in which war takes place, for they all form part of the same prophecy.

A MULTI-HEADED HORNED MONSTER

Verse three says “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.”

Now, verse 9 says this dragon is “called the devil and satan.” This is who Michael fights against and casts out of heaven. So, if we take the description literally, the devil is not an angel, but an hideous animal-like monster - a red dragon with seven heads, ten horns and a long swishing tail! Is that what tradition believes? Well that is what it has got if it takes the account literally!

A WHALE OF A TAIL

Verse 4 says the dragon’s “tail swept down the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth.”

Taken literally this would mean this creature hasn’t got a short tail as depicted in medieval paintings of the devil, with a spear-head on the end. No! He has a tail of phenomenal length which stretches light years out into space, because it swept one third of the stars to the earth.

It is at this point that it is particularly obvious that the language is symbolic. Stars, being suns, are much larger than the earth and light years apart. The earth would be totally destroyed if just one of them was cast upon it, let alone four (i.e. one third of the twelve).

A WEAK LINK

Realizing this, expositors of the traditional view agree that the stars cast to the earth in v 4 are not literal but symbolic, and link them with the angels in v 9 which were cast into the earth with the dragon by

Michael. And it is at this point that the unsatisfactory nature of this interpretation is particularly obvious.

A careful reading of the verses reveals that the “stars” in v 4 belong to the “woman” and are cast down by the “dragon.” But the “angels” in v 7-9 belong to the “dragon” and are cast down with the dragon by “Michael.”

The dragon is an enemy of the woman and the twelve stars associated with her, and for that reason he casts one third of them down. The dragon is likened to a crocodile which lashes out with its tail and sweeps its prey into its clutches.

It is quite clear that the stars are not friends or allies of the dragon-devil. They have not joined or supported the dragon in a rebellion against God, and are not cast out by God. The dragon himself casts the stars down from their “heaven” while he remains in his “heaven” with his “angels” holding his position of power till Michael wages war against him and casts him out.

Nowhere is it stated that the dragon’s angels were one third. The reference to one third is in relation to the stars belonging to the woman which the dragon is against and casts down. Neither is there any reference in Rev. 12 to the angels being divine and belonging to God. They are specifically referred to as the dragon’s angels, not Gods. The belief that one third of God’s angels were cast out of heaven has no basis whatever in Rev. 12 or anywhere else in the Bible.

IS THE DEVIL A CANNIBAL?

Verse 4 says, “The dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her child as soon as it was born.” Taken literally, this would mean the devil is a cannibal, eager to gobble up newborn baby boys - so eager that he stands in front of a pregnant woman as she goes through the birth-pangs of labour, waiting for her to give birth. Once again it is evident that this is symbolic language.

WHOSE HEAVEN?

As stated before, in view of the fact that all the different items and aspects in Rev. 12 are symbolic, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the “heaven” in which the woman and dragon dwell, is symbolic also. Reference to “war in heaven” is proof positive that the heaven is not the “heaven of heavens” where God and His holy angels dwell.

As pointed out in a previous chapter, God's heaven is the pinnacle of perfection and cannot be marred by sin, due to the untemptable and sinless nature of the divine immortal state. If wars, infighting and division can occur in this heaven, then it is reduced to the same level as earth. The Christian hope of attaining immortality and equality with the angels would therefore be seriously undermined, and the merit of the Lord's prayer "Thy kingdom come ... on earth as it is in heaven" would be questionable.

THE KINGDOM HAS NOT COME

Talking about the kingdom, Rev. 12:10-11 is interesting. As a result of the dragon-devil being cast out, the kingdom of God comes: "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ."

Was this the result of tradition's devil being cast out of heaven prior to the fall of man? Did the kingdom of God and Christ come then? Obviously not! Quite the opposite in fact. Instead of the kingdom coming, paradise was lost!

AN ACCUSER OF THE BRETHREN

Regarding the casting out of the dragon-devil, Rev. 12:10 goes on to say "The accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death."

We are told here that prior to the dragon-devil being cast out, he was accusing the brethren of Christ and putting them to death. Will the traditional view allow this? Will it accept that prior to being cast out of heaven before the fall of man, the devil was persecuting and killing members of Christ's church? No, it cannot, because Christ's church did not exist at the time and was not formed till 4000 years later.

Once again this confirms that Rev. 12 is prophetic, not historical.

SOME CLUES ON REVELATION TWELVE

If Rev. 12 does not relate to a fallen-angel devil, what is it talking about? Some guide-lines will be offered to act as a basis upon which further study can be made.

Regarding the red dragon with seven heads and ten horns: this kind of symbology occurs elsewhere in Scripture and it certainly has nothing to do with fallen angels. For example, a similar beast is referred to in Dan. 7 along with other beasts, and they are explained to be “kings” i.e. kingdoms of the world which were to arise out of the earth and gain control of the nations.

Revelation chapters 13 and 17 also refer to the beast with seven heads and ten horns, and it clearly represents an alliance of nations against God and His people. It also has an end-time phase because we read in Rev. 19:19-20 that it will be destroyed by Christ at his second coming.

EGYPT AND BABYLON - DRAGON AND SERPENT

The application of “dragon” to nations hostile to God’s people is not new or peculiar to the book of Revelation. It has its roots in the Old Testament. For example, Jer. 51:34: “Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon has devoured me (Israel); he has crushed me, he has made me an empty vessel; he has swallowed me up like a dragon, he has filled his belly with my delicate flesh; he has cast me out.”

Remember also v 53: “Though Babylon should mount up to heaven yet destroyers will come.”

In these verses we have references to Babylon ascending to heaven - being a dragon - devouring God’s people - casting out God’s people. As Lam. 2:1 puts it: “casting down from heaven to earth the glory of Israel.”

Who can fail to see the similarity of language here with Rev. 12 which refers to a dragon in heaven, devouring a woman’s child and casting one third of the woman’s stars to the ground? Rev. 12 is unmistakably an echo of Old Testament symbology.

Egypt, an old historic enemy of Israel, is also referred to as a dragon in Ezk. 29:3, Isa. 51:9. Not only is Babylon and Egypt referred to as a “dragon,” but also “serpent” (Jer. 8:16-17. Isa. 27:1). This is significant in view of the fact that the dragon in Rev. 12:9 is also called “serpent.”

THAT OLD SERPENT

The dragon in Rev. 12:9 is not merely called “serpent” but “that old serpent,” and Isa. 51:9 sheds some light on this. It refers to God wounding the dragon and relates to the divine judgement that fell upon Egypt in Moses’ time. Isaiah refers to this as happening in “ancient” times, in the generation of “old.” From this we learn that even in Isaiah’s

time, seven hundred years before the book of Revelation was written, Egypt was regarded as the “old dragon” and therefore “old serpent.”

The traditional view of course, maintains that “the old serpent” in Rev. 12 is the same serpent that was in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3), but there are certain problems with this.

1. The serpent in Gen. 3 was a literal snake, “a beast of the field which the Lord God had made.” It was not a dragon with seven heads and ten horns as is the case of the serpent in Rev. 12. Gen. 3 is literal and Rev. 12 is symbolic. (More about this in another chapter).

2. Rev. 12 is prophetic, but Gen. 3 is historical. Gen. 3 narrates events that have happened, but Rev. 12 narrates events that will happen. As stated before, Rev. 12 is four thousand years too late to be predicting the fall of tradition’s fallen-angel devil.

SYMBOLIC ASPECT OF SERPENT

The only connection that the serpent in Gen. 3 has with Rev. 12 is that the serpent in Eden later became a symbol of those who, through lies and deceit, seek the downfall of God’s people. In this sense it would be true to say that the conflict in Rev. 12 between the dragon and the woman, has its roots in Gen. 3 in the conflict between the serpent and the first woman Eve. Rev. 12 can be regarded as prophetic of a conflict between the woman’s seed (the church) and the serpent’s seed (anti church nations).

In a later chapter it shall be pointed out that the original serpent in Gen. 3 has long since passed away, but the effect of his lie which led to original sin has lived on in the sinful nature of fallen man. The serpent lives on in those who, like himself, lie and deceive, rebel against the word and authority of God, and seek the death and downfall of God’s people.

The original serpent in Eden became a representative - a symbol of all in the human family who manifest the same traits by yielding to the dark evil force of sin. For this reason, as we have seen, Egypt and Babylon are referred to as a serpent. There are, in fact, many references in the Bible to wicked men being called serpents. See Ps. 58:4. 140:3. Even Jesus said to the wicked leaders of his day “You serpents; you generation of vipers” (Matt. 23:33).

CALLED THE DEVIL AND SATAN

Rev. 12:9 says the great dragon, that old serpent, is “called the devil and satan.” Because of the common belief that the devil is a fallen angel, it is thought that this reference to the serpent being called the devil proves the original serpent in Eden was an angel. But the problem with this is that the original premise is based on an assumption that lacks Scriptural basis and support. The Bible does not teach that the devil is a fallen angel! Gen. 3 certainly doesn’t. It clearly describes the serpent as a “beast of the field.”

FALSE ACCUSER

Regarding the words “devil” and “satan,” more will be said about them in a later chapter. Suffice it to say at this stage that neither of these words mean fallen angel. “Devil” comes from the Greek word “diabolos” which basically means “false accuser” or “slanderer,” and can refer to anyone in the human family who falsely accuses and slanders. For this reason Jesus called Judas a devil (Jn. 6:70). The same word is translated “slanderers” in 1 Tim. 3:11, and “false accusers” in 2 Tim. 3:3. Tit. 2:3, and relates to fallen humanity, not fallen angels.

The appropriateness of the word “devil” being applied to the dragon in Rev. 12 is indicated in v 10 where it says he “accused” (falsely accused) God’s people, and Rev. 20:8 where reference is made to him deceiving nations.

ADVERSARY

As far as the word “satan” is concerned, it simply means “adversary” or “opponent” and is often translated such, and applied to humans. For example, Jesus called Peter satan because he was opposed to the prospect of Jesus dying as a sacrifice for sin and being raised on the third day (Matt. 16:21-23). Jesus did not call him satan because a fallen angel devil possessed and inspired him. No! he called him satan because his thoughts were earth-bound like those of fallen man. In the words of the Good News Translation, Jesus said to Peter: “Get away from me, Satan! You are an obstacle to my way, because these thoughts of yours don’t come from God, but from man.”

Coming back to the dragon, it is important to note that reference is never made to him being inspired or possessed by the devil or satan. No,

Rev. 12:9 refers to the dragon in terms of being devil and satan himself.

This was certainly true of Egypt and Babylon in Old Testament times, due to the false accusations they made against God and His appointments, and the adverse position they took as opponents of God's people! In every sense of the words they were "devil" and "satan," and the same applies to the dragon in Rev. 12.

SURNAMED THE DEVIL AND SATAN

Attention should also be drawn to another significant point in relation to Rev. 12. It does not teach that the devil became, or was called a serpent, as if to imply the devil existed before the serpent. No, it teaches the opposite, saying that the serpent became, or was "called" devil and satan. The significance of this is that the word "called" can signify "surnamed" and is so translated in Act. 15:37.

Now, a surname is a name added, which means the names "devil" and "satan" became added to the serpent. "Serpent" comes first, then devil and satan are added as supplementary names or titles.

This is also true of the original serpent in Eden. Because of the lie, false accusation and adverse position he placed himself in, he became devil and satan. There is no reference to devil and satan in Scripture before the serpent. Until the serpent lied, there was no devil! Everything in God's creation up to that time was "very good."

The traditional view has reversed this by saying a fallen angel became the devil, and then the devil became or inspired the serpent.

THE WOMAN

Regarding the woman, it is clear from the fact that she is depicted as being clothed with the sun, having the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head, that she cannot be taken literally but is symbolic of something. Verses 6 and 14 refer to a place being prepared for her by God as a refuge from the dragon, where she would be fed and nourished by God. This indicates that the woman is precious to God and protected by Him.

Verse 17 says the woman's seed "keep the commandments of God and bear witness for Jesus." The reference is clearly to Christians, so the woman must be the church.

Both the Old and New Testament use a woman to symbolize the church. In Old Testament times Israel was the church (Act. 7:38) and she

is referred to as a “woman” and the Lord’s “wife.” (Isa. 54:1-6. Jer. 6:2 etc).

The New Testament church, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, is also referred to as a woman, an “elect lady”, “the bride” of Christ (Rev. 21:9. 2 Jn. v 1. Jn. 16:21-22. Rom. 7:1-4. Gal. 4:31). In 2 Cor. 11:2 the true church is referred to as a “chaste virgin” espoused to Christ. In Rev. 17 the false church is referred to as a “great harlot” which persecutes the true church.

SUN, MOON, TWELVE STARS

The sun, moon and twelve stars take us back to Joseph’s dream in Gen. 37 where the sun represented his father, the moon his mother, and the eleven stars his eleven brothers, who were seen bowing to him, the twelfth star. This family of Israel was the church at the early part of its history.

It is fitting that the same symbology be given to the New Testament church in view of the fact that it is based on the covenants of promise given to Israel (Eph. 2:12. Rom. 11). For this reason the New Testament church is called “Abraham’s seed,” “Jews inwardly,” “the Israel of God” (Gal. 3:29. 6:16. Rom. 2:28-29).

The fact that the metaphor of the sun, moon and stars has its origin in the Old Testament Israel, which consisted entirely of Hebrews, may signify that Hebrew Christians in particular, in the land of Israel, are the subject of the prophecy in Rev. 12.

Joseph’s dream of the sun, moon and stars was a prophecy, and its purpose was to teach that in spite of all the travail, suffering and affliction he would experience in Egypt as a result of the envy and hatred of his brothers, he would prevail and be exalted. And so he was! He was “cast down” from his “heavenly” position as favourite of his father, being flung into a deep pit and then down to Egypt into a dungeon. But, at the end of his tribulation, he was highly exalted to the right hand of the monarch.

TRAVAILING IN BIRTH

Rev. 12:2 says the woman “being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”

“Travail” is quite a common figure in Scripture to signify trouble and tribulation. It is used many times in the Old Testament in relation to Israel’s tribulation, caused by hostile nations: (2 Kng. 19:3. Isa. 26:16-18.

Jer. 4:31. 6:24. 13:21. Jer. 30:4-7. Mic. 4:9-10. Hos. 13:12-13).

The metaphor is also used in the New Testament (Jn. 16:19-21, 33). “Sorrows” in Matt. 24:8 means “birth pangs” and refers to the tribulation which precedes the second coming.

STARS CAST DOWN

After referring to the woman travailing and being in pain, reference is made to the dragon attacking and casting down one third of her stars. The dragon obviously hates the woman! Verse 17 says he is “angry” with her, and v 13 says he “persecutes” her.

It is therefore not difficult to see the dragon as the cause of the woman’s travail and pain, i.e. tribulation.

Verse 4 says the dragon “swept down the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them down to the earth.” The stars are, of course, one third of the twelve which belong to the woman. This suggests one third of the woman’s seed (Hebrew Christians in the land of Israel?) will fall. Later, in v 17, we read that the dragon makes war “with the remnant of her seed” i.e. the remaining two thirds.

In a previous chapter we have already looked at very similar language in Dan. 8:10 where reference is made to an anti-Israel power casting down some of the stars of heaven to the ground and stamping upon them. Verse 24 interprets the stars to be “the holy people” i.e. Israelites. Dan. 11:32-35 also refers to a time when some of the people of God would fall by the sword of the enemy, and says the purpose is “to test and purge them, and make them white.”

A REFINING PROCESS

A refining process relating to the nation of Israel is also referred to in the word of prophecy in Zech. 13:8-9. Reference is made here to two thirds of the population being cast down and the remaining one third being refined like silver in the fire.

In view of the fact that the original Scriptures in the Old Testament relate the dragon to Egypt and Babylon (Iraq today), could very well suggest, as do other prophecies that Arab nations surrounding Israel will inflict tribulation upon both natural and spiritual Jews living in the land. Islamic fundamentalists are against both Jews and Christians, and would have no scruples about using the sword in the event of a successful invasion.

The removal of the mosque on the temple-mount at Jerusalem to make way for a Jewish temple could act as the catalyst to motivate such an invasion. Even at the end of the millennium, the dragon deceives nations to invade the holy land (Rev. 20:7-9).

SHE BROUGHT FORTH A MAN CHILD

Rev. 12:5 says that as a result of her travail (tribulation), the woman gives birth to a “man child.” For obvious reasons this man-child cannot refer to Christ, nor the woman to Mary. Remember that the chapter is prophetic, relating to events after the first century A.D. Mary was dead and Jesus had long since ascended to heaven when the book of Revelation was given.

The expression “man child” also has its roots in the Old Testament in Isa. 66:7-8: “Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the land (of Israel) be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation (Israel) be born in one moment? Yet Zion had hardly travailed when she brought forth children.”

Like Rev. 12, this passage also refers to a woman travailing and in pain to be delivered, and giving birth to a man child. The woman is said to be “Zion,” and the man-child produced by her travailing is explained to be “a nation” consisting of “children.” The “man child” is clearly not a single individual, but a body of people.

It is quite common for Scripture to speak this way. For example, the newly born nation of Israel is referred to in terms of a man child in Hos. 11:1: “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” And Ezra 3:1 refers to the people of Israel gathering together at Jerusalem “as one man.”

The same applies to Christ’s church. Although consisting of many members, it is referred to in its perfected state as a “perfect man,” not men (Eph. 4:13). Many times the church is referred to as a single “body” - Christ’s body. In fact, 1 Cor. 12:12 refers to the church as “the Christ.” Elsewhere the church is referred to as an “holy nation” 1 Pet. 2:9.

According to Rev. 12:5 the man-child is destined to “rule the nations with a rod of iron and be caught up to God and His throne.” According to Rev. 2:27 and 3:21, this is the destiny of the church.

SATAN AS LIGHTNING FELL FROM HEAVEN

Before leaving Rev. 12, reference should be made to a statement uttered by Jesus which is often connected with this chapter to support the fallen-angel devil. The statement is in Lk. 10:18 and records Jesus as saying “I beheld satan as lightning fall from heaven.”

The traditional interpretation of this is based on two assumptions: 1. “Satan” is a fallen angel. 2. “Heaven” is the heaven of heavens where God dwells.

The word “satan,” as already pointed out, does not mean fallen angel. It simply means “adversary,” and nowhere is it stated in Scripture that satan is a fallen angel adversary.

Regarding the word “heaven” in Lk. 10:18, it is surely significant that only three verses before this, in v 15, Jesus used the word metaphorically, saying, “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell.”

The metaphorical usage of the word here, not to mention all the other places in the Bible, should be taken into account before rushing in and giving it a literal application.

CONTRADICTION

To regard satan in Lk. 10:18 as a fallen angel creates a contradiction. In its context, Jesus’ statement “I beheld satan as lightning fall from heaven” was made in response to his disciples rejoicing over the fact that they had been successful in casting out demons, i.e. healing those who were mentally and physically sick.

Now, according to the common view, satan and his cohorts were cast out of heaven about 4000 years before Christ’s ministry. And, as a result of being expelled, they are supposed to have been functioning as demons, invading and possessing people, and afflicting them with mental and physical sicknesses.

But Lk. 10:18 teaches the opposite. Instead of linking demon possession with the fall of satan, it links dispossession. Instead of teaching that demons invaded people as a result of satan’s fall, the passage teaches that demons were being cast out of people as a result of satan’s fall. Jesus clearly makes the statement concerning the fall of satan in relation to the casting out of demons. He equates victory and success over sickness and disease with satan’s fall, but tradition says it was satan’s fall which caused sickness.

WHO IS THE SATAN?

Whoever satan was, he “fell” during Christ’s ministry when power over all types of sickness was manifested, not 4000 years beforehand. And his “fall” was very conspicuous by the remarkable and outstanding healings that were taking place - as conspicuous as lightning flashing across a dark cloudy sky!

Regarding the identity of satan in this particular section of Scripture, it is important to remember that the word simply means “adversary.” In later chapters it shall be demonstrated that this is one of many names or titles given to sin, which is frequently personified in Scripture, i.e. treated as a personal malignant enemy, enthroned over the world, ruling with great power, tempting and inducing people to disobey God, and inflicting mankind with sickness, disease and death.

In a later chapter it shall also be explained how the serpent in Eden became a symbol of the sin he provoked. It is therefore significant that after referring to satan falling from heaven, Jesus, in his very next statement (Lk. 10:19) said to his disciples “Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents over all the power of the enemy.” Although this statement can be taken literally as applied to snakes, the reference to “enemy” suggests it can be extended beyond the literal into the spiritual - to the real enemy which is sin.

Up until Jesus came, sin was a great champion, having ruled over and defeated everyone. Sin was invincible, being enthroned over all human hearts causing much sickness and disease. But Jesus toppled this enemy from his high tower as Prince of the world, and cast him down. As has been demonstrated from other Scriptures, being “cast down from heaven” is a metaphor signifying loss of power. And this was certainly evident in the spectacular deliverances from sickness, and even death, performed by Jesus and his disciples.

SATAN TRANSFORMED INTO AN ANGEL OF LIGHT

In looking at the passages of Scripture which are thought to teach that satan is a fallen angel, 2 Cor. 11:14-15 should also be included. It reads: “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness”

Taking this statement as it stands in its context, it says nothing about satan having once been, or now being in reality, an angel. It says satan

transforms himself into an angel. But how could he transform himself into an angel if he was already an angel?

The word “transform” means to change into something different. Some modern translations use the word “disguise” or “masquerade.” This means that whoever the satan is, he is not really an angel, he only gives the appearance of being one; he disguises or masquerades as such.

SEVERAL ALTERNATIVES

Keeping in mind the fact that “satan” means “adversary” and “angel” means “messenger” and can apply to either human or divine beings, there are several ways in which the statement in question can be interpreted:

1. A supernatural adversary masquerades as a supernatural messenger of God.
2. A supernatural adversary masquerades as a human messenger of God.
3. A human adversary masquerades as a supernatural messenger of God.
4. A human adversary masquerades as a human messenger of God.

As far as number one and two are concerned, Scripture simply does not teach that a wicked supernatural angel was expelled from heaven, so no such being exists to masquerade either as a human or superhuman messenger of God. There is certainly no reference in 2 Cor. 11 to satan being a supernatural fallen angel. This concept has to be read into the text, for the text itself does not state it.

As far as number 3 is concerned, it would be impossible for a human to masquerade as a super human. A mortal cannot disguise himself as an immortal, and a few simple tests would soon blow his cover or pretence.

There is nothing, however, impossible about number 4, i.e. that satan is a human adversary, under the power of sin, masquerading as a messenger of God, or church leader. (Remember that the word “angel” is used in Rev. 2 and 3 to describe church leaders).

CONTEXT CONFIRMS

The context of 2 Cor. 11:14-15 confirms this application. A careful comparison between verses 14, 15, 23, reveals that the phrase “messenger of light” runs parallel with “ministers of Righteousness” and “ministers of Christ.” It is clear from this that “light” relates to “righteousness” which relates to “Christ.”

Most Bible students will appreciate that the word “light” is

commonly used in Scripture in this spiritual sense. For example, in Lk. 16:8 Christians are referred to as “children of light.” The “light,” of course, is Christ, who is also their “righteousness.”

The “satan” or adversary in 2 Cor. 11:14 relates to an enemy claiming to be a light-bearer of divine truths and whose followers claimed to be ministers of Christ. In actual fact, they were “false apostles and deceitful workers” (v 13).

A careful study of the whole chapter soon reveals that they were not fallen angels, but apostate Jews who were undermining Paul’s influence in the church. Paul indicates this when he says “Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.” (v 22).

* * * * *

CHAPTER FOUR THE ANOINTED CHERUB

We now turn attention to Ezk. 28 which is another one of the foundation texts used to support the belief that the devil is a fallen angel.

In this chapter we have reference to an “anointed cherub” who has been in “Eden, the garden of God,” and upon the “holy mountain of God.” He was “perfect” from the day he was created till his heart got filled with pride, causing him to sin and be cast out.

Before taking a closer look at this passage to see what it is really saying, let us firstly notice what it doesn’t say.

1. There is no mention of the words devil, satan, angel. To conclude that the “anointed cherub” was an angel and became a devil is to assume something that is not stated in the text.

2. There is no mention of the anointed cherub ever being in heaven. He had been in “Eden, the garden of God” and was cast out of the “holy mountain of God,” but nowhere is it stated that either of these places was heaven.

3. There is no mention of the anointed cherub surviving after being cast out, and roaming the earth tempting people to sin and rebel against God. Quite the opposite! God’s words of warning to him in v 16-19 are: “I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God, and I will destroy you, O covering cherub I will cast you to the ground and make a spectacle of you in front of kings that they may see you I will set fire to you which shall devour you and reduce you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who are watching.”

The fate of this anointed cherub as a result of sinning and being cast out of the mountain of God, clearly does not tie in with the fate of the fallen angel devil of tradition.

EXAMINING THE CONTEXT

In approaching this section of Scripture, it is important once again to look at it carefully in its context. Two vital clues are supplied in a statement made in v 12: “The word of the Lord came to me saying: son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, you have been in Eden, the garden of God you are the anointed cherub that covereth”

We are informed here that firstly, the subject of the discourse is the

king of Tyre, a man, not an angel. In fact, the word “man” is stated twice in v 2 and 9, but never “angel”.

The second clue is that the nature of the discourse is a “lamentation,” which is usually a mournful dirge, often containing highly descriptive terms, involving metaphorical speech. For example, David’s lamentation over Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam. 1:17-27 refers to them as being “swifter than eagles, stronger than lions.” On the face of it, it would seem more appropriate for this language to be used in relation to angels, not men. As we have already seen in the book of Lamentations itself (2:1), reference is made to the beauty of Israel being cast down from heaven to earth. It would also be easy to imagine that this highly descriptive language could only apply to angels, but it doesn’t.

A DISTINCTION WITHOUT A DIFFERENCE

In response to the fact that Ezk. 28:12 says the discourse refers to the king of Tyre, those who apply it to a fallen angel point out that v 2 refers to the “Prince of Tyre,” and make a distinction between the two. It is claimed that the “Prince” is a man - the human ruler of Tyre who became proud and vain, and the “king” is an “anointed cherub” - an angel - the real corrupting power behind the Prince.

Unfortunately, a distinction is made here where no difference exists. The titles “prince” and “king” are often used synonymously in the Bible and applied to one and the same person. Jesus himself is referred to as both king and prince, and many other examples could be given.

In actual fact, the distinction creates a contradiction, because those who say “king” refers to satan, and “prince” a human, often quote Dan. 10:13, 20 which refers to “the prince of Persia,” and claim that it refers to satan, not to mention “prince of this world” in Jn. 12:31 etc. So, in one breath it is affirmed that “prince” means a human, not satan, then in the next breath it is affirmed that “prince” means satan!

NOT A TYPE

Some concede that the discourse in Ezk. 28 relates to the king of Tyre, but believe he was a type of the fallen angel devil, and therefore maintain that a double fulfilment is involved.

However, as pointed out in the chapter dealing with Lucifer, a type must precede the antitype. The downfall of the king of Tyre, around 600 B.C. could not therefore be a type of the fall of angels over 3,400 years

beforehand. Ezk. 28 is at least 3,400 years too late to be regarded as a type of the origin of tradition's devil.

The point made earlier should also be kept in mind, that whenever Scripture provides types, it also makes clear reference to the antitype. This is where the concept of a fallen angel devil falls down quite badly. It claims that certain Scriptures like Ezk. 28 and Isa. 14 are a type, but fail to provide an antitype to back it up. Not one Scripture can be provided which clearly and plainly teaches the devil is a fallen angel. The concept is based on self-appointed types or imaginary shadows.

FACING THE FACTS

It is clearly stated in Ezk. 28 that the discourse applies to the king of Tyre. Whether we like it or not, or can make sense of it or not, we have to accept it and interpret it in this light. This is where some have made a mistake. Because some of the statements are hard to understand in relation to the king of Tyre, they have concluded they must apply to someone else. So a fictitious being has been created to whom the descriptions can be applied. Basically, this is how the concept of a fallen-angel devil began.

The apostle Peter relates to this kind of process in 2 Pet. 3:16. Referring to some things in the Scriptures which are hard to understand, he warns that failure to face the facts and follow the guide-lines of Scripture will result in twisting and distorting the Scriptures.

It is important then, in approaching Ezk. 28, to look at it as applying to the king of Tyre.

TYRE

Tyre was a city on the Mediterranean coast of the country of Phoenicia, known as Lebanon today. Tyre was a great maritime power and her fleets of ships traded far and wide with many nations. Tyre became very rich through this trade, resulting in the king becoming proud, conceited and arrogant. His attitudes and actions incurred God's anger, and Ezekiel was inspired to prophesy his punishment. This is the subject matter of Ezk. chapters 26 to 28, and these three chapters should be read in one sitting to appreciate all the comments in their context.

PERFECT IN ALL YOUR WAYS

Ezk. 28:15 says the king “was perfect” in all his ways. The word “was” signifies past tense. This was the king’s position in the past, prior to Ezekiel giving the prophecy.

Because it has been thought that “perfect” means sinless perfection, it has been concluded that it cannot apply to a human such as the king of Tyre. But the word does not necessarily mean that. For example, Jesus said to his disciples: “Be ye therefore “perfect” (Matt. 5:48). But it is evident from the rest of his teaching that he did not expect his friends to attain to sinless perfection while being clothed with sinful flesh.

We read in Gen. 6:9 that Noah was a just man and “perfect.” But he was not an angel, neither did he attain sinless perfection. On one occasion he got drunk! (Gen. 9:20-22).

Job was “perfect” and upright (Job 1:1), but he had to be rebuked by God for some bad attitudes and statements (Job chapters 38 to 42).

The word “perfect” is used in these and other places to mean behaviour of a high and exemplary standard. The Jerusalem Bible translates Ezk. 28:15 like this: “Your behaviour was exemplary from the day of your creation.” The Revised Standard Version reads: “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created.”

The idea of the devil being perfect from the beginning does not tie in with 1 Jn. 3:8 which says “the devil has sinned from the beginning.” And Jn. 8:44 records Jesus as saying “the devil was a murderer from the beginning.”

CREATED

Regarding the word “created” in the statement “You were perfect in your ways from the day you were “created”: it has been said that this proves the reference is to an angel because the king of Tyre was not created but procreated. But Scripture uses the same word created elsewhere in relation to the formation of people and nations. See Ps. 102:18. Isa. 43:1-7. 54:16. Ezk. 21:30.

Reference to the exemplary character of the king of Tyre relates to an earlier part of Tyre’s history. It is recorded in 1 Kng. 5. 2 Sam. 5:11. 2 Chr. 2:12-14.

We learn from this history that Hiram, king of Tyre, “always loved David.” He sent messengers to David’s son Solomon when he ascended the throne and rejoiced greatly, saying, “Blessed be the Lord God of

Israel, who made heaven and earth, who has given to David a wise son, endowed with prudence and understanding, who will build a house for his kingdom.”

Hiram provided Solomon with servants and materials to build a palace and temple at Jerusalem. There was, as we read in 1 Kng. 5:12, peace between Hiram and Solomon. A league was made between them to help and support each other - to “cover” for each other in the event of invasion and attack by an enemy. This is referred to in Amos 1:9 as a “brotherly covenant.”

It is evident from all this that in the early days, the king of Tyre was of exemplary and blameless character, maintaining a high standard of conduct in all his dealings with Israel, and an excellent attitude towards Israel’s God.

There is also another aspect to the “perfection” of Tyre. Due to the enormous wealth gained through trade, Tyre built a beautiful harbour and port. In Ezk. 27:3-4, 11, it is described in terms of being “perfect in beauty.” So there could also be a physical material significance behind the reference to the king’s perfection.

INIQUITY WAS FOUND

Unfortunately, the king’s high standard of conduct was not maintained. As Ezk. 28:15 says: “Iniquity was found in you.” The nature of the sin is indicated in v 16-18: “Your commerce grew so great, lawlessness filled your heart and you went wrong Your beauty made you arrogant; you misused your wisdom to increase your dignity So great was your sin in your wicked trading, that you desecrated your sanctuaries.”

The reference made earlier to Tyre’s port being “perfect in beauty” was actually the boast of the king. In Ch. 27 the port is likened to a beautifully decked-out ship proudly sailing the high seas, but is overtaken by a storm and wrecked.

The beauty of the port and the success of trade clearly went to the king’s head. Riches and prosperity filled him with pride and greed, causing him to stoop to unrighteous trading and corrupt attitudes and dealings.

I AM A GOD

The king became so power drunk and inflated with pride, that he started thinking of himself in terms of being a god. Ezk. 28:2 says

“Puffed up with pride, you claim to be a god. You say that like a god you sit on a throne, surrounded by the seas. You may pretend to be a god, but, no, you are mortal (a man), not divine.” (Good News Translation).

It is important to note that reference to the king being a god and sitting in the seat of God, is the king’s own personal estimation of himself and his position. But God’s verdict is “You are mortal - a man, not divine.” This disqualifies once and for all any application to a fallen angel.

WISER THAN DANIEL

The same applies to the words in v 3: “Behold, you are wiser than Daniel, there is no secret hidden from you.” These words are not affirming God’s view of the king, but the king’s own inflated opinion of himself. It is a satirical or sarcastic statement. The Amplified Bible renders it like this: “Indeed, you are (imagining yourself) wiser than Daniel; there is no secret (you think) that is hidden from you.”

Daniel had many deep and secret things revealed to him by the Spirit of God, resulting in him being elevated to positions of power and authority in Babylon, where he functioned as a wise administrator.

In his fame and success, the king of Tyre became swelled-headed and started comparing himself with Daniel, imagining in his conceit, that he was wiser and better. In view of the fact that the king of Tyre was in contact with many nations, all of whom had wise men, it is natural to wonder why he picked on Daniel, an Israelite, to compare himself. The king seems to have been obsessed with an ambition to be wiser than Israel’s wisest man. This competitive spirit suggests rivalry and jealousy - an unhealthy attitude towards Israel.

This attitude stood in sharp contrast to the attitude of the king in David and Solomon’s day. Solomon was the wisest man in his time and the king of Tyre was happy to acknowledge that, and not try and compete in a jealous spirit (2 Chr. 2:12).

Times have clearly changed in Ezk. 28. This king is not kindly disposed to Israel, and therefore not “perfect”; not of exemplary character.

REJOICED OVER JERUSALEM’S DOWNFALL

In actual fact, as Ezk. 26:1-2 indicates, Tyre had become quite hateful towards Israel: “... this is what the people in the city of Tyre are cheering about. They shout, ‘Jerusalem is shattered! Her commercial power is gone! She won’t be our rival anymore.’” (Good News Bible).

In her heyday under Solomon, Jerusalem was a gateway to trade and commerce with the nations. The wealth of the nations poured in from all directions and the gates swung open to caravan traffic bearing costly cargo.

But ultimately the Babylonians destroyed the city of Jerusalem and took the Jews captive, (including Daniel). Tyre reacted with great joy to this, because she stood to gain as a result of Israel's loss.

Here again can be seen a contrast from Tyre's "perfect" attitude in the past. In those days she helped in the building of Jerusalem, supplying timber and workmen, but now she rejoices over the destruction of it all.

To make matters worse, they went further by capturing Jewish fugitives fleeing from the Babylonians, and handed them over to their neighbouring enemy, the Edomites. Both Lam. 1:2 and Am. 1:9 refer to this; saying that Tyre did not keep the treaty of friendship she had made and betrayed her ally.

HE WHO CURSES ISRAEL SHALL BE CURSED

Tyre failed to realize that her prosperity was due to blessing Israel, and that the moment she turned against Israel, she would sign her death warrant and come under God's curse. And it was Ezekiel's duty to draw attention to this by proclaiming calamity and disaster to both the king of Tyre and his people. Ezekiel warned that ruthless enemies would come and attack the city of Tyre and totally destroy it, along with the king and many of his people.

Addressing the king, the prophet said: "Your wisdom and skill made you rich with treasures of gold and silver. By great cleverness in trading you have heaped up riches, and with your riches your arrogance has grown. Therefore, thus says the Lord God, because you consider yourself a god, I will bring ruthless enemies to attack you. They will destroy all the beautiful things you have acquired by your skill and wisdom. They will kill you and send you to a watery grave. When they come to kill you, will you still claim that you are a god? When you face your murderers, you shall only be a man and no God. You will die like the uncircumcised at the hands of the godless foreigners. I the sovereign Lord have given the command" (28:4-10). Attention hardly needs to be drawn to the impossibility of applying this to a fallen-angel.

EDEN THE GARDEN OF GOD

Addressing the king of Tyre, Ezk. 28:13 says “You have been in Eden, the garden of God.” The common belief is that this refers to the “garden eastward in Eden” in which the Lord placed Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:8). Seeing that the king of Tyre did not live contemporary with Adam and Eve, it is concluded that the reference to him being in the garden must mean the statement applies to an angel.

However, “Eden the garden of God” is quite a different description from “a garden eastward in Eden.” “Eden”, was a large extensive area of land throughout which Tyre traded and did business. But the garden in which Adam was placed was not all of Eden, but “eastward in Eden.” i.e. the garden did not occupy the whole territory or land mass of Eden, but just an eastern sector of it.

From the following references in Scripture to Eden, it is evident that it was an extensive tract of land, at least encompassing the whole of Mesopotamia, if not the whole of the territory of the ancient Assyrian empire: 2 Kng. 19:12 and Isa. 37:12. Ezk. 27:23. Ezk. 31.

EVERY PRECIOUS STONE WAS THY COVERING

Ezk. 27 refers to Tyre’s trading with the nations and gives an itemized list of the items of trade. For example, v 16 refers to “emeralds and rubies from Syria”, and v 22 refers to “all precious stones and gold” from Sheba. Quite a variety of precious stones was involved and nine of them are mentioned in Ezk. 28:13. This verse says “every precious stone was thy covering”, or, in the words of the Good News Bible “You wore gems of every kind.” This is simply stating that the king adorned himself, and no doubt his palace and temples, with some of the treasures he accumulated. It is not difficult to imagine his robes ornamented with stones and necklaces, bracelets and rings.

It is, however, difficult to imagine an angel strutting about in heaven with diamond-studded robes, necklaces dangling around his neck and rings draped on all his fingers!

YOU WERE UPON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF GOD

Ezk. 28:14 goes on to say that the king “was upon the holy mountain of God.” The common view is that this refers to heaven where the rebel angel lived before being cast out, but Scripture does not teach this.

Instead, it teaches that the holy mountain of God was in Jerusalem. See Ezk. 20:40. Dan. 9:16, 20. 11:45. Ps. 48:1. Obadiah v 16.

The “holy mountain of God” is the same place referred to as “the mount of the congregation” in Isa. 14:13, where the king of Babylon aspired to sit.

Tyre, of course, had been upon this holy mountain. The king had supplied timber for the temple there, and craftsmen were sent there to help in the construction of it. Tyre also visited Jerusalem on trade missions and clearly had a foothold there. Ezk. 27:17 lists Judah and Israel among Tyre’s trading partners.

But, as Ezk. 28:15-16 goes on to say: “You were busy buying and selling, and this led to violence and sin. Therefore I will cast you as profane out of the holy mount of God.”

It is evident from this that it does not refer to the time when relations were good with Israel and the visits and contacts were friendly. In those days, the king of Tyre or his emissaries would depart from Jerusalem with joy. Such is not the case in v 16. Tyre is pictured as occupying the holy mount and having to be forcefully evicted. The reference to “violence” as the sin which causes God to cast out, implies violence being involved in the occupation of it.

In connection with this, Ezk. 26:2 is significant: “Tyre has cheered against Jerusalem, shouting out, Hooray, the city is shattered; her commercial power is gone; her gates of trade have now opened to me and I shall prosper; she won’t be our rival anymore.”

Not only did Tyre cheer at the violent overthrow of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, but also moved in afterwards for whatever spoil they could find. Joel 3:4-6 refers to Tyre moving into Jerusalem and seizing silver and gold for their temples, and selling Jewish survivors as slaves to the Gentiles, which, being against their will, would involve force or violence. This recalls Amos 1:9 which states that they delivered a whole band of Jewish exiles to Edom, not remembering or honouring the ties of friendship.

WALKED AMONG THE STONES OF FIRE

Ezk. 28:14 not only says Tyre was upon the holy mountain of God, but also “walked up and down among the stones of fire.” According to the context, these stones of fire were on the holy mountain of God in Jerusalem, when Tyre moved in after the Babylonians set fire to the city and temple. This would suggest that “the stones of fire” refers to the

smouldering remains of the city and temple which the king walked up and down among, gloating and rejoicing over the destruction.

What a contrast to the early days when the king was “perfect”, eager to see the temple erected and assisting to that end!

THE ANOINTED CHERUB THAT COVERS

Ezk. 28:14 in the Authorised Version refers to the king as “the anointed cherub that covers.” Because “cherub” is used elsewhere in relation to an angel, the reference has been regarded as applying to the fallen angel. However, taken in its context, the statement is unmistakably applied to the king of Tyre and we must therefore interpret it accordingly.

Many translations and commentaries say that Ezk. 28:14-16 is a difficult passage to decipher because it is obscure and uncertain in the Hebrew. Many of them do not give the sense that the king of Tyre himself was the anointed cherub that covers, but rather that an anointed cherub was provided by God to be a covering or guardian for the king of Tyre. For example, the Jerusalem Bible says “I had provided you with a guardian cherub.” The Good News: “I put a terrifying angel there to guard you.”

These and other translations teach that God provided Tyre with special angelic protection during the time of exemplary character when supporting Israel. This is quite consistent with the Scriptures which teach that God appoints angelic supervision over the nations and especially blesses and protects those who bless Israel.

Regarding Ezk. 28:16, the Authorised Version reads: “I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.” But once again, very few modern translations agree with this. The general consensus of opinion is that it does not mean the king of Tyre was a cherub that would be destroyed, but that the cherub was going to destroy the king of Tyre. For example, the Revised Standard Version and New Revised Standard Version read: “And the guardian cherub drove you out.” Jerusalem Bible: “And the guardian cherub has destroyed you from amid the coals.” New English Bible: “And the guardian cherub banished you.”

Because the king of Tyre rejoiced over the Jews being driven out of their land and suffering destruction, the angel of the Lord used the Babylonians and Greeks to destroy the city and island of Tyre and drive the nation into exile.

ALTERNATIVE ANGLES

Even if the Authorised Version translation was correct, and the king of Tyre himself was referred to as “the anointed cherub that covers”, it can be interpreted in that light as applying to a man and not an angel. For example, Cyrus the king of Persia is referred to as the Lord’s “anointed,” because he was specially appointed by God for a specific commission - to conquer Babylon, and release the Jewish captives so they could return to their land and rebuild the temple (Isa. 44:28 to 45:4). Tyre was likewise “anointed” to help Israel build the temple.

As far as the king of Tyre being referred to as a “cherub,” Hastings Bible Dictionary presents the view that the king of Tyre is being compared to one of the holy angels, i.e. the king was “like an angel.” The New International Bible seems to give this sense: “You were anointed as a guarding cherub.”

If so, this would not be the first time that a man was likened to an angel. Four times in the Old Testament we read that David was “as an angel of God.” (1 Sam. 29:9. 2 Sam. 14:17, 20. 19:27). In Zech. 12:8 we read that the Jews at Jerusalem “shall be as the angel of the Lord.” And, it is recorded in Gal. 4:14 that the apostle Paul said to the church “You received me as an angel of God.”

A GUARDIAN

In what sense then, it may be asked, could Tyre have been a guardian cherub? Well, in the same way that the cherub in Gen. 3:24 guarded the entrance to the garden with a sword in his hand, so Tyre guarded the land of Israel, referred to as “the garden of the Lord” in Ezk. 36:35, and “as the garden of Eden” in Joel 2:3.

The king of Tyre controlled the Phoenician coast (Lebanon), which was an effective buffer zone for Israel in the event of attack from the north. Zec. 9:1-5 indicates this by referring to nations in Palestine panicking when invading forces destroyed Tyre.

As pointed out before, Tyre and Israel, in the early days, entered into a covenant or league. This would involve agreement to “cover,” i.e. defend and protect each other in the event of invasion and attack by an enemy. Ezk. 28: 14 actually states that God set up the king of Tyre for this purpose: “I have set thee so.”

DIFFERENT CHERUB IN GENESIS CHAPTER 3.

Some who believe that the guardian cherub in Ezk. 28 is a fallen angel, maintain that he is the same person as the Cherubim in Gen. 3:24 which guarded the path to the tree of life.

In answer to this it needs to be pointed out that the Cherubim in Gen. 3 took up the position to guard the path after Adam and Eve sinned and were expelled from the garden. If, as tradition believes, the rebel angel was cast out of heaven before Adam and Eve sinned, and used the serpent to tempt them into sin, would God then use that same sinful angel to guard the entrance to the garden to keep sinners out? Would God use an unholy being to guard and protect holy things? Not likely!

SATIRE

In concluding this chapter, mention could also be made of the fact that some students have regarded the references to the king of Tyre being an anointed cherub in Eden upon the holy mountain etc. as satire or sarcasm, as in the case of 28:2-3 where the Lord states sarcastically the king's own inflated opinion and estimation of himself. Adam Clarke's Commentary for instance, says the reference to the king of Tyre being an anointed cherub and on the holy mountain "is a strong irony."

THE WITNESS OF ARCHAEOLOGY

In connection with this, it is interesting to note that archaeologists have found cherub-sphinxes in the area of Tyre, dating back to the period of Ezk. 28. One ivory carving was found of a king sitting on a throne with a sphinx on each side, resembling the cherubim. Some believe this could be a distortion or corruption of the divine Cherubim.

Originally, it was a man from Tyre who made and carved the items for Solomon's temple, including the Cherubim on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant in the most holy place. This ark of the covenant represented in certain respects, the throne of the Lord. The Cherub-flanked throne upon which the king of Tyre sat, claiming to be a god, could very well have been an imitation of it.

Statements from certain Phoenician and Ugaritic texts quote the king of Tyre as saying "I am God," which Ezk. 28:2 says he claimed to be.

Various expressions like "holy mountain of God" have also been found in Phoenician texts, which describe a location in the city of Tyre

itself - probably the location of the temple palace where the king sat.

In his arrogance, the king may have imagined that Tyre had replaced Jerusalem not only as a trade centre but also as a spiritual centre, or that he had regained and restored paradise in Tyre, causing it to become the garden of God which the Cherubim now guarded.

Phoenician sphinxes usually had jewels placed over their breasts, and significantly enough, the nine jewels mentioned in Ezk. 28:13 as “covering” the king, are nine of the twelve in the breastplate which was worn by the high priest of Israel (Ex. 28:17-20).

All in all, it would not be difficult to come to the conclusion that the king of Tyre usurped and corrupted the divine patterns appointed for Israel’s temple, adapting and imitating holy things for the glorification of self. And, in view of this, there would be some merit in regarding the references to the king being “God”, “anointed cherub”, “in Eden the garden of God”, “upon the holy mountain” etc. as being strong satire and irony.

Due to the uncertainty of the Hebrew in the verses under consideration, various translations and interpretations are possible as we have seen. Dogmatic conclusions are therefore unwise. But one thing is certain: whatever way one looks at this section of Scripture, the application to a fallen-angel devil is impossible except by totally ignoring the context and misapplying the statements.

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CHAPTER FIVE THE SERPENT (PART ONE)

In considering the foundation passages of Scripture upon which belief in the fallen-angel devil has been based, it is inevitable that attention be directed to the serpent in Gen. 3. Original sin was clearly caused by the serpent deceiving Eve into disobeying a command to not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

THREE MAJOR FACTORS

There were three major factors which led to sin and the fall of our first parents: 1. The tree of knowledge of good and evil. 2. The command to not eat from it. 3. The serpent who deceived Eve into eating, by telling a lie. Take away any one of these factors and the sin would not have been committed. All three played a part in the process.

Now, if we were to ask the question, "Who made the tree, the command and the serpent?" the answer of Scripture is "God." He was responsible for all three. (Gen. 2:8-9; 16-17. 3:1). God, of course, did not make the serpent lie or Adam and Eve sin, and we need to be clear about that. However, it is an unavoidable fact that He did make the tree, the command and the serpent, and that they were involved in the circumstances which led to the fall.

Now, God in His foreknowledge would have foreseen this, yet He still brought those three factors into existence. This being the case, there must have been a good reason for so doing. Unfortunately, failure to understand this has led to misconceptions concerning the serpent, so we need to go back to the beginning to get the proper perspective.

VERY GOOD - NO GOOD

Gen. 1:31 tells us that "God saw everything He had made, and behold, it was very good." This "very good" condition prior to the fall of man, is contrasted in Rom. 7:18 with the condition after the fall: "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." Paul is referring, as he says in v 17, to "sin that dwells within me." It is evident from the context that Paul is referring to sinful impulses and inclinations deep within his flesh nature which are opposed to law and righteousness and have a constant bias towards evil.

Originally, man was not created with such sinful propensities. He was

created “very good.” However, this does not mean that Adam and Eve were created with a ready-made, fully developed and mature godly character. This is not how God goes about developing such character. This is not what “very good” means in Gen. 1:31, as is evident from the fact that the statement is applied to “everything God had made.” This includes not just man, but animals, birds, fish etc which are incapable of the moral and spiritual qualities and attributes that are usually associated with a godly character from the divine point of view.

Everything was very good in a natural physical sense, being well formed, well ordered and constituted. As far as man was concerned, he was a good physical being with a good body and brain. The mind functioned well in its thinking and reasoning processes, and all the bodily parts worked perfectly.

But man was made with these things. He didn’t have to develop them himself. No personal effort was required. He didn’t have to exercise any moral or spiritual powers to acquire them.

NOT CREATED WITH CHARACTER

Character, however, is an entirely different matter. It cannot be immediately or mechanically produced. It cannot be instantly or automatically printed on a person’s mind like words or pictures are printed on a piece of paper as it passes through a photo-copy machine.

Character is something that grows and develops through personal experiences, which require exercising and applying moral and spiritual principles and making decisions and choices.

In this respect, God’s work on man was not finished or complete. The divine edict “Let us make man in our image” had more in view than just a good physical body with a good brain mechanism. The sequel reveals that the Creator particularly had in mind a man who was good spiritually, who took His word seriously and who made decisions and choices that pleased Him.

MORE WORK TO BE DONE

So then, at the end of the six days of creation, God’s physical external work of creation was completed and very good, but in another sense - an internal spiritual sense, it was a work about to begin. There lay ahead a deeper and more wonderful development on a moral and spiritual plane, before God’s glory could be fully manifested in man - before man could

become in the image of God in the fullest sense.

As we know, physical development and strength requires physical exercise, otherwise the muscles get weak and the flesh goes flabby. And so Adam was required to do physical exercise. He had to cultivate and till the ground (Gen. 2:5, 15). Spiritual development and strength also requires exercise. Heb. 5:14 informs us that spiritually minded people are those who have “exercised their senses to discern both good and evil.” It is not difficult to infer from this that both good and evil have to co-exist and be confronted and encountered, before spiritual discernment and the development of godly character can be achieved. Other Scriptures, as we shall see, certainly teach this.

INNOCENT OF GOOD AND EVIL

Now, when Adam and Eve were first created, they were ignorant of both good and evil, and therefore had no opportunity to exercise their senses to discern between the two and develop character. This is obvious from the reference to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If Adam and Eve already had knowledge of, and knew good and evil, and had exercised their senses to discern between them, why is the tree referred to as the source of such knowledge and why are they told not to partake of it?

It is not difficult to conclude that the reason for the tree being put there was to lay a basis upon which a particular series of circumstances could be set in motion, to give Adam and Eve the opportunity to “exercise their senses to discern both good and evil”, and so set in motion the processes required for the development of godly character.

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

Godly character is obviously character that pleases God, and this can be summed up in two words: “faith” and “obedience.” Faith, according to the Bible’s definition in Heb. 11:1 is “confidence in things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Faith is basically to believe in God and His promises. We are told in Rom. 10:17 that “faith comes from hearing the word of God”, but other Scriptures make it clear that if faith stops at just hearing and doesn’t result in doing, i.e. obedience, it is valueless. True faith is not passive but active. This is the kind of faith Heb. 11:6 refers to when it says “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Obedient faith is the key to godly character!

It should be evident from this then, as mentioned before, that nobody, including Adam, starts life with a ready-made, fully developed, obedient faith. Had this been the case with Adam, he would not have disobeyed God and sinned!

It should also be evident that faith does not grow naturally and automatically like hair or nails, without any spiritual influence or input. No! It requires contact with the word of God and a positive obedient response and application. No one, including Adam and Eve, starts life with this obedient faith, but most are born with the potential for it to be developed.

Being created in the likeness of God, man has a mind endowed with tremendous capabilities. He is capable of tremendous good or evil. He is capable of being very believing or unbelieving, obedient or disobedient, positive or negative, constructive or destructive, divine or diabolical. It is all a question of how he allows his creative potential to be exploited, influenced and directed.

NO BASIS FOR FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

Now, some may feel it is incorrect to say that Adam was not created with a ready-made fully developed obedient faith. This point should therefore be clarified. As pointed out before, faith is defined in Heb. 11:1 as “confidence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Now, when first created, Adam was not required to be convinced of things not seen, not even as far as the presence of God was concerned because divine visitations were made, during which Adam could see and talk to the Lord (Gen. 3:8).

Neither was Adam required to confidently anticipate or hope for anything. He had everything a man could hope for! He lived in perfect conditions - a paradise in which there were no weeds, wild animals, sickness, disease, war, famine, pestilence and no prospect or fear of death. There were not even any neighbours to argue and contend with or neighbours’ wives or husbands to covet.

Adam had perfect uninterrupted fellowship and peace with God. Man, God and all creation were united. Total harmony reigned. As things stood, the conditions requiring faith and hope were non-existent. There was no basis upon which they could develop and be manifested.

The same applies to obedience. When first created, Adam was not obedient in the real sense of the word. He lacked opportunity to exercise obedience because there were not, at that stage, any commandments to

obey. At this point, the need for the Lord making a commandment should start to be appreciated. Otherwise it is hard to see the sense in putting a tree in the garden and then commanding them to keep away from it.

A STATE OF FLUX

It would be wrong, of course, to say that Adam was unbelieving and disobedient. This was equally impossible because he had nothing to disbelieve or disobey. Without a law or commandments, both obedience and disobedience are impossible. So Adam was neither believing nor unbelieving, obedient nor disobedient in the strict sense of the words. He was in what has been styled “a provisional state” - a state of flux - a neutral gear, able to go into either forward or reverse.

Adam was innocent of both good and evil, yet capable of both. It all hinged on how he would react and respond when placed under the appropriate conditions and confronted with the opportunity to make his own decision and choice.

Adam was unquestionably in a unique situation and it required a unique set of circumstances to make faith and obedience possible, and this is what the early chapters in Genesis are all about, concerning the tree, the command and the serpent. God was setting in motion a certain train of events to lay a basis on which godly character could be developed.

The command involved a simple law - a prohibition notice on one particular tree, as we read in Gen. 2:16-17: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat, dying you shall die.”

GOOD AND EVIL

The penalty for disobedience was mortality and death. This is the “evil” that would result from partaking of the forbidden fruit. With mortality, of course, would come all sorts of other evils as well, such as sickness, disease, sorrow and countless other pressures and problems. And, as a result of experiencing such evils, they would then “know,” as never before (i.e. know experimentally), the “good” they had been experiencing beforehand.

Good and evil are relative conditions and the one cannot be properly known without the other. The same applies to hot and cold, fast and slow, light and dark etc. A person would not really know or understand and appreciate the one without experiencing the other. And so it is with good

and evil. One who only saw and experienced good and never evil, would not know how good the good was, and would know nothing about evil. It is the experiencing of evil that throws good into sharp relief, and reveals its goodness. The prodigal son, and many other sons and daughters since, discovered this when they ran away from a good home which they took for granted, and ended up in a bad one.

In the light of all this, it should be appreciated why the forbidden tree is called “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” To partake of this tree constituted transgression of law, which is sin, which results in a bad and guilty conscience, a sense of condemnation and alienation from God, and fear of death.

The fruit of the tree, whatever it was, was not necessary to produce such evils, for they were all the effect of the act of disobedience. For this reason the whole emphasis in the Bible is on sin and death entering the world through the act of disobedience. For this reason also we are not told what kind of fruit it was and we need not be concerned about knowing.

TEMPTING AND TESTING

It cannot be denied that God deliberately placed something forbidden before Adam and Eve - something “good for food and pleasant to the eyes - a tree to be desired to make one wise” (Gen. 3:6). Yet He refused to let them have access and partake, and warned that death would result if they did.

Now, this clearly was not a case of God tempting them because it is emphatically affirmed in the Bible that He will never do this (Jam. 1:13). However, He does test and there is a difference, although the Authorised Version has failed to make the distinction in some places, as for example in Gen. 22:1.

According to Jam. 1:14-15 temptation involves a person being lured and enticed by their own lust or desire. So when the Bible says God does not tempt, it means He does not physically manipulate our mind or emotions or perform some sort of surgical operation, or exercise an hypnotic influence on our brain to inflame and excite our desires and make us sin.

He does, however, test, by arranging or allowing an opportunity to sin to be placed before us. For example He sometimes creates situations which arouse sinful desires, but whether or not we sin, depends on whether we yield to the desires or resist them.

One thing is certain: God will never make us yield. We can never

blame Him for that. His desire is that we resist and conquer the desires that lead to sin and build up a strong godly character as a result.

There are many examples in the Bible of God testing His people. For example, He allowed or maybe providentially arranged for David to see Bathsheba in her birthday suit, but He did not inflame David's passions and make him sin. David was lured and enticed into adultery by his own desires and sinned due to yielding to them instead of resisting them.

Such tests are not laying a trap to make people stumble and fall. No! It is a case of "all things working together for good." This is a major theme in the Bible and it starts in the garden of Eden.

Now, in the simple law given to Adam and Eve, they were given something to believe and obey, which they didn't have up till that point of time. They now had opportunity to be convinced of something they could not see, and which their natural senses had never experienced, namely, death. Because sin had not been committed at that stage, the death sentence had not been passed. Death was an unknown quantity. Adam was therefore required to believe the word of God and be convinced of the certainty and reality of what God had stated. Such belief constituted faith, and this had to be put into practice by obeying the commandment.

Of course, as already mentioned, not only did the law provide a basis and opportunity for faith and obedience, but also unbelief and disobedience.

FREEWILL

It should be evident from all this, that man was created with freewill. If not, there was no point in giving him the commandment. Freewill - the power of choice, is one of the unique abilities with which man has been created. It permits him to decide his own destiny. It enables him to voluntarily follow or defy God.

God, of course, could have made man to be a scrupulously obedient robot if He had desired a mechanical type obedience. He could have placed a fixed printed circuit in man's head, as men do to robots and machines, causing him to only do what the Creator wanted. But God clearly did not want man to be a human machine that blindly obeys without thought, reason or choice. For this reason, God risked the entrance of sin into the world, so that man might be bound to Him by love and not force. God clearly desires moral obedience, not mechanical.

If man's mind had been "programmed" to automatically obey, there could not have been a voluntary love relationship springing from his own

personal spontaneous will and desire. There would be no character or depth in it. It would be a very artificial and superficial arrangement, like teaching a parrot to say "I love you," or hypnotising a member of the opposite sex to love and be loyal to you. There could be no satisfaction with that kind of love and loyalty, knowing that it did not spring from the person's own will and desire and choice. There would be no heart and soul in such a relationship. And so, because God is love - a moral God with heart and soul, He would not settle for anything less than a voluntary relationship - a relationship in which His children personally chose to love, serve and obey Him.

It was inevitable therefore, that not only would He create man with freewill, but that He would also create a situation which would provide him with the opportunity to exercise it. This, of course, required two different directions from which to choose - the way of obeying God's word and the way of disobeying.

In view of this, it should be evident how wise and necessary it was for Adam to have access not only to a tree of life in the garden, but also a tree of death, and for God to issue the command in relation to the tree of death.

THE THIRD FACTOR

We now turn our attention to the third major factor which led to the fall of Adam and Eve - the serpent. Can the wisdom of God be seen in making this creature and allowing him to come on the scene? God in His foreknowledge would have known that the serpent would use his subtlety to question and challenge the commandment, yet He allowed it. Did He allow it as a test of faith and obedience, as a result of which the utmost good could come if the right response was given? Or was the serpent an unwanted, underhanded and unnecessary intrusion and interference by an enemy of God whose presence in the garden could do no possible good at all? Let's think about this and do some digging beneath the surface.

A TESTED FAITH

As we have seen, the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the commandment to not eat from it, were necessary as part of a process designed to bring about obedient faith. However, a passive quiescent faith is one thing, but a tried and tested and active faith is quite another. And it

is emphasized throughout the Bible that an untried and untested faith is of no value to God. It is only the faith that stands the test of trials that is “much more precious than gold” (1 Pet. 1:7).

You see, it is relatively easy to believe and have faith when nothing questions, challenges or opposes it. It is easy to have faith when it is never subjected to pressure, criticism, contradiction and opposition. It is easy to have faith when a wall of protection surrounds us, preventing us from being exposed to adverse and antagonistic influences.

Faith can look good like hot-house plants which are protected from the elements, but which can't survive being exposed to the real world - to fluctuating temperatures, wind, hail, frost and snow.

The wise man Solomon wrote: “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small” (Prov. 24:10). And so God in His wisdom allows His people to be subjected to adversity and conflicts of faith to test and develop them. See 1 Pet. 4:12. Jam. 1:12. Job. 23:10.

GOD ALLOWS EVIL FOR GOOD

When everything is good and going well there can be no trial. Whether we like it or not, there has to be evil - adverse circumstances - negative pressures, before trials can take place. So it should not surprise us that the testing processes of God require the existence of evil, and He therefore allows it. But He does not require fallen angels to produce it! Let's look at some examples.

In Gen. 22 we read that God put Abraham to the test by allowing a message to come to him asking him to do something which in reality was contrary to the divine will, and which God never really intended to be carried out, namely, the killing of his own son Isaac.

In Judg. 2:21 to 3:3, we read that in order to test Israel, to see whether or not they would be obedient, the Lord left the Canaanites in the land and did not drive them out. In a sense it was like leaving serpents in the garden to test and develop faith and obedience.

In Deu. 13:1-4 we are told that the Lord, in order to test the love and loyalty of His people, would allow false prophets to come in among them telling lies trying to deceive them into turning their back on God and His word.

In some cases, when God's people are bent on pursuing a wrong course and abandoning truth and righteousness, God will actually confirm and strengthen their deception and hurry them to their destruction. An example of this can be found in 1 Kng. 22. This chapter relates to wicked

king Ahab who pushed the patience of God too far, resulting in Him sending an angel to be a “lying spirit” in the mouth of the king’s prophets. Through these prophets, the angel deceived Ahab into leading his army out to do battle with the Syrians, resulting in his defeat and death.

In Num. 22 we read that due to the prophet Balaam’s persistence, God put him to the test by telling him to do something that he had previously been told not to do and was angry with him when he did it. Balaam was expected to know that God does not change His mind in such matters and it proved to be fatal for the prophet.

We learn from 2 Sam. 24:1 and 1 Chr. 21:1 that God put David to the test by allowing him to be provoked into taking a course of action that was contrary to the Divine will. This action involved assessing his military strength by numbering Israel.

In 2 Thes. 2:10-12 the apostle Paul goes so far to say that God will send a strong delusion to those who refuse to welcome and love the truth, causing them to believe a lie, resulting in them being condemned.

GOD CREATES GOOD AND EVIL

It should be clear from these examples that God not only allows evil, but sometimes even creates it. Scripture in fact plainly states this in Isa. 45:7: “I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.” The word “evil” here means adversity - adverse circumstances, including affliction and death.

Sometimes God does this simply to provide a basis upon which the faith and obedience of His people can be tested and developed, in much the same way as a manufacturer deliberately creates harsh and adverse conditions and climate to test the strength and endurance of his product before getting a seal of approval. He doesn’t do it because he hates his product but because he wants it to be strong and successful.

Other times God creates evil to punish sin. So we need to clearly understand that reference to God creating evil does not mean He creates sin. No! He creates evil to punish sin, and some of the evils He creates to do this are floods, earthquakes, famines and pestilences. There are many examples in the Bible of God doing this.

EVIL ANGELS

More often than not, God uses His holy angels to inflict these evils. For this reason they are referred to in Ps. 78:49 as “evil

angels” (Authorised Version). Modern translations render it “destroying angels,” or “messengers of calamity” - “messengers of adversity.” Because angels are “spirits,” the Berkley translation renders “evil angels” as “evil spirits.”

Now, when an holy angel is used by God to adversely affect someone, whether it be to test their faith or to punish sin, it is not uncommon for that angel to be referred to as “satan,” which means “adversary.” An example of this can be found in Num. 22:22 where an angel is called “adversary,” which is “satan” in Hebrew, because he stood in the middle of a narrow path forcing Balaam’s ass to move over and crush his foot against the wall.

JOB’S SATAN

A particularly good example of God using an angel to create adverse circumstances as a test, is recorded in the book of Job. This angel is referred to as “satan” because of the adversity he inflicted upon Job. But this was no fallen angel. He had not been cast out or banished from heaven. Quite the opposite! He had free access to heaven and engaged in conversation with God, and all the adversity he inflicted on Job was done with the Lord’s permission. Throughout the book of Job, the “evil” he experienced is attributed to God many times, but never to a fallen-angel devil! (More about this in a later chapter).

Job, like Adam, had an hedge around him and his life was pleasant and sweet. He was protected and prospered by God. Under the circumstances it was relatively easy to have faith and be obedient. So God, in His wisdom, allowed the angel to make a breach in the hedge around Job’s “garden”, and let waves of adversity enter.

This “evil” had a twofold purpose. It acted as a test and trial of Job’s faith and obedience, resulting in him being purged of some deep-rooted and hidden weaknesses, and becoming a stronger and more mature character. And it acted as a punishment upon Job’s sinful sons and daughters to whom life had become just one continual round of partying and pleasure seeking.

BACK TO ADAM AND EVE

With these thoughts in mind we come back to Adam and Eve. As things stood, when God first presented them with the commandment to not eat from the tree, there was nothing difficult about

this. It wasn't hard to believe and obey. Being innocent and ignorant of good and evil, they simply believed God without doubting, questioning or challenging the commandment. By itself, the commandment did not present a trial to their faith.

Adam and Eve's response was totally passive. There was no resistance, no objection or opposition, just total unquestioning submission. The reason for this is because sin had not entered the world at that stage. As pointed out earlier, there was no "sin in the flesh." Their nature was "very good" in contrast to becoming "no good" when sin was finally committed.

When the commandment was presented to Adam, it would not have awakened any desire within him to disobey. At that stage, there was no natural bias or tendency in the flesh nature to rebel against law, as there was afterwards as a result of sin. Human nature since the fall is affected by law quite differently. Rom. 7:9 explains it in these words: "When law comes, sin springs to life."

ANTI-AUTHORITY SPIRIT

Because of sin, a rebellious, anti-law, anti-authority spirit took possession of fallen man, resulting in law having a negative effect. Law and authority provokes and aggravates sin, causing it to manifest itself in rebellion and disobedience. Where there is no law, there is no restraint or restriction on sin. The flesh is left free to do as it pleases and fulfil its ungodly lusts without any sense of shame or guilt. But, when law is imposed, sin resists the restraints and restrictions, and resents not being able to be free to please itself.

Since the fall, sin in the flesh became the prime source of testing of the faith and obedience of God's people. It is the daily battle with this enemy of God that develops godly character.

However, it is important to remember that when God's law was given to Adam and Eve, it did not cause any rebellious thoughts to intrude and resist, because there were no negative or sinful propensities in their nature. The flesh, at that stage, could not produce the desire to disobey and sin.

So, no trial of their faith and obedience was involved up to this point. Something else - another element or factor was required to make the character-developing process complete. Obviously, some adverse circumstance was needed - some dissenting voice which challenged God's commandment and questioned their faith and obedience. Adam and Eve

needed to be subjected to a pressure situation in which their freewill could be exercised by making a choice between believing or not believing - obeying or not obeying God.

SIGNIFICANT TIMING

Is it not significant, therefore, that it is precisely at this very point in the Genesis narrative that we are introduced to the serpent, and that he fulfilled the very function that was required to complete the basis on which faith and obedience could be tested? It is very significant indeed, and with these thoughts in mind, we are in a better position to appreciate the role that the serpent played.

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CHAPTER SIX THE SERPENT (PART TWO)

Gen. 3:1-6 is God's revelation of how sin originated. We are not "left in the dark and with little information" as one exponent of the traditional view has stated, if we don't regard Isa. 14, Ezk. 28 and Rev. 12 as relating to a fallen-angel. Gen. 3 provides us with all the information we need to explain the origin of sin, and if it is not enough to explain the traditional belief, then there is something wrong with that belief. If we are still in the dark after reading Gen. 3, then we are truly in the dark, because all the light that is necessary to explain the origin of sin is shed in this chapter.

Taking it as it stands, Gen. 3 speaks about a serpent "more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." This "beast" (creature) suggested a course of action be taken contrary to what God commanded. It involved crossing the law-line established by God. This aroused Eve's desires and induced them in a direction opposite to God's will. She yielded to these newly excited lusts and allowed them to take control of her mind and emotions and lure her into committing sin, and Adam later followed suit.

A STRAIGHTFORWARD ACCOUNT

This is Scripture's simple straightforward account of how sin originated and entered the world. We read this account and ask ourselves; "where is tradition's fallen-angel devil in this transaction?" We are directed to the tempter. We have a good look at him, and find that he is a serpent, an animal - a creature of the field which the Lord made more subtle than any other creature. We say, "Here is the tempter, a serpent, but where is the fallen angel?"

Tradition tells us that the fallen angel used the serpent to bring about the fall. We ask for proof - just one verse in the Bible will do, but not one is forthcoming. All that can be offered is the argument that it is impossible for a serpent to speak by itself, and therefore it must have been someone else. This assumption is the point at which all the error starts. This is the big stumbling-block. It is, in fact, from this single point that the doctrine of a fallen-angel devil has developed.

TRUTH CAN BE STRANGER THAN FICTION

In view of the fact that there is no foundation in the Bible for a fallen-angel devil, and no reference to such a devil speaking through the serpent, requires us, whether we like it or not, to accept what Gen. 3 says about the serpent speaking himself. To reject this on the grounds that we have never heard a serpent speak is not good enough.

Asses don't normally speak either, but it is recorded in Num. 22 that Balaam's ass did, and the New Testament confirms this (2 Pet. 2:15-16). Do we conclude it could not have been the ass himself who spoke simply because we have never heard one speak? Are we going to use our own experiences as a yardstick to decide what is possible and impossible in God's purposes?

Serpents don't normally turn into sticks or swallow other serpents, but Ex. 7:9-12 says God caused this to happen. Whales don't normally swallow men and vomit them out alive on the shore three days later, but God arranged for this to happen to Jonah. Ravens don't normally bring food to a man each day to sustain him during famine, but God arranged it for Elijah. The sun dial doesn't normally go back ten degrees, and neither do axe heads float in water.....

In Balaam's day, God's purpose required the ass to speak, so this ability was bestowed upon the animal. The same applies to the serpent in Gen. 3, and no one believing in the power of God should have any difficulty accepting it.

GOD CHOOSES FOOLISH THINGS

Human nature, governed by its own natural earth-bound instincts and intellect, tends to shudder and back away from the idea of a serpent speaking. It does, on the face of it, seem a foolish thing to have to believe. But this is fully in accord with the way God often works, as we read in 1 Cor. 1:27: "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."

Tradition, claiming to be wise, regards it as foolish to believe the serpent himself spoke. And this has resulted in attempting to rationalize Gen. 3 away with another idea, to make it more plausible and palatable to the human instinct and intellect.

As a result, many minds have been confused and confounded, as is evident in the twisting and misapplication of so many Scriptures to support the rather bizarre doctrine that one third of God's holy angels

rebelled against Him, and were expelled to earth to use His power to teach others to rebel, and have been allowed to continue doing this for 6000 years without being stopped or punished. How true, as the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Thes. 2:10-12, that when the truth is not accepted, strong delusion will be the result, causing lies to be believed. In the final analysis, refusal to accept the truth stated in Gen. 3 that the serpent himself spoke, is at the root of tradition's doctrine of a fallen-angel devil.

FACING THE FACTS

The fact is that the Genesis record gives us a serpent and nothing but a serpent. To add a fallen angel to this is to add to the divine record which we are clearly warned against doing. As we have seen, the circumstances at the time required Adam and Eve's faith and obedience to be put to the test and this required a challenge from an external source. Had there been a fallen-angel devil available, God may have allowed him to make the challenge. But there wasn't, so God had to allow the adverse influence to come from one of the other living creatures which He had created on earth. And the serpent, due to being more subtle than all the creatures God had made, became the creature that fulfilled that function.

A talking serpent could not, of course, be produced by nature or human power, but nothing is impossible for divine Power. In a parrot we have an example of a speaking creature minus ideas and reasoning powers. In the serpent we have a creature who not only spoke, but also reasoned and expressed ideas, because "God made it more subtle than any other creature."

A DIVINE ARRANGEMENT

The Sovereign Lord, not a sinful angel, was in control. Divine wisdom, not diabolical devilry, was behind the whole arrangement, with the utmost good in mind for man. This was not a sneaky, unnecessary and unwanted attempt behind God's back, to undermine His purpose by an arch enemy. No! It was something the providence of God permitted in order to develop faith and obedience in the progenitors of the human race.

Left to themselves, obedience would have been a matter of course. But it is not obedience of this mild passive type that is well pleasing to God. Obedience under trial is what pleases Him. Obedience without pressures and problems is a flimsy superficial type of obedience - a mere circumstantial type due to favourable circumstances and conditions.

God's purpose was to produce willing obedience in a free-willed race. Willing obedience requires the opportunity to obey or disobey, and this required God to arrange circumstances that would make that choice possible. This was achieved by the serpent.

As far as Gen. 3 is concerned, God tested Adam and Eve, the serpent beguiled (deceived) them by making sin sound logical and plausible, and Adam and Eve were tempted by yielding to the sinful desires aroused within them by the serpent, resulting in being drawn away into sin. Jam. 1:13-15 quite clearly states that God does not tempt, and that man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust.

AVOID FOOLISH QUESTIONS

Several times in his epistles, the apostle Paul warns against asking foolish questions because they can lead to strife and controversy. Questions which relate to matters God has chosen not to reveal can fit into this category. For this reason it is unwise to get drawn into, and side-tracked by the many questions that can be raised in relation to a talking serpent.

The Bible doesn't enter into discussion on such issues and neither should we. They can be a distraction and detract from the simple central issue that Scripture focuses on, which is that sin entered the world by one man sinning as a result of yielding to his own desire which the serpent aroused.

We are certainly faced with more serious problems if a fallen angel spoke through the serpent and the serpent itself did not speak. It is obviously significant that prior to saying the serpent spoke and reasoned, it is expressly stated that God created it more subtle than any other creature. This information surely indicates that the serpent itself had something to do with the ideas it expressed. After all, why create the serpent subtle if it was merely a tool used by a subtle fallen angel to speak through? Under such circumstances the serpent would not need to be subtle. It could have been a dumb speechless animal and it would not have made any difference.

THE SERPENT WAS RESPONSIBLE

Referring to the serpent, Jesus said (Jn. 8:44): "When he speaketh a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it." Here, Jesus teaches that the serpent spoke "of his own." This means that the

speech came forth from the serpent itself, not a fallen angel.

2 Cor. 11:3 confirms this: “The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety.” Paul affirms two things here: 1. It was a literal serpent who beguiled Eve. 2. The serpent beguiled Eve “through his subtlety, i.e. the subtlety of the serpent itself was what led to Eve being beguiled, not the subtlety of someone else.

That it was the serpent who spoke is further indicated by the fact that 1. Eve blamed the serpent and not someone else, saying “the serpent beguiled me and I did eat.” 2. God cursed the serpent saying “Thou hast done this cursed art thou upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.”

3. The serpent, although subtle, and able to speak, did not deny the accusation and made no attempt to shift the blame to a fallen angel. “Of course not,” someone may reply, “Because Lucifer had made a quick exit leaving the serpent speechless.” But if this were the case, would not Omniscient God know that? Of course He would! Then why did He direct His question to a dumb speechless animal if a fallen angel was really to blame? And why would He punish the serpent if it was an innocent helpless creature, and let the real culprit go free to cause more rebellion?

God would not pick on a snake if an angel was to blame, and any doctrine that implies He did would be a serious reflection on His intelligence. Such a doctrine makes a mockery of Gen. 3, and raises far more moral and spiritual problems than the view which believes the account means what it says, and takes the serpent literally.

So then, Gen. 3 deals with three parties: Adam, Eve and the serpent. An alleged fourth party - a fallen angel is not mentioned or even hinted at, neither here nor in any other Scripture. He is purely and simply an added extra of human speculation and tradition - a myth. In view of this, one cannot help call to mind Paul’s warning in 2 Tim. 4:3-4: “The time will come when sound teaching will not be tolerated ears will turn away from the truth causing people to wander into myths.”

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CHAPTER SEVEN THE SERPENT AND SIN

When you think about it, the serpent's statement to Eve represented sin, for sin is transgression of law and this is what the serpent advocated. God's law commanded Adam and Eve to not eat the fruit of the tree, warning them that death would be the punishment if they disobeyed. The serpent contradicted this with a lie, convincing Eve she would not die, deceiving her into disobeying and Adam followed suit.

Now, we have seen that prior to the fall, there was no sinful tendency or bias in man's nature that inclined him towards disobedience. When God's law was given, no negative force within him aroused a desire to disobey. His flesh nature was "very good."

However, when the serpent suggested going against God, for the first time in human history, a war or conflict was experienced in the mind - a war between two opposing principles - God's truth and the serpent's lie. It was a war between righteousness and sin.

The serpent's dissenting voice awakened human thoughts and desires to new and different possibilities - an alternative course of action contrary to the way of God. Had Adam and Eve rejected the serpent's sinful suggestion, and held fast to God's truth, their faith would have passed the test of trial, and true obedience would have been achieved. As a result, they would have retained a good conscience, peace and fellowship with God, and continued living in Paradise.

They were quite capable of overcoming the temptation by allowing the word of God to dominate their thoughts and actions, and that is what the Lord desired. He makes it quite clear in His word that He will not test His people beyond what they are capable of handling. Adam and Eve didn't have to succumb in order to develop character. The modern philosophy that one has to taste and experience sin to build character is wrong. Jesus was the greatest of all characters and he never sinned once, and he was tempted in all points like us. Adam and Eve, however, yielded to their newly inflamed lusts and became servant to them, allowing their thoughts and actions to be governed by the creature instead of the Creator.

God, in His foreknowledge, knew beforehand that this would happen, and had already made provision for it in His eternal purpose. But His foreknowledge did not necessitate disobedience or compel it. Adam and Eve had freewill and were free agents to make their own choice. They could choose obedience unto life, or disobedience (sin) unto death.

BY ONE MAN SIN ENTERED THE WORLD

The result of choosing sin is stated in Rom. 5:12, 19: “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin” “By one man’s disobedience, many were made sinners.” This simply means man’s nature became sinful, containing a strong bias or proneness towards sin.

Because Adam and Eve made a decision to sin by yielding to the lusts aroused by the serpent, a propensity towards that choice became implanted in their spirit - in the deep sub-conscious region of the brain. And this resulted in the tendency to sin becoming a fixed and established principle in their nature.

Of course, the bias towards sin did not stop at Adam and Eve. It was transmitted from them to all their descendants, which is the whole human race. This is a fact of life and is declared in Rom. 5:19: “By one man’s disobedience, many were made sinners.” Verse 12 explains how: “By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all had sinned.”

The point being made here is that the whole human race was in Adam (seminally) when he sinned, and therefore affected by it. Due to the law of heredity, when Adam’s nature became sinful and mortal as a result of sin, it followed as a natural course that the “seed” produced by that nature would be of the same kind - sinful and mortal. Adam was clearly the seed-bearer of the whole world. All of humanity was bound up in him.

So then, the effects of one man’s sin were imputed to all his posterity by reason of the organic unity or genetic connection that existed between them. From the time of Adam’s sin, therefore, a bias towards sin and death has been the inheritance of every natural born soul. But the seeming injustice of this is more than countered by the immeasurable grace made available by God to all men through the obedience of one man, Jesus Christ!

THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE FLESH IS FLESH

As things stand, it is impossible for anyone born of a woman, to avoid partaking of the same sin-prone nature. Referring to this, Job 25:4 says: “How can anyone be clean (untainted and unscarred by sin) who is born of a woman.” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (Jn. 3:6).

It is obviously not our fault or a sin that we are born with a sin-prone nature. It is rather our misfortune. We had no control over it. However, we are blameworthy and held responsible if we yield to the inner inducements

and enticements of sin, and disobey. To do so is to imitate, in principle, our first parents who yielded to the sinful desires induced by the serpent.

The individual historical serpent in Eden has, of course, long since passed away during the course of time. Not being an angel, it was not immortal. The serpent's mortality is indicated in God's own words in Gen. 3:14: "Cursed art thou upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."

However, the effects of sin aroused by the serpent in our first parents, continue to live on in the sinful nature of their descendants. The "law" or principle of sin inculcated by the serpent has been an ongoing principle. And it functions in the same manner as the original serpent, by exciting our baser lusts, arousing and inflaming sinful desires, inducing us to sin. As Gen. 4:7 puts it: "sin is crouching at the door (of the heart); his desire is toward you, but you must master him."

In this sense, the serpent is still very much alive in the world today, and will continue to exert influence as long as sinful desires in the flesh assert themselves against God.

THE PROPOSITION

The proposition is, therefore, that the serpent represented sin in an external form, which ultimately became an indwelling principle in the nature of fallen man, resulting in the germination of generations of human serpents, referred to as "the serpent's seed" in Gen. 3:15.

Prior to committing sin, the suggestion to sin came from outside Adam and Eve from an external source. But after they sinned, and their nature became sinful, they became subject to temptation from evil thoughts which could arise within their own hearts. This is the situation that all their descendants are born into, and all who are honest will acknowledge that sinful thoughts do arise in their own heart in opposition to the will of God, without provocation or stimulus from external influences being necessary.

These sinful impulses are like the writhings and twistings of a serpent, and are therefore fittingly styled in Rom. 7:5: "The motions of sin working in our members" (body). Like a snake, they are always present, coiled up, ready to strike at any time with poisonous thoughts, seeking to captivate and control our mind and induce us into sin. Of all the creatures in God's creation, a more fitting representation of sin could not be found.

Now, once the serpent in Eden had induced man to sin, it is difficult to understand why some fallen-angel devil should be needed to keep the

process going. It would rather gather force under its own momentum. As the flesh population multiplied, so did sin which resided within it. With the growth of the human race, temptations from within man's sinful nature were supplemented by temptations from outside in other men's nature, due to the daily contact of mankind, pressures of life, and the struggle for existence in a world living under a curse and harsh conditions.

All the necessary tests for faith and obedience were provided within the human race itself, without needing superhuman influences to be added. One thing is certain: the sin in fallen man is more than enough to cope with, without throwing sinful angels against him as well!

Jam. 1:13-15 plainly teaches that "every man is tempted when drawn away by his own lusts." And Jam. 4:1-3 says "What causes wars and fightings? Do they not spring from your own lusts"

The first murder in history of Abel by Cain, is completely explained by obvious natural circumstances, namely: pride, envy, and hatred, which are attributes of the flesh. Invisible supernatural powers are not mentioned anywhere in the narrative and to introduce them is quite superfluous - a distraction.

A POSITIVE SIDE

Sin is clearly a negative destructive force, but there are positive sides to it: 1. Its entrance into the world made the Lord Jesus Christ's place in history necessary. 2. It provided a basis for God's love and grace to be manifested and magnified. 3. It accentuated and highlighted the righteousness, sinlessness and holiness of God. (Sin and righteousness, like good and evil, are relative conditions, the one being understood better as a result of witnessing and experiencing the other). 4. It provided the basis for Christ's glory which had to do with conquering all temptation and sin. Plp. 2 states that it was his obedience that led to his exaltation. 5. It provides a basis upon which faith and obedience can be tested and godly character developed.

Without the propensity of sin - without a negative force to cope with and resist, we would have no fight or battle or spiritual warfare to prove our love and commitment to God and obedience to His word. We would be as Adam and Eve were before the serpent came on the scene.

So we shouldn't despise the negative propensity or get dejected over temptation, for they have a good and positive purpose. We should look at it as a high-jumper looks at the high jump, or as a hurdler looks at hurdles, or as one looks at obstacles in an obstacle race.

The athletes don't complain about the height of the high jump or the force of gravity that tries to keep them earthbound; they don't complain about the hurdles and obstacles being in the way or the number of them. No! They see them as a means of rising above and overcoming, extending themselves to gain victory and win a crown of glory.

In like manner the people of God should not be condemned or discouraged or complain about the obstacles and hurdles and handicaps and "gravitational pull" of sin. They are there to step over, not fall over; to be stepping stones not stumblingblocks, for the glory of God.

THE SERPENT AND SIN

The proposition that the serpent represented sin has quite a bearing on the subject of the devil. By comparing certain Scriptures it is evident that the things said about the serpent are also said about sin, suggesting that the serpent became a symbol of the sin he provoked.

The serpent caused Adam and Eve to miss the mark and fall short of God's high calling, and ever since the fall, sin has had the same effect. In fact, the Greek word for sin means "to miss the mark."

Because sin was originally aroused by a personal agent, the serpent, it is often personified in Scripture and referred to in terms which connect it with the serpent. Barclay in his book on New Testament Words points out that in Paul's writings "sin becomes almost personalized until sin could be spelled with a capital letter, and could be thought of as a malignant, personal power which has man in its grasp."

In view of the fact that sin originally stemmed from a personal agent, it is appropriate that it should be personified in this way. This suggests that we regard every temptation as a re-enactment of the temptation of our first parents. It would greatly help us in our warfare against sin if we could.

AN IMPRESSIVE THEME

The relationship between the serpent and sin is quite an impressive theme in the New Testament and a few examples will now be given where various figures of speech and principles, which originally related to the serpent, have been transferred to, and applied to sin.

Rom. 7:7-11 refers to sin as a personal enemy which seeks opportunity through God's law to produce in man all manner of lust. Verse 9 speaks about sin springing to life as soon as God's commandment is

given. Verse 11 goes on to speak about sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, “deceived me, and by it killed me.”

Sin is personified in quite a dramatic way here. It is referred to as a personal wicked being, seeking to use God’s law as a means of arousing ungodly lust in man, which, precisely, is what the serpent did in Eden.

The reference in v 9 to sin springing to life as soon as God’s commandment came, also calls to mind the fact that the serpent appeared on the scene when God’s commandment came to Adam. And the serpent’s action of finding opportunity in God’s commandment to deceive and kill, was no doubt in Paul’s mind in v 11 where he refers to the working of sin in the same terms.

In every respect, Paul describes the working of sin in terms which link up with the original serpent. Originally, the deceit which led to sin and death, came from the serpent. But since the fall, Scripture says deceit is an attribute of sin and comes from man’s sinful heart. For example, Heb. 3:13 refers to “the deceitfulness of sin,” and other verses such as Mk. 7:21-22, Jer. 17:9 etc declare that the human heart is the most deceitful thing there is and desperately wicked and all evil thoughts and lusts proceed from it.

ENMITY

Another indication of a link between the serpent and sin, can be seen by comparing Gen. 3:15 with certain New Testament statements. In Gen. 3:15 the Lord said He would put “enmity” between the woman’s seed and the serpent’s seed, and it is interesting to note how this word “enmity” is used in the New Testament. For example, Rom. 8:7 speaks about the carnal mind (sinful mind), being at enmity with God. And Jam. 4:4 makes the point that friendship with the world is enmity with God. (According to 1 Jn. 2:16, the “world” represents “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life”).

So then, originally the serpent was the source of enmity, but afterwards the enmity is linked with the “carnal mind,” “the flesh,” “lust,” “world,” all of which belong to sin’s influence and dominion.

A closer look at Gen. 3:15 results in further proof that the serpent represented sin. This verse relates to the punishment of the serpent, and, significantly enough, it is at this point that the Genesis narrative merges into the symbolical promise of Christ’s ultimate victory over sin. This means that the serpent’s punishment was an object lesson - a symbolic prophecy of the ultimate debasement of sin.

THE WOMAN'S SEED

The words in Gen. 3:15 are addressed by God to the serpent and read like this: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

This is generally accepted as the first promise in the Bible of Christ's ultimate victory over everything the serpent stood for. The fact that the woman's "seed" is referred to by the personal singular pronouns "he" and "his" clearly indicate that the reference is to a specific man. The same "seed" was promised to Abraham in Gen. 22:17-18 and we are told in Gal. 3:16 that it refers to Christ. Then Gal. 3:29 goes on to say that it ultimately includes "all who are Christ's," i.e. his "body," the church, which shares his victory over the serpent.

Jesus was certainly a "woman's seed." He was "conceived" by Mary, which is a biological term signifying the fertilization of the female "seed" (ovum). As Paul puts it in Gal. 4:4, Jesus was "made of a woman." It is significant that Gen. 3:15 says he would be a "woman's seed," not a "man's seed," because it was not a man's seed that caused Mary to conceive. She conceived by the Holy Spirit, which means the power of God performed the function normally performed by the male sperm. Jesus was clearly no embryo transplant!

In a normal conception, when fertilization of the female egg takes place, 23 single chromosomes are contributed by the father's seed, and 23 by the mother's, so that the child has 23 pairs, and is therefore impregnated with sets of genes from both parents, and inherits characteristics from both sides. Jesus therefore inherited characteristics from both sides. On his mother's side he inherited the characteristics of the flesh, and on his Father's side he inherited characteristics of the Spirit. Because his mother Mary was a descendant of Adam, Jesus is often referred to as "son of man" (Adam). But, because God was his Father, he is also called "son of God."

THE SAME FLESH

Jesus himself taught that "a person born of the flesh is flesh," and this was no less true in his own case. It is clearly stated in Heb.2:14 that he had "the same" flesh and blood as all other members of the human race. This means he shared the same fallen flesh nature of man which contains the propensity towards sin. For this reason, he was "tempted in all points

like us, but without sin” (Heb. 4:15). On the basis of the definition of temptation in Jam. 1:14, this means Jesus experienced the lurings and enticings of the sinful desires of the flesh, but refused to yield or succumb.

On the other hand, inheriting characteristics of the Spirit as a result of being begotten by God, gave Jesus a quick understanding of spiritual values and the moral fortitude to apply and implement them, enabling him to conquer and crucify every temptation, and live a sinless life (Isa. 11:1-5). In every respect, he was clearly a special provision of God in order to overcome anti-forces that all other men were too weak to conquer.

With these thoughts in mind, we return to Gen. 3:15. What this verse is declaring is that in order to deal with whatever the serpent stood for, the conqueror would have to be a “woman’s seed,” i.e. a partaker of the same sin-prone fallen nature of man. This person, not being a man’s seed, would obviously have to be Divinely begotten, as a result of which he would have the strength on his Father’s side, to resist and defeat the sinful impulses in the flesh inherited from his mother’s side.

To put it in a nutshell, God planned to send a seed of a woman forth who would meet sin on its own ground, which is the flesh, and defeat it by crucifying and putting to death all of its sin-prone desires and passions. This is the significance of the woman’s seed bruising the serpent’s head.

BRUISING THE HEAD AND HEEL

The “head” is the most vital and vulnerable part of the body, and the “heel” is much less vital. To be struck on the head signifies death, which is what Jesus inflicted on sin during his life in the flesh, and once and for all on the cross in his body of flesh.

To be struck on the heel signifies a temporary interruption of one’s walk in life - temporary suffering, which was the case with Christ. The death inflicted on him in his combat with sin, only temporarily halted his walk in life. On the third day he rose again, stood on his feet, having triumphed over sin and death.

Identifying Jesus as the “woman’s seed” is really the key to ascertaining the significance of the serpent whose head had to be bruised. If we took Gen. 3:15 literally, we would have to expect the mission of Jesus to involve striking a snake on the head. But there is no record of him doing this. He was not concerned about snakes (or fallen angels)! He was concerned with doing battle against sin. As Lk. 4:18 puts it: Jesus came to “set at liberty those who were bruised,” referred to in Matt. 12:20 as a “bruised reed.” That is, Jesus came to deliver and restore those who had

been wounded and broken by sin.

Now, if the serpent represented sin, we would expect to find that firstly, it was sin that temporarily interrupted Jesus' walk in life and caused temporary suffering, and secondly, that Jesus inflicted a death blow upon sin. That the mission of Jesus was bound up in dealing with sin, is so well known and fundamental, there should be no need to spend time quoting Scriptures to prove it.

And it is equally as well known that Jesus' walk in life was only temporarily interrupted when he was nailed on the cross. He was, as Isa. 53:5 puts it: "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." But he rose again, stood on his nail-pierced feet and is alive forevermore.

NOT THE ABSTRACT SENSE

It was obviously not sin in the abstract sense that nailed Jesus to the cross. Sin needs hands to perform such a deed. It was sin manifested through sinful men that bruised Jesus. As Act. 2:23 declares: "You (Jews) have taken him (Jesus), and by wicked hands (sinful Romans), have crucified and slain." The crucifixion was performed by the Romans, but the Jewish leaders were the motivators and instigators.

The fact that Gen. 3:15 predicted the serpent would wound Jesus, and the Romans and Jews, motivated by sin, fulfilled it, compels a simple equation. The connection between the serpent and those who wounded Jesus is obvious.

In the light of this, is it not significant that Matt. 26:4 makes the point that the Jewish leaders "consulted that they might take Jesus by "subtlety" and kill him." This reference to "subtlety" takes us back to the serpent who was "more subtle" than any other creature, and through whose subtlety death came upon Adam and Eve.

It is particularly significant in view of the fact that Jesus said to those same Jewish leaders; "You serpents, you generation of vipers" (Matt. 23:33). John the Baptist used the same language (Matt. 3:7), and so did Paul: "With their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips."

NO EXTERNAL STIMULATION NEEDED

It is important to note that neither Jesus, John nor Paul used the word "serpent" in relation to fallen angels. In each case they are addressing

men - Jewish authorities - “principalities and powers.” And these authorities are not called “serpents” because they were influenced by a fallen-angel devil. No! They were called serpents because of the sinfulness of their own heart. The sinful impulses in the flesh are active by themselves without needing any external stimulation or provocation, as all who are honest will admit.

This is how Jesus puts it: “O generation of snakes, how can you being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matt. 12:34). Jesus plainly called them snakes due to the sinfulness of their own heart. Again in Matt. 23:25, 28 Jesus said to them: “within (i.e. inside your heart) you are full of extortion and excess within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

Even Pilate knew that it was their own fleshly carnality that inspired them, for we read in Matt. 27:18 that he knew it was through envy that they delivered Jesus up to him to be sentenced to death. Envy, according to Gal. 5:19-21 is a “work of the flesh,” not a fallen-angel devil.

NOT CONFINED TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

The application of the term “serpent” to the wicked among fallen man, is not confined to the New Testament. Many verses could be quoted in the Old Testament which refer to those governed and controlled by the sinful desires of the flesh as serpents. In a previous chapter on Rev. 12, attention was drawn to various Scriptures which refer to Egypt and Babylon as a serpent. They were fittingly so-called because they were pagan nations, full of spiritual wickedness and darkness, lies and deceit, and caused much suffering and death for God’s people Israel.

In view of these examples, it can be seen that the figure of the serpent is not only used in Scripture to signify the sinful desires of the flesh, but also the people themselves whose lives are controlled and ruled by those desires and who become the physical embodiment of them. It is such people who are referred to as the “seed” of the serpent in Gen. 3:15, as we shall see as this theme is developed.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SERPENT AND SIN, DEVIL AND SATAN

Having considered the connection between the serpent and sin, we now consider the serpent's connection with the devil and satan; which is indicated in Rev. 12:9 and which refers to "that old serpent called the devil and satan." However, before we consider the connection, let us firstly analyse the words "devil" and "satan" and ascertain their meaning.

DEFINING OUR TERMS

The success of any study depends upon words being correctly defined. A genuine and efficient truth seeker will check the original meaning first, taking nothing for granted before reaching conclusions. When words are given false meanings, false conclusions automatically follow, and a style of argument known as "reasoning in a circle" will be the result. This involves a pre-conceived sense being applied to a word, and then quoting the word to prove the sense.

Tradition has done this for example, in relation to baptism.

The word "baptism" means immersion in water, and involves people old enough to believe, being totally submerged in water. But tradition changed this into a ritual which involves babies who cannot believe being sprinkled with a little water.

This has resulted in many people believing that the word "baptism" means infant sprinkling, and quoting the word to support the doctrine and practice.

The same has happened in relation to the words "devil" and "satan". It is commonly believed that they relate to a fallen angel and the words are quoted to support that concept. However, in the same way that the word "baptism" has no affinity with infant sprinkling, so the words "devil" and "satan" have no affinity with a fallen angel, and it is wrong to read that concept into the words.

DIABOLOS

The word "devil" is an English word and has been translated from two quite different Greek words, "diabolos" and "daimon." Modern translations have removed some of the confusion by making a distinction between the two, translating "diabolos" as "devil" and "daimon" as "demon". Demons relate to malignant influences which invade the body

and mind, inflicting various sicknesses and disease, and devil relates to a power or influence that arouses ungodly desires and induces into sin. There is a difference between the two and failure to recognize this can lead to confusion.

Diabolos is the word that concerns us at the moment. It is composed of two Greek words, “dia” and “ballo.” “Dia” is a preposition signifying “through,” “over,” “across,” and “ballo” means to “throw,” “thrust,” “cast,” “fall,” “strike,” “pierce” (as with a dart or arrow).

So then, literally, diabolos (devil) means to strike or pierce through, cast over, thrust across, throw out or down. The word can be applied and illustrated several ways. For example: if a line of obedience be laid down, and one be forbidden to cross over it, then whatever would cause one to cross over and sin would be diabolos, i.e. devil. Or, if a person verbally attacks, and pierces through the character of another with darts of calumny and false accusations, that person constitutes a “devil.”

For this reason, most Concordances and Lexicons give the meaning as “slanderer,” “false accuser.” This is the basic meaning of the word devil. It does not mean fallen angel. In reply to this, someone may say “But the fallen angel is a false accuser.” If this is the case, Scriptural evidence would firstly have to be produced to prove that such a fallen angel exists, before claiming he is a false-accuser, and unfortunately no such evidence exists.

Evidence that “false accuser” is a correct meaning of diabolos can be seen in a number of verses in the New Testament. In 1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3 and Tit. 2:3, diabolos has been translated “slanderer” and “false accuser” and is applied to fallen man not fallen angels. These verses teach that anyone in the human family who slanders or falsely accuses another, is a “devil.” For this reason Jesus called Judas Iscariot a “devil” (Jn. 6:70). These examples are proof positive that the word does not mean fallen angel.

INCONSISTENCY OF TRANSLATORS

The inevitable question that presents itself to an honest truth seeker is: if “false accuser” is the correct translation of diabolos, why has the word not been uniformly translated this way? Why has it been translated “devil” in some places and “false accuser” in others? Inconsistency on the part of translators who held to the traditional view is evident here. When they came across diabolos in places where it obviously applied to fallen man, and could not be applied to their fallen angel, they translated it “false

accuser.” But in other places where they felt it could be applied to their fallen angel, they translated it “devil.” But there is no such devil. Not one of the verses where the word “devil” occurs defines him as a fallen angel. These verses can be understood in quite a different light as we shall see.

SATAN

The word “satan” occurs 16 times in the Old Testament and 37 times in the New Testament. It is not an English word translated from Hebrew or Greek, but a Hebrew word which has been transliterated - carried over letter by letter from the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek New Testament and from the Greek into English.

In Hebrew, “satan” is quite an ordinary word with a simple meaning, namely, “adversary,” one who opposes, attacks or accuses another. As in the case of “devil,” there is nothing in the word itself which signifies fallen angel. Although the word occurs many times, it is never defined in terms of a fallen angel. This concept has to be read into it.

In a later chapter it will be demonstrated from Scripture that the word satan has a variety of applications, for the simple reason that an “adversary” can be good, bad or indifferent, all depending on who or what he is opposed to . A good person can be an adversary (satan) to an evil person, and an evil person can be an adversary (satan) to a good person. For this reason the word satan is applied to fallen man as well as righteous holy angels, but never fallen angels!

As in the case of the word devil, the translators have also been inconsistent in their translation of satan. When the context made it obvious that the word applied to man, they translated it “adversary.” But when they felt it could apply to their fallen-angel devil, they transliterated it “satan.”

ORIGIN OF DIABOLOS

Diabolos, being a Greek word, obviously did not originate in the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures. It originated in the Greek translation of those Scriptures known as the LXX or Septuagint, compiled during the inter-testament period. The translators of the Septuagint translated the Hebrew word “satan” into the Greek word “diabolos.” The English translators then translated diabolos into “devil.” According to the “Encyclopedia of Word and Phrase Origins” by Robert Hendrickson, the word in early English, was called “deofol,” and later “devil.” Some have

suggested that “devil” is the word “evil” prefixed with the letter “d,” being the first letter of “diabolos.”

The word “devil,” then, was the Septuagint’s substitute for the word “satan,” and for that reason the two words are synonymous in the Greek New Testament and are used interchangeably.

BACK TO THE DRAGON

With these thoughts in mind we come back to the reference: “the great dragon, that old serpent called the devil and satan” in Rev. 12:9. As pointed out in a previous chapter, the dragon has nothing to do with a fallen angel. The reference is to a coalition of nations at enmity with, and antagonistic towards God’s people, and these nations are called “serpent” due to the sinful and deceptive activities involved. The serpent is also called “devil” because he falsely accuses God’s people (Rev. 12:10). And he is called “satan” because of the adverse stand he takes against them.

In view of this, it would be true to call the old original serpent in Eden devil and satan, because his lie was a “false accusation” and he became an “adversary” to God and man.

As already mentioned, it is significant that Rev. 12:9 does not say “That old devil and satan called the serpent,” as if the devil came first and then became a serpent. No, it puts it the other way, saying: “That old serpent called (surnamed) the devil and satan.” The serpent came first and later became a devil and satan as a result of uttering a false accusation and becoming an adversary. Until the serpent uttered the false accusation and became an adversary, there was no devil or satan!

THE FATHER OF LIES

The serpent in Eden not only became a devil, but the devil in the historical sense, for he originated, and was the “father” or founder of lies, for he told the first lie which led to sin and death entering the world.

The fact that the serpent became “devil” due to his lie and deceit, is confirmed by Jesus in Jn. 8:44 where he refers to the serpent as “devil.” Speaking to the serpent’s seed - the Jews who falsely accused him and were intent on “bruising” him, Jesus said: “You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from himself, for he is a liar, and the

father of it.”

Notice particularly that Jesus links the sinful lusts of fallen man with the serpent who originally aroused them!

It seems clear from what Jesus says in Jn. 8:44 that the Bible devil originated with the serpent in the garden of Eden, and not in a rebellion of angels in heaven.

As sinful flesh increased and multiplied in the earth after the fall, so did sin, resulting in the world becoming the amplified result of the serpent’s lie and deception. History has seen many systems, governments and nations in the world which have falsely accused and opposed God’s purposes and people, which could be fittingly styled “that old serpent called devil and satan.”

Such organizations and systems are the outworking and embodiment of the same old serpent principle. They are the old serpent in modern dress, whether on a national or international scale, because they are governed by lies, deceit and all the other sinful lusts of the flesh.

EXAMPLES OF DEVIL RELATING TO SIN

If the serpent represents sin, and became devil and satan, it should not come as a surprise to find that the words devil and satan are also used in Scripture to relate to sin. Careful research into this subject reveals that all four words, “serpent, devil, satan and sin,” are used synonymously and interchangeably in relation to the sinful desires of the flesh.

But it should be pointed out that in the same way that the serpent represented sin in both an internal abstract sense and an external concrete sense, such is also the case with the words devil and satan. That is, as the serpent represents the sinful desires of the flesh as well as the sinful people who are controlled by those desires, so it is with devil and satan. Sometimes these words refer to the sinful desires of the flesh, and other times to those who are ruled by them and become the physical embodiment and manifestation of them. Such people are called, not only “serpents,” but also “devil” and “satan.”

ABSTRACT AND CONCRETE ASPECTS

An example of the two applications can be seen in relation to Judas. The internal abstract aspect is referred to in Jn. 13:2 where reference is made to “the devil having now put into the heart of Judas to betray.” Also v 27: “satan entered into him.”

The external concrete sense is mentioned in Jn. 6:70 where Judas, due to yielding to the temptation and becoming the physical embodiment and manifestation of the devil principle, is actually called “a devil”: “Have I not chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil.”

The abstract aspect of satan entering Judas and putting it into his heart to betray Jesus, can be compared with Gen. 4:7 which says sin crouches at the door (of our heart), desiring to jump in and take control of our passions and desires. How true! The impulses of sin spring up from the deep dark recesses of the subconscious with a desire to enter and control our heart and induce us into sin. Hence, speaking about the urges of sin in the flesh, the apostle Paul said: “When I want to do good, evil is present with me.” Speaking about temptation, Jam. 1:14 refers to the process in terms of being “drawn away by our own lust.”

Another example of the abstract aspect is in Act. 5:3: “Why has satan filled your heart to lie?” But v 4 makes it clear that no external influences from a fallen angel were involved, for it says “Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? Jam. 1:15 makes the point that it is when human lust conceives it results in sin. Jesus also made it clear, as recorded in Matt. 15:19, that false witness (lies) come from within the human heart.

The expression “satan filled your heart” can be compared with “sorrow filled your heart” (Jn. 16:6). Nobody concludes from this that sorrow is a personal morbid external being. Sorrow is an emotion that wells up from within our own inner being. And so it is with satan filling the heart or putting things into it. It simply relates to the personification of impulses and motions of sin which well up from within sinful flesh and poison the mind.

The abstract and concrete aspects of devil and satan are further illustrated in Peter. The abstract aspect is referred to in Lk. 22:31 which records Jesus as saying: “Satan has desired to have you” This is just another way of saying, as we have already read in Gen. 4:7: “Sin is crouching at the door (of your heart), and his desire is toward you.”

The concrete aspect can be seen in Matt. 16:23 where Jesus called Peter himself satan, saying “get behind me satan.”

A FITTING SURNAME

At the beginning of this chapter it was pointed out that the word “devil” has been translated from the Greek “diabolos” which means to strike through, cast over, thrust across, throw down. In this respect it can be seen how it is a fitting surname for the serpent, and a fitting title

and synonym for sin, because the serpent induced Eve to cross the line and step over the mark set by God, resulting in being cast down from their very good state and cast out of Paradise. And sin likewise induces us to step across and outside the boundary lines set by God into forbidden territory, causing us to fall short. It is appropriate, therefore, that the words devil and sin mean stepping over the mark and missing the mark.

WOMAN'S SEED AND SERPENT'S SEED

Coming back to Gen. 3:15, it is evident that the world would be divided into two antagonistic communities - two camps between which "enmity" would exist. These two communities are referred to as the "woman's seed" and "serpent's seed." The "woman's seed" refers to Christ and his body, the church, i.e. those who have renounced sin and are committed to crucifying the sinful desires of the flesh, refusing to be servant to them. And the "serpent's seed" are those who yield to sin and are governed and controlled by the ungodly lusts and desires of the flesh, originally aroused by the serpent.

In relation to the Christ-body, the serpent's seed are devil and satan, for they falsely accuse and are adverse to them, and try to force them to cross the line by renouncing their faith and disobeying God. On many occasions throughout history they have been guilty of persecuting and "bruising" the heel of Christ's followers. Pagan Rome was guilty of this, and is referred to in Dan. 2:40 as a power that would "break in pieces and bruise."

The wicked community in the world, styled the "seed" or "children" of the serpent, are referred to a number of times in Scripture in terms which link up with Gen. 3:15. Because the wicked are the "seed" of the serpent, the serpent is sometimes referred to as their "father." And, because "devil" and "satan" are surnames of the serpent, his seed or children are sometimes referred to as "children of the devil" or the "devil's angels" (messengers). See Jn. 8:33-47. Act. 13:8-10. 1 Jn. 3:8-12.

SATAN'S MINISTERS

Satan's ministers in 2 Cor. 11:14-15 also fit into the category of the serpent's seed. Reference has already been made to this in an earlier chapter but we are in a better position to understand it in view of what has been advanced.

In 2 Cor. 11:2-3 Paul expressed the fear that, as the serpent beguiled

Eve through his subtlety, so the minds of Christians might be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. In v 13-15 we learn that Paul had in mind “false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.” Paul then goes on to say that they are satan’s ministers (servants), and it is not surprising that they masquerade as ministers of righteousness, because satan himself masquerades as a messenger of enlightenment (“angel of light”).

It is not difficult to connect satan here with the serpent, as do other passages of Scripture. The serpent in Eden was the prototype of all false teachers. He presented himself to Eve as a messenger of enlightenment, claiming to know the mind of God and able to shed light on it. This is indicated in his words “Yea, hath God said God doth know You shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:1-5). This was the first lie - the first time false teaching was taught, and therefore the serpent became the “father” of such (Jn. 8:44). For this reason, all false teachers since then are classified as the serpent’s “seed,” “children,” “ministers,” “messengers” etc.

Some may have difficulty accepting that “satan” in 2 Cor. 11:14 refers to the serpent because the masculine pronoun “himself” is used, and it speaks in the present tense, saying “satan himself is (not was) transformed into” However, the masculine pronoun is used in relation to the serpent in 2 Cor. 11:3 and Gen. 3, and Jesus spoke of the serpent in both the past and present tense (Jn 8:44), because he lives on in the sinful nature of man. He represents an ongoing and ever present principle.

SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN

In Rev. 2:9 and 3:9 reference is made to “synagogue of satan” and this also fits into the same category of the seed of the serpent.

The word “synagogue” means “assembly,” “congregation” and the serpent’s seed is certainly a congregation - a great assembly of people world-wide.

Sometimes the serpent’s seed sets up its own religion, but it is a counterfeit religion often mistaken for the true by those who fail to discern between good and evil and truth and error. As in the case of the old serpent, many pagan religions (and not so pagan) have, through their doctrine of the immortality of the soul, perpetuated the serpent’s lie: “You shall not surely die.” God’s truth, “You shall surely die” has been changed into a lie, which has become the first principle in many religious creeds. It negates and neutralizes the true teaching in the Bible which declares that life after death depends entirely on resurrection. Without resurrection

there is no hope of immortality. See 1 Cor. 15.

A GREAT VARIETY OF EXPRESSIONS

Scripture provides a great variety of expressions to describe the community of the serpent's seed. But it all comes back to the same basic concept, that all who allow the propensities of sin which were originally aroused by the serpent, to rule and dominate their life and therefore live in sin, are the serpent's seed. The ultimate destiny of such is to suffer a bruised head and "lick (bite) the dust."

The serpent in Eden is clearly the basis of passages in the New Testament where reference is made to the devil and satan. This means, therefore, that whenever we read about the devil and satan in the New Testament, we should think of the serpent, not a fallen angel, and look for something in the context reminiscent of the occasion when our first parents fell. If every temptation to sin could be regarded as a re-enactment of the Eden crisis, it would surely help to overcome.

JESUS OVERCAME THE SERPENT

One thing is certain: Jesus overcame! Being conceived by a woman, he inherited the same flesh in which resided the propensities of sin, originally inflamed and implanted in the human race by the serpent. This enabled Jesus to confront and encounter the serpent on its own ground, and this he did by resisting every temptation to sin and crucifying every thought and desire that was contrary to the will of God.

Jesus gained total victory over the flesh. He overcame where everyone else failed. In his sacrificial death on the cross, he once and for all "condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). Or, as Heb. 2:14 says, He destroyed the devil. He inflicted a death blow to the serpent principle which had ruled over, and enslaved all men since Adam's fall.

AS MOSES LIFTED UP THE SERPENT

This was symbolically expressed in Gen. 3:15 as bruising the serpent's head. In view of this, the significance of the words of Jesus in Jn. 3:14-15 should be apparent: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life"

In this statement, Jesus related his death on the cross to Moses lifting

up a serpent on a pole, which is recorded in Num. 21. This chapter refers to Israel committing sin, as a result of which the Lord sent serpents among them to bite them, resulting in many deaths.

The association of serpents here with sin, hardly needs comment. Being bitten by serpents was parabolic of sin bringing death. For this reason 1 Cor. 15:56 says “the sting of death is sin.” Reference here to sin having a “sting” is another example of the way Scripture links and associates the serpent with sin.

In order for death to be overcome, a serpent had to be nailed to a pole and be lifted up. Those who were bitten, but were prepared to lift up their eyes in faith, believing that the serpent nailed to the pole represented the Lord’s victory over the power of the serpents, did not die but continued to live.

It is not difficult to see the parallels between this and the cross of Christ. But it is difficult to make sense of it if the serpent represented a fallen angel. How could the nailing up of Christ’s flesh upon the cross and the putting of it to death, condemn and destroy an angel? But when it is understood that the serpent represents sin in the flesh, and that Jesus, as a representative of the human race, partook of the same flesh, nailed it up and put it to death on the cross, then it starts to make sense.

THE SERPENT GAVE RISE TO SUPERSTITION

Later in Israel’s history, superstitious Israelites failed to see the serpent nailed up on a pole as being merely symbolic of spiritual truths. They started ascribing supernatural powers to it, resulting in fearing and worshipping it (2 Kng. 18:4). That which was simply a symbol was elevated to the rank of a divine being - a god. But it was all just in their mind - a figment of the imagination - a myth! It had no divine power at all, but to those who believed otherwise, it did have such power, for such is the effect of faith even when it is blind!

A similar situation has happened in relation to the original serpent of Eden. It was merely a snake - a creature of the field and a symbol of sin. But later in history, superstitious people started ascribing supernatural powers to it, linking it with an angel. This has resulted in many imaginations and myths and subjective experiences which have deepened the deception and reinforced the error.

NOT FULFILLED YET

Coming back to the bruising of the serpent's head in Gen. 3:15, it should be pointed out that the cross of Christ was not the complete fulfilment of that prophecy. On the cross, Jesus inflicted the death-blow on the serpent in his own flesh and rose from the dead to immortality. But his followers - those who believe in him and have repented of their sins and have been "born again," are still mortal and die even though their sins have been atoned for and they have been reconciled to God. It will not be until Jesus returns and raises them from the dead and bestows immortality upon them, that the fullness of his victory over sin and death will be seen and experienced. In the meantime, Jesus is the "firstfruits" of a mighty harvest - a foretaste of much more to come, and this is the great hope of the Christian faith. (1 Cor. 15).

FUTURE BRUISING

In the meantime, however, the fact remains that the serpent, alias the devil, still lives on in the world, and will continue to do so as long as sin is allowed to assert itself, and falsely accuse and oppose God's purpose and people.

But on the last day, when Jesus returns to rule the earth and execute judgement against all ungodliness, the serpent will truly be bruised in the head. The church will rule with Christ, and Rom. 16:20 refers to the effect of this in terms of "satan being bruised under their feet." This is an obvious allusion to Gen. 3:15 and confirms the relationship between the church and the woman's seed, and the world of sin and the serpent.

The ultimate bruising of satan under the feet of the Christ-body is referred to in Mal. 4: "You shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet." And Ps. 91:13 uses similar language: "You shall tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the serpent you shall trample under foot."

Interestingly enough, the Greek word for "bruise" in the phrase "bruise satan under your feet" in Rom. 16:20, has been translated "broken to shivers" in Rev. 2:27. This verse is speaking about the church ruling the nations with a rod of iron and breaking them to shivers as the vessels of a potter. This is what bruising satan is all about - total demolition of the kingdoms of the world.

Ps. 110:5-6 also prophesies about judgement day and refers to the dead bodies of the nations being everywhere. It also refers to the

“wounding of heads” in many countries.

LICK THE DUST

Ultimately, every knee must bow before Jesus and every tongue confess him as Lord, and the language in Ps. 72:11 is interesting in connection with the subject in hand. It says: “Yes, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.” And v 9 says “His enemies shall lick the dust.”

The prophet Micah repeats this with an added extra: “They shall lick the dust like a serpent” (7:17). This language recalls God’s curse on the serpent in Gen. 3:14: “Upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life.”

This choice of language that links God’s curse of the wicked with His curse on the serpent, again indicates that the serpent was a symbol of the sin he provoked. The curse upon the serpent pointed to the ultimate subjugation of everything the creature stood for - sin in the flesh and all sinners who prefer to be ruled by their own lusts instead of by God.

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CHAPTER NINE SIN IN THE FLESH, ALIAS THE DEVIL

Reference has already been made to Rom. 7, but more needs to be said about it. Here is a paraphrased version of verses 14-20 based on some modern translations:

Paul says “We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold as a slave under sin. I do not understand my own actions, for I do not do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate. Now, if I do not want to do the things I end up doing, my bad conscience shows that I agree that the laws I am breaking are good. So then, I am not really the one who does it, but rather it is sin which dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. For even though I have the will and desire to do good, I am not able to do it. I don’t do the good that I want to do; instead, I do the evil that I don’t want to do. Now, if I do what I don’t want to do, it is plain where the trouble is: it is sin which dwells within me.”

Now verses 21-25: “It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love to do God’s will as far as my new inmost self is concerned, but there is something else deep within me, in my lower bodily nature, that is at war with my mind, and wins the fight, and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. In my mind, I want to be God’s willing servant, but instead I find myself still enslaved to sin. So you see how it is: my new inner man tells me to do right, but the old flesh nature loves to sin. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death (i.e. deadly lower nature). Thanks be to God, who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ.

A MOVING AND ENLIGHTENING CHAPTER

This is a very moving and enlightening chapter. Paul says that in spite of being converted and having a desire in his innermost being to serve and obey God, there is a negative force or power constantly at work, pushing and provoking him to go in the opposite direction, causing a civil war - a battle between the Spirit and the flesh. This negative force is the cause of all sin and is clearly a powerful enemy. The question is, who or what is it? Is it an external supernatural fallen angel devil?

Paul makes no reference to any external influences. His whole emphasis is upon internal impulses and influences within man’s own body of flesh: “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.” Instead of referring to supernatural influences, Paul refers to natural

down-to-earth influences arising out of man's earthly nature. Paul does not trace the source of sin to a fallen angel, but to the carnal nature of fallen man: "O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

Not once does Paul use the word devil or satan in this passage, which you would expect him to do if the devil is a fallen angel who is responsible for all the problems Paul is discussing. Instead, Paul uses the words "sin," "flesh," "sin in the flesh," "carnal."

It is clear from Paul's testimony, that man is inherently sinful, having a strong natural bias towards sin. A strong "gravitational pull" constantly exerts itself from within, pulling and tugging in a direction away from the things of God, trying to hold back from reaching the mark of the high calling in Christ. This is why this power is called "sin," which means "a missing of the mark," "to miss one's aim," i.e. to miss or wander from the word and will of God.

TWO USAGES OF "SIN"

In Paul's usage of the word "sin" it is clear that he uses it in two ways. Basically, as we read in 1 Jn. 3:4, "sin is transgression of law." Here, the word sin is used as a verb and signifies action, i.e. disobedient action. But it is also used to describe the sinful impulses in the flesh which lead to action. This is particularly apparent in Rom. 7 where Paul speaks about "sin that dwells within me, that is, in my flesh," and of sin finding opportunity through God's law to produce lust and deceive into transgression.

Paul's words in Rom. 6:12 to "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts," are an exhortation to not yield to the desires of sin in our flesh in order to avoid committing sinful acts.

Vine's Expository Dictionary gives this comment on the word sin: "It relates to concrete wrong-doing as well as a governing principle or power which is the source of wrong action." In this sense he says "Sin is spoken of as an organized power, acting through the members of our body..... The seat of sin is the will, and the body is the organic instrument of it."

Barclay, in his book on New Testament Words says this: "It is to be noted that in the New Testament 'Hamartia' (sin) does not describe a definite act of sin; it describes the state of sin, from which acts of sin come. In fact, in Paul's writings, sin becomes personalised until it could be spelled with a capital letter, and could be thought of as a malignant,

personal power which has man in its grasp.”

THE FLESH

While in the process of defining terms of Scripture, something should be said about the “flesh.” In Rom. 7 and elsewhere, the flesh is referred to as the source and instrument of sin. Paul speaks of “sin that dwells in me,” and then defines “me” to be “my flesh.” In such cases, the flesh signifies our lower fallen sin-stricken nature, not the skin that covers our bones out of which hair grows!

Because the “flesh” is the source of lust and sin, the Bible uses these expressions interchangeably. That is, sometimes the word “flesh” is used to mean lust or sin. For example, a comparison between Col. 2:11 and Rom. 6:6 reveals that the phrase “body of flesh” is synonymous with “body of sin.” By a figure of speech called “metonymy,” flesh is sin, due to the propensities of sin which reside within and are manifested therefrom.

The references to the flesh being sin or sinful, when it is actually the impulses within to which reference is being made, can be compared with the expression “boiling the jug,” when it is the water within to which reference is being made. Metonymical expressions such as this are very common in most languages.

BEING HONEST

Most people, if they are honest, will acknowledge that there is a negative influence at work in their lower nature, inducing them to think bad thoughts and do bad things - things against their better judgement and conscience. Robert Louis Stevenson, in “Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde,” gave a fascinating description of an individual who was swayed one moment in his nature, by the beneficent Doctor Jekyll, then the next minute he was turned into and controlled by his evil Mr Hyde nature. We all know from experience about these two souls in our breast - the presence of two inner forces, one good and one evil.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Time magazine (18.9.78) in its “Time essay,” made this observation: “Everyone except the abnormally saintly or submissive, possesses the retaliatory instinct. It lurks like a small black gland at the base of the

brain, in the mind's non-reasoning regions. When a person's elemental sense of justice is affected, the retributive instinct flares and hops in outrage; it gesticulates like Mussolini; it demands satisfaction. The urge is deep and primitive"

Another writer made this observation: "Modern psychologists have uncovered deep sub-conscious instinctive drives in us which pervert our reason. We have been rudely awakened to the fact of the "original sin," which has resulted in outbursts of the demonic elements in human nature whose existence many had forgotten. We have learned to our horror the terrible potentialities of man's inhumanity to man."

Man's potential for evil is so terrible and diabolical, that some refuse to believe he is capable of such crimes by himself and cannot accept he is responsible. The fallen-angel devil becomes a convenient scapegoat to blame. How true, as we read in Jer. 17:9, that the human heart is more deceitful than anything! Such people need a revelation of the exceeding sinfulness of sin! (Rom. 7:13).

Much has been written on this subject by modern psychiatrists and psychologists who, in some cases, although not Christians, have a more enlightened understanding than some Christians. One made this statement: "There is a dark side to all of us; a Darth Vader lurking in every soul." Another wrote these words: "Meditation enlarges the field of consciousness, and reveals the dark negative hidden unconscious forces and undercurrents of the mind which bind us. A stream of unwelcome and offensive thoughts, at any moment, crosses our mind as a result of an association with some quite ordinary idea. These associations form as it were a kaleidoscopic film ceaselessly running through the back of our minds."

One psychoanalyst refers to it as "The superego; the false moral code; the secret and all powerful veto which spoils and sabotages all that is best in a person's life, despite the sincerest aspirations of his conscious mind."

THE SPIRIT THAT DWELLS IN US

These statements about the lower nature of man are in harmony with what Paul says in Rom. 7 and elsewhere about sin in the flesh. Jam. 4:5 puts it like this: "The spirit that dwells in us lusts enviously." This "spirit" is referred to in Eph. 4:23 as "the spirit of the mind," and relates to the deeper subconscious region of the mind. The conscious and subconscious levels of the mind were recognized in Biblical times, and

the word “spirit” is sometimes used to describe the deeper sub-conscious region.

However, it is important to realize that the sinful impulses that spring from the subconscious are not really part of the true personality of a Christian. This is obvious from the fact that a true Christian resists them and gets upset when they defeat him. And so Paul says “I am not really the one who does it, but sin which dwells within me.” In view of this, the expression “the devil made me do it” has an element of truth from the point of view of the devil being the sinful urges of the flesh. But there is no truth in applying the expression to a fallen angel.

SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS

If all temptation to sin came from a source external to man, i.e. a fallen angel, the implication would be that if such a being did not exist, we would never be tempted or sin. And this would imply that there is basically nothing wrong with us or our nature; i.e. it’s all Lucifer’s fault; remove him and there would be no more sin or trouble in the world. But this doesn’t tie in with Paul’s confession: “in my flesh dwells no good thing O wretched man that I am.” There can be no doubt about it that Paul regarded the flesh as inherently sinful.

BASIS OF REPENTANCE

It is, in fact, the sinfulness of the human heart that forms the basis on which the Bible appeals to men to “repent.” Repent means to change the mind, alter the attitude, take authority over the thoughts and intentions. Isa. 55:7 puts it like this: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord.” Also Pr. 3:5: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding.”

It is made clear in these and other Scriptures that we are able, with God’s help, to take authority over sinful thoughts and habits, and experience a change of outlook - a transformation of mind. This experience is called “born again,” and this is what repentance involves. But if all wicked thoughts are poured into our mind from a supernatural external source - from a fallen-angel, how could we be expected to have any control over that?

If Jacob couldn’t defeat one angel in a physical fight and ended up, in spite of all his resistance, getting crippled, how could we possibly combat

one third of God's angels in a mental conflict? Under such circumstances, God's appeal to repent becomes a farce, especially if He cast the angels down here in the first place, and has the power to remove them.

THE HUMAN HEART IS THE SOURCE

Rejection of a supernatural fallen-angel tempter is justified time and time again in Scripture. Jam. 1:13-15 has already been quoted but let's look at it again. It is an inspired definition of temptation and that is why it is so important. It says "every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust." In this statement, James is adamant that temptation, (inducement to sin), springs from within a person, from their own desires. Prior to saying this, he stressed that God does not tempt. Now, if there was another supernatural tempter possessing God's power, such as a fallen angel, James would surely say so. After all, he is dealing specifically with the subject of temptation. But he makes no mention of such a being, and traces the source to man's own lust instead.

Remember also the pertinent question asked in Jam. 4:1: "What causes wars and fightings among you?" Many today would say fallen angels are responsible and blame them, but James did not share that view. His answer was "They are caused by the aggressiveness of your lusts."

Listen to the words of Jesus on the subject; recorded in Matt.15:16-20 and Mk. 7:15-23: "Are you without understanding? there is nothing outside of man that can enter and defile him. It is the things which come out of him that defile the man. The things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

NOTHING LEFT FOR A FALLEN ANGEL TO DO

Listen also to Paul's words in Gal. 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh (i.e. the effects of sin in the flesh) are clear, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lust, idolatry, witchcraft (i.e. spiritualism), hatred, quarrels, jealousy, bad temper, strife, divisions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and other things like these."

Now, the question that needs to be asked is: If the flesh produces all these sins - if they all originate and arise out of man's own sinful nature, what is there left for a fallen angel to do? Can anyone think of a sin which

is not covered in this list? It is clearly wrong to attribute them to fallen angels when Scripture attributes them to fallen man.

When the sinfulness of our own nature is recognized and acknowledged, we can identify with Paul's cry in Rom. 7:24: "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Fortunately, God has provided a way and Paul is quick to declare it: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Paul then proceeds to explain how, and introduces us to some key points which relate to the true identity of the devil.

ROMANS 8:3: A KEY VERSE

Paul says in Rom. 8:1-3 "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God has done by sending His son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

Verse 3 is the key verse as far as the present investigation is concerned. Let's look at it phrase by phrase, starting with "For what the law could not do." What could the law not do? It could not conquer or condemn sin. It aggravated and aroused sin, resulting in condemning sinners and failing to confer life.

The law was, as the next phrase says, "weak through the flesh." i.e. the law was powerless to confer life due to the weakness of the flesh. To gain eternal life under the law required one hundred percent obedience. No slip-ups were tolerated. The law was rigid and inflexible, as is the law of gravity in relation to a mountain climber. No matter how long and how well he has been climbing, or how near the top he gets, just one slip can result in death.

THE LAW WAS GOOD

Due to man's inability to control his sinful nature and be totally obedient to God's law, the law could only give death and not life. Not that it was the fault of the law! Paul makes it clear in Rom. 7:12 that the law was "holy, just and good."

One of the good things about it was that it revealed to man how weak he was and that he was a sinner under sentence of death and in need of salvation. The impossibility of being saved by his own work and effort keeping the law, made him come to the point of realizing there has to be

some other way - a better way. And so there was! As Jesus said: "I am the Way." And the way to salvation through him is through grace not law. The law was, as we read in Gal. 3:24, a "schoolmaster" designed to lead people to Christ.

SIN REIGNED UNTO DEATH

So then, human lust was a major problem under the law. Sooner or later sinful desires of the flesh caused people to break the law, which is sin and results in death. And so, as Paul puts it: "Sin reigned unto death" (Rom. 5:21).

From Adam through to Christ, no one was able to subdue their sinful flesh and live a totally sinless life, rendering one hundred percent obedience to the law. All sinned, missed the mark and fell short, and therefore died and corrupted away. Sin was truly a powerful ruler, the "god" or "prince" of the world, reigning over all unto death.

Obviously what was needed to break the deadlock or stronghold of sin was someone who never yielded or succumbed to the promptings and propensities of the flesh - someone who conquered every temptation and crucified the flesh, putting to death every urge and impulse that was contrary to God's way - someone who yielded one hundred percent to the Spirit, rendering total obedience to God's law.

THE SAME HANDICAP

Obtainably, to gain this victory over sinful flesh, such a person would have to partake of it. In much the same way athletes who want to conquer the four minute mile don't hop on a horse or into a racing car and ride around the track, or do the high jump on the moon where there is less gravitational pull. That would be cheating and nobody would recognize it as a great achievement or victory.

For an athlete's performance to be recognized and acclaimed, it has to be performed in the flesh, in the same way and on the same track and under the same conditions as other contestants. Imagine, for example, what the response would be at the Olympics for physically handicapped and disabled people, if someone who was not handicapped entered the events and won them all. No one would be impressed. It would be an empty and hollow victory. However if a physically handicapped athlete has been blessed and advantaged with a large heart and strong soul due to genetic factors inherited from his father, and achieves victory, no one

complains or objects to that, but gives due praise.

In like manner, conquering the fallen sinful flesh nature of man required partaking of the same nature which all have battled with, i.e. having the same handicap of sin in the flesh - the same anti-force that has caused the “up-hill” struggle.

There would certainly be no point coming in the nature of God, who does not possess the propensity to sin and therefore cannot be tempted, sin or die. Neither would there be any point coming in the nature of angels for the same reason, because they, being divine immortal beings, likewise cannot be tempted or sin, and therefore cannot die (Lk. 20:35-36).

AN UNAVOIDABLE CONCLUSION

It is an unavoidable conclusion that the conquering of sin in the flesh required someone coming in the same flesh and gaining victory over all of its desires, making it bow and surrender to the word and will of God. And this precisely, is what the mission of Jesus was all about. In fact, this is the very point that Paul makes in his last phrase in Rom. 8:3.

Having said that “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God has done through Christ,” Paul then explains how: “By sending His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and, as a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”

THE SAME FLESH

Whether we like it or not and whether it fits in with our theology or not, Paul clearly teaches here that Jesus partook of the same “sinful flesh” nature of fallen man - the very same nature described previously by Paul in Rom. 7 where he talked about “sin in the flesh,” and said, “I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing.”

This is why Jesus said on one occasion “call me not good,” in response to a man who addressed him as “good master” (Mk. 10:18). Jesus did not mean that he was not a good character, for he was all of that and more, due to his divine begetal and the rich influence of the Spirit and word of God in his life. But the man to whom Jesus addressed the words “call me not good,” thought the good that was manifested by Jesus had its source in his physical flesh personage which was the product of his mother’s seed. The man only saw Jesus as a seed of a woman - a “son of man,” and not as the Divinely begotten son of God, and was attributing the good displayed by Jesus to the flesh instead of the

Spirit. But, as Paul taught, there is no good thing in the flesh, and Jesus confirmed that the same applied to his flesh by saying “call me not good.” Jesus did not want the flesh to get the glory that belonged to the Spirit! As the Spirit of Christ declares in Ps. 16:2: “preserve me O God, for in Thee do I put my trust. I say to the Lord, Thou art my God; I have no good apart from Thee” (Revised Standard Version).

THE FLESH PROFITS NOTHING

On another occasion, recorded in Jn. 6:63 Jesus, referring to his own flesh said, “the flesh profits nothing; it is the Spirit that gives life; the words that I speak are Spirit and life.”

The reason for saying this was because the Jews had misunderstood his teaching to mean that they had to literally eat his physical flesh in order to gain eternal life. Jesus therefore made it clear to them that there was nothing profitable about his flesh; the profit lay in the words that he spoke which were inspired, not by the flesh, but by the Spirit.

During his ministry Jesus freely and unashamedly confessed “Of (out of) my own self I can do nothing.” (Jn. 5:19, 30). The good that he achieved and manifested did not come from his flesh, but the Spirit. Left to itself, without the Spirit, nothing good can be produced by the flesh, only the promptings of sin.

THE SAME POTENTIAL TO SIN

Because Jesus shared the same fallen flesh nature which contains the propensity to sin, he had the same potential to sin as all other men, but did not of course! This is taught in a Messianic prophecy in 2 Sam. 7:14 in which God says “I will be his Father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and the stripes of the sons of men, but my mercy shall never depart from him.” We know that this prophecy refers to Jesus because it is quoted in Heb. 1:5 and applied to him.

If, as we read in Heb. 4:15, Jesus was “tempted in all points like us,” and if, as we read in Jam. 1:14, temptation involves being “drawn away by our own lust,” we cannot avoid the conclusion that Jesus must have been able to experience the lurings and enticings of the impulses of the flesh which lead to sin, and therefore could have sinned had he chosen to do so.

NOT MY OWN WILL

For this reason Jesus said: “I came, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me” (Jn. 6:38). “I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me” (Jn. 5:30). These statements teach that Jesus had a will separate and independent of his Father’s will, and which was contrary to his Father’s will. How else can it be explained that Jesus refused to do his own will, but chose to do his Father’s instead? Jesus’ “own will” refers to the will of the flesh and the Father’s will is that of the Spirit, and the two are at variance and at enmity with each other. The Father’s will was for Jesus to be crucified, but it is not the will of the flesh to die such a horrible painful death, and Jesus experienced the battle between the flesh and the Spirit in the garden of Gethsemane prior to his crucifixion. He fell to his knees three times, sweating as it were great drops of blood as he pleaded in prayer to his Father: “If it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but what You will.”

It must be emphasized that although the physical flesh nature of Jesus was, as he said, “not good,” and “profited nothing,” he had a perfect moral and spiritual character, and was without blemish in this respect. He never sinned, but completely and perfectly overcame all the impulses and propensities of the flesh.

It was therefore impossible that the grave could hold him so he was raised from the dead before his flesh could see corruption. But his physical mortal body that was raised was “changed” into a “perfect” immortal body, which cannot be tempted due to not having a propensity toward sin.

MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING

This perfection of the physical body is referred to in Heb. 2:10 which says Jesus “was made perfect through suffering.” (The same point is made in Heb. 5:8-9. 7:28. Lk. 13:32). These references to physical perfection being attained as a result of resurrection clearly imply and confirm that the physical flesh nature of Jesus was not perfect beforehand, during his ministry on earth.

And so, as Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:16: “Though we have known Christ after the flesh, from now on we no longer regard him.”

CAME IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH

Coming back to Rom. 8:3, Paul states the reason for Jesus coming in sinful flesh in these words: “so that as a sacrifice for sin, he could condemn sin in the flesh.” Now, how could Christ possibly condemn the propensities of sin in the flesh through his sacrifice, unless they were in his body of flesh which was put to death on the cross?! A careful analysis of Rom. 8:3 makes it fairly obvious that Jesus had to come in the very same nature that had been conquering mankind and causing death. But, instead of being conquered and put to death by that nature, Jesus, by the Spirit, conquered it and put it to death. The cross was a public execution and ceremonial condemnation of sin in the flesh (“sinful flesh”) by a perfect representative of the fallen human race.

CARRIED SINS IN HIS OWN BODY

Because Jesus had the same “sinful flesh” as all other sinners, he had the potential to commit every kind of sin that has been, or can be committed in the world. The sins of the world are summarised in 1 Jn. 2:16 as “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” And the fact that Jesus said “I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33), indicates he was tempted in all areas of the sins of the world. The propensity for all the world’s sins were in his flesh and he overcame and destroyed them in his sacrificial death. And, due to the grace of God, Jesus’ victory is imputed to all true believers by reason of the spiritual unity they have with him through faith. Scripture therefore declares that he carried the sins of the world in his own body on the tree. (1 Pet. 2:24. 1 Jn. 2:2).

Under the old covenant, sins already committed were symbolically placed on an animal by the laying on of hands. This transfer of sin was obviously artificial and superficial. It only dealt with the effects of sin, not the cause. But under the new covenant, the actual power of sin in the flesh that causes all sins in the world to be committed, was destroyed in Christ’s body of flesh - literally and physically. For this reason, Scripture never refers to Christ dealing with sin on his flesh, as in the case of animal sacrifices, but in his flesh. (Rom. 8:3. Eph. 2:15. Col. 1:22. 1 Pet. 2:24.) There was nothing merely symbolical, artificial or superficial about Christ’s sacrifice. He dealt with the root cause of all sin and triumphed over it, crucifying it in his own body of flesh.

ONE MAN

As death came upon all men due to the sin of one man Adam, eternal life is made available through the victory over sin by one man, Jesus Christ. Physical relationship with Adam results in death, but spiritual relationship with Christ results in life. See Rom. 5 for Paul's exposition on this.

The principle of redemption which allows many people to gain victory through the victory of the one man Christ Jesus, was foreshadowed in David's victory over Goliath. The giant, like sin, was too big and strong for any other man to defeat. But David, whose name means "beloved" and is one of the titles of Christ (Eph. 1:6), "bruised" Goliath with a fatal blow on the head resulting in all the Israelites being liberated.

HEBREWS 2:14

Having gone through Rom. 7 through to 8:3, we now turn to Heb. 2:14 which shows how directly it all relates to the subject of the devil. This is how it reads: "Seeing, then, the children (God's children) are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Jesus) also himself likewise partook of the same, so that through his death, he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil."

This is really a key verse as far as the subject of the devil is concerned, and confirms conclusions previously reached. Heb. 2:14 runs parallel with Rom. 8:3 and a comparison between the two is enlightening because it produces a definition of the devil.

<u>Romans 8:3</u>	<u>Hebrews 2:14</u>
1. Made in the likeness of sinful flesh	Took part of the same flesh
2. As a sacrifice for sin	Through his death
3. Condemned	Destroyed
4. Sin in the flesh.	The devil.

The last item in this list of parallels is the most interesting because it teaches that sin in the flesh is the devil, i.e. the lusts and desires of the flesh which lure and entice us into sin, constitute the devil, which means "sin in the flesh" and "devil" are synonymous or interchangeable terms.

OTHER VERSES LINK THE DEVIL AND SIN IN THE FLESH

This conclusion is not only based on this parallel. Other Scriptures point to the same conclusion. For example, Eph. 4:27: “Be angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath: neither give opportunity to the devil.” In its context, Paul is talking about sin and fleshly lusts, as can be seen by reading verses 22-32.

In Rom. 13:14 Paul addresses the same issues, but instead of saying “neither give opportunity to the devil,” he says “make no provision (i.e. give no opportunity) for the flesh to fulfil the lusts.” In this parallel we again see how the flesh is synonymous with the devil

In 2 Tim. 2:25-26 Paul refers to sharing the truth to bring about repentance from sin, so that people might “escape from the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” Being taken captive by the devil simply means being enslaved and ruled by sin.

Jam. 4:7 says “Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” This statement is made in the context of human lust and sin, as can be seen by reading v 1-9. 3:15. Sinful thoughts as we know, attack us and seek to rule and dominate our life. But if we take authority over them and resist them by the word of God, they flee from us.

In the next chapter, the connection between the devil and sin in the flesh will become even more obvious by a closer internal examination of the Heb. 2:14 text.

* * * * *

CHAPTER TEN JESUS DESTROYED THE DEVIL

Heb. 2:14 says Jesus destroyed him who has the power of death, that is, the devil. We have here a Scriptural definition of the devil: “him who has the power of death.” This is significant because elsewhere in Scripture it is emphasized that sin has the power of death. For example, 1 Cor. 15:56: “The sting (power) of death is sin.” The Good News Bible renders it like this: “Death gets its power to hurt from sin.”

This is a fundamental teaching in the Bible. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). “Sin has reigned unto death” (Rom. 5:21). “Sin when it is finished, brings forth death” (Jam. 1:15).

So then, the devil, referred to in Heb. 2:14 as “him who has the power of death” must be sin, because there are not two powers or causes of death, only one - sin. Although different words, devil and sin represent the same power. They are synonymous terms.

PERSONAL PRONOUN

Some may feel that the personal pronoun “him” in the phrase “him who has the power of death” must refer to a person and not something abstract like sin. But it has already been pointed out that sin is frequently personified in the Bible and treated as a personal malignant power which has man in its grasp. And in Gen. 4:7 the personal pronoun “him” is applied to sin: “sin is crouching at the door, and his desire is toward you but you must master him.”

Now, it stands to reason that if sin is personified, and if “devil” is a synonymous term, that devil will also be personified. And if the personification of sin can be accepted without regarding it as a fallen angel, why not the devil?!

Remember also that the serpent was a male, referred to by the personal pronouns “he” and “him,” and because he became “devil” and a symbol of the sin he provoked, it is not surprising that sin and the devil are personified and given the same personal pronouns.

In passing, it should also be pointed out that in the Greek, “diabolos” is either masculine or feminine, but not neuter, and therefore it would be grammatically incorrect to speak of it as “it”. Thus, when used in a general sense, the masculine pronoun “he” or “him” is given in preference to the feminine.

THREE KEY FACTORS

Heb. 2:14 actually contains three clues concerning the nature and identity of the devil. The first, as we have seen, is that the devil has the power of death. The second is that Jesus destroyed the devil by dying himself on the cross. And the third is that Jesus had to come in the same flesh as other members of the fallen human race to do battle with, and destroy the devil.

Regarding the second point, that through his own death, Jesus destroyed the devil: this also confirms that the devil relates to sin, because every other reference in the Bible relating to the same subject says the purpose of Christ's death was to deal with sin. "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). "He was manifested to take away our sins" (1 Jn. 3:5). etc etc.

Jesus didn't die to destroy a phantom. He didn't come to do battle with an invisible, immaterial demon. He came to deal with the sinful desires of the flesh which had captivated and controlled all men before him, sending them all to their death.

THE THIRD POINT

This brings us to the third point in Heb. 2:14, namely, that Jesus had to come in the same flesh as fallen man in order to do battle with, and destroy the devil.

Now, the question that this immediately raises is this: if the devil is a powerful superhuman being, why would Jesus have to come in the weak mortal flesh nature of fallen man and die in order to destroy him? One would have thought that if the devil was a supernatural angel, that Jesus would have come as a supernatural being to do battle with him.

However, once it is accepted that the devil relates to the mortal flesh realm of sin, it immediately becomes clear why Jesus had to come in the same flesh to deal with the problem.

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

It is not easy to make sense of a supernatural angel being destroyed by the death of Jesus. How could the death of Jesus on the cross, destroy an angel? And, if the fallen angel was destroyed, shouldn't he now be dead and powerless? Why is it then, that tradition maintains he is still

roaming and flying about, more active and powerful than ever, tempting mankind to sin and rebel against God?

In every respect it is very difficult to relate the devil in Heb. 2:14 to a fallen angel. But it all makes sense if it is applied to sin in the flesh. Due to partaking of sinful flesh, Jesus was able to experience the full force of the power of sin and be tempted in every point like fallen man. During his life he resisted such temptations and dealt the death blow to them with the word and Spirit of God.

The cross was the climax - the grand finale to his warfare against the flesh. On the cross sin in the flesh was personally and physically condemned and destroyed in Christ's own body of flesh. In Christ, sin lost its stranglehold and monopoly over man, and breaking the deadlock opened up the way, and laid a basis upon which all who were prepared to believe in, and belong to Christ, could share in his victory and be saved.

RESURRECTION THE RESULT

As a result of his victory over sin, Jesus gained victory over death and was raised on the third day. As a result of his resurrection, Jesus was clothed with a new immortal body in which the principle or propensities of sin do not reside. At his first coming he was, as 2 Cor. 5:21 puts it, "made sin for us," i.e. made to wear sin's flesh nature in order to combat, destroy and remove it. But at his second coming, as Heb. 9:28 says, he will appear "without sin," i.e. not clothed with a mortal "sinful flesh" body, but an immortal body that cannot be tempted due to not containing the propensities of sin.

In his resurrection, Jesus shed once and for all his sin-prone flesh body, and was divested of the promptings and temptations of the devil. However, it is obvious that the devil (sin) still lives on in the world in all who are flesh. If it didn't, we would never experience temptation or be able to sin. So the devil is still very much alive and well in the world, but has no power over those to whom the victory of Jesus has been imputed and who are covered by his name.

Those who are in Christ receive help and strength from his word and Spirit to fight and resist sin, and through him the grace of God forgives when they fail, so that they may be justified and not condemned. Ultimately, their victory over sin and death will be the same as their Master's, for at his second coming, he will raise from the dead those who have died, and bestow upon them and those who are still alive, the same sinless immortality that he received from his Father. (1 Cor. 15. 1 Thes.

4:13-18. Plp. 3:20-21. 1 Jn. 3:1-3).

THE SAME FLESH

Before moving on from Heb. 2:14, attention should be drawn to the way it so emphatically states that Jesus had “the same” flesh as fallen man. The reason for saying this is because sometimes it is thought that the statement in Rom. 8:3 that Jesus was made in the “likeness” of sinful flesh means his flesh was “similar” but not “the same.” But Heb. 2:14 puts an end to all doubts, clearly stating that Jesus partook of the same flesh.

The Spirit of God seems to be at pains in Hebrews chapter two to stress that Christ’s humanity was identical to his followers. For example, in verse 17 it is stated that “both he (Jesus) who sanctifies, and they (his followers) who are sanctified, are all of one, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” (The New English Bible renders the words “are all of one” as “are all of one stock”).

Verse 14 then goes on to say: “Seeing, therefore, the children of a family share the same flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” Notice how one word is heaped upon another here, emphasizing that the humanity of Jesus “himself” was “also,” “likewise,” “the same.”

Verse 17 adds to this, saying Jesus had to be made like his brothers in “all things,” i.e. “in every way.” And one thing is certain: if the flesh of Jesus did not have the potential and propensity to sin, he would have been different from his friends and followers in the most fundamental way possible.

ANTICHRIST

As has been pointed out in a previous chapter, Jesus became a partaker of the same flesh as fallen man due to being conceived by a woman possessing the same nature. Conception results in the child being impregnated with the mother’s genes, and by this means Jesus inherited “the same” flesh as his mother, even though he was begotten by the Spirit of God, because the divine purpose required it.

Once it is understood how necessary it was for Jesus to partake of sinful flesh in order to condemn and destroy the power of sin, it can be appreciated why the New Testament says any doctrine that denies that Christ came in the flesh is “not of God” and is the “spirit of antichrist.” (1 Jn. 4:2-3. 2 Jn. v 7-10).

Now it should hardly be necessary to point out that these references in John's epistles to Christ coming in the flesh, do not mean that it is important to believe that he had skin, or that he only had the outward appearance of being human, or that he was an historical person. That would be ridiculous. Of course he had skin and no one would be foolish enough to deny that, or deny that he was an historical person. Jesus was not a figment of the imagination and neither was he a skinless skeleton or spectral being without any substance. No! This was not the issue; the word "flesh," as we have seen, goes much deeper than mere skin.

References to the "flesh" in relation to God's redemptive purpose in Christ, relate to the nature of fallen man which contains sinful propensities. This is what John means when he says Jesus came in the flesh. The doctrine that denies this is antichrist.

WHY SUCH AN ISSUE?

Why is the apostle John so strict and severe about this issue? Because if Jesus didn't partake of sinful flesh, he could not have overcome and defeated sin and nailed it upon the cross in his body of flesh. And this would make a complete farce of the cross, not to mention a mockery of his righteous sinless life, because anyone could live a sinless life if there was no potential to sin in his flesh.

To believe that Jesus did not have the same sin-prone flesh as fallen man, undermines the virtue and merit of his obedient sinless life. Such a view robs him of his moral glory as an overcomer and turns the cross into an empty and hollow victory - a very artificial affair.

As has been said before: there could be no glory or praise for a man who has a perfect physique and is physically sound and whole, who wins all the events in which physically handicapped and disabled people participate. No one would celebrate the ability of an astronaut who breaks all high jump records while on the moon where there is a much lower gravitational pull to contend with. And neither would there be glory from God for a man who never sins because he is not hampered by the handicap of sinful flesh, and does not have the gravitational pull of sin in his flesh to contend with like all other men.

EARS TURNED AWAY FROM TRUTH

It is evident from the apostle John's epistles, that in his day, towards the end of the first century, seeds of error were being sown in relation to

the nature and status of Christ. Certain false teachers accepted that the Messiah had come and was Jesus, but they did not believe he had the same flesh nature as fallen man. They probably thought such a concept was degrading and dishonouring. So they went beyond the Biblical record which stated that Jesus would be “made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:1-3), and elevated his nature to a higher plane.

Significantly enough, the word “transgresseth” in 2 Jn. v 9 which describes their action, literally means in the Greek “to go beyond,” i.e. exceed the limits. They no doubt thought that their new doctrine was “advanced” teaching and progress. But any doctrine which goes beyond the sacred page can only be a retrograde step resulting in the retardation of spiritual knowledge, not advancement. Something as fundamental as Christ’s nature cannot be changed without changing other important doctrines as well. It is like the keystone to an arch: remove it and the arch comes crashing down.

NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE

The apostle Paul warned in 2 Tim. 4:3 that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, and shall turn away their ears from the truth” Again in 1 Tim. 4:1-3 he wrote these words: “The Spirit says distinctly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils forbidding to marry” (celibacy of nuns, priests), “and commanding to abstain from meats” (no meat on Fridays, only fish).

We learn from Rev. 17 that the false teaching would develop ultimately into a world-wide super church with multitudes of adherents, whose base or headquarters would be at Rome. This religious system is referred to as an “harlot,” due to being unfaithful to the teaching of the bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Her teaching, being a departure from the truth, befuddles minds, resulting in contradiction and confusion, and is fittingly symbolized by a bowl full of wine in her hand from which she makes her adherents drink. On her forehead (which signifies the mind) is written “mystery, Babylon” (i.e. confusion), which perfectly sums up the system’s teaching.

“BLESSED MYSTERY”

Is it not significant that this system’s concept of God (the Trinity) is openly acknowledged to be a “blessed mystery,” and involves confusion and contradiction, for it is impossible to explain how one God

can be three persons and yet those three persons are one, and how a father can be his own son and a son be his own father.

Many students of the Bible and church history believe that the doctrine of the Trinity developed as a result of denying Christ came in sinful flesh. Little by little, Christ's nature and status got advanced until eventually he was made equal with Father God - a position he himself denied, saying "My father is greater than I" (Jn. 14:28). Even after his ascension to heaven, the apostle Paul declared that "the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3).

Now, once it was believed that Jesus was "very God of very God," equal with Father-God, who cannot be tempted or sin, it became impossible to believe that Jesus could have "sinful flesh" and be able to sin. Such a concept was regarded as dishonouring and degrading to Christ. But the problem was that it could not be denied that Jesus was conceived by Mary, and that all children conceived by sinful flesh are born with sinful flesh.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

So, to get around this, the system went beyond the pages of Scripture and invented a new doctrine which became known as "the immaculate conception." This doctrine declared that the effects of original sin were neutralized in Mary so that when she conceived Christ she could not impregnate him with the genes which put sinful propensities in the flesh, making it "sinful flesh." This became known as "the clean flesh heresy."

And so there you have it: trinitarianism, the keystone to the arch of Christendom's theology, denies that Christ came in the flesh in the real Scriptural sense of the term. And, as a result of this, another explanation of the devil had to be found, resulting, as Paul predicted in 1 Tim. 4:1-2, in "doctrines of devils" which are a departure from the faith.

THE NUMBERS GAME

Those who play the numbers game may be impressed by the large numbers of people throughout the world who subscribe to these doctrines, but it would be a deception to base confidence on this. Rev. 17 clearly predicted that multitudes of people would be deceived. It has always been dangerous to base truth on numbers.

The majority of the world's population used to believe the earth was

flat but they were wrong. Only a few had got it right and they were mocked and scorned. This has been a theme in history and many examples could be given. Jesus himself said: “Strait is the gate and narrow the way but few there be that find it.” “Many are called, but few will be chosen.” “Many false teachers shall arise and shall deceive many.”

ANIMAL SACRIFICES INEFFECTIVE

Failure to accept that Jesus came in sinful flesh, and defeated the power of sin by conquering it in his own flesh, results in a rather superficial and unsatisfactory concept of the cross.

A very common view is that, in some mystical way that cannot be explained, the sins of the world were transferred to Jesus as he died on the cross. But there are several problems with this, mainly, that it would mean the principle involved in his sacrifice for sin was no different from the animal sacrifices under the law, which were unable to take away sin.

Under the law, when a man sinned, he artificially or symbolically transferred the sin to a beast by the laying on of hands, then it was killed. However, in reality, something abstract like an act of sin, cannot be transferred from one body to another, be it animal or man. Even if it could, of what value would it be, because sins continue to be committed afterwards, necessitating the same procedure.

For this reason, as is taught in the New Testament, “It was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin.” Putting down an animal after sins were committed, was like cutting down thistles at ground level. Because the roots are left in the ground, it is only a question of time and they will sprout and grow again.

If all that was required to put away sin was for sins to be symbolically transferred to a sacrifice, why weren't animal sacrifices sufficient or effective? And if sins are laid on Christ according to the same principle, how is it that his sacrifice does put away sin but the others didn't? Why did the artificial transfer system not work with animals but worked with Christ?

THE ANTITYPE TRANSCENDS THE TYPE

From Heb. 10 we learn that the animal sacrifices under the law were only a shadow of a better and more effective principle to come in Christ's sacrifice. In verses 5-10 we are told that at the heart and root of this principle is Christ's success in doing the will of God. This, of course,

involved renouncing and crucifying the sinful will and desires of the flesh, and fully obeying the will of God. And this could only be done by partaking of sinful flesh.

Herein lay the major difference between animal sacrifices and Christ's. Not being human or moral creatures, animals cannot know the will of God, let alone do it. Neither can they know what sin is, and, not having sin in the flesh to contend with, they cannot consciously conquer its propensities out of love and respect for God with a desire to please and glorify Him.

This means that during the centuries that animal sacrifices were offered, the power of sin itself was never actually conquered, in spite of the countless times sins were artificially transferred by the laying on of hands. And the same would apply to Christ's sacrificial death, if the propensity to sin was not in his body of flesh. Under such circumstances, the death of his body would not be the death of sin's power in the flesh. And this would mean that in spite of the many hands that have reached out to identify with him and his sacrifice, the power of sin in the flesh in reality has not been conquered, condemned and destroyed. As has been said, denial that Jesus came in sinful flesh, reduces his sacrifice to the same level as the animal sacrifices, and for this reason is branded as "anti-Christ" by the apostle John, because it robs Jesus of his moral glory and takes the chief virtue out of his example as an overcomer of sin.

NO SHADOW CAN EQUAL SUBSTANCE

If animal sacrifices were only a "shadow" of Christ's, it is natural to expect that a much higher or deeper sacrificial principle would be involved in his. If the artificial transfer principle involved in animal sacrifices was the same principle involved in Christ's sacrifice, then shadow and substance would be the same and that would be absurd. No shadow can ever equal the substance.

Animal sacrifices only dealt with sins already committed, and were a bit like shutting the gate after the horse has bolted. Animal sacrifices only dealt with the effects or symptoms or outcroppings of sin, not the root cause. But Christ, in his sacrifice, got down to the root of the matter and dealt with the cause, namely, the devil - sin in the flesh.

In every respect the sacrifice of Christ transcends the animal sacrifices. As the one sin of Adam impacted on all who were "in him" (seminally), imputing sin and death to them, so the one sacrifice of Christ impacts on all who are prepared to be "in him" (spiritually),

imputing righteousness and life to them. Through the one sacrifice of Christ - the one and only victory over sin in the flesh in history, the sins of those who are prepared to be in him by repentance, faith and baptism are cancelled. Such is the love and grace of God in Christ whose desire is for us to be saved and not perish.

GOD IS JUST AND JUSTIFIER

Because God is righteous, He could not ignore His law of sin and death which demands death to be the penalty of sin. He could not cast a blind eye to this and grant eternal life in spite of it. To do so would be unjust - a contradiction of His law and therefore a violation of His righteousness. But His grace found a way by which He could bring about justification (absolve people of their sins) and still remain just (Rom. 3:26). And this “way” was by sending His own son to fulfil the demands of the law by upholding it and never sinning, thus conquering and breaking the deadlock of sin, providing a basis upon which the grace of God could grant others victory. By this arrangement, God was able to condemn sin without condemning sinners.

There is clearly no room for boasting in this scheme of redemption. Except for Jesus, no one can earn or deserve it by their own works or effort. To do so would require living a sinless life as Jesus did, but everyone is too weak to do that. Salvation is clearly a gift of God’s love “by grace through faith.” To Him therefore be all the glory, honour and praise.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

The temptation of Jesus is recorded in Matt. 4:1-11, Mk. 1:12-13, and Lk. 4:1-13. These records tell us that straight after his baptism, Jesus was “led” - “driven” by the Spirit of God into the wilderness for forty days to be tempted by the devil. The “devil” did not entice him into the wilderness and neither was it the decision of Jesus himself to go there. He was decisively directed there by the Spirit of his God to be tempted by the devil.

The temptation was a trial ordained by the Father to test His son before he started his public ministry; before he officially manifested himself as the Messiah.

At his baptism, for the first time in his life, Jesus received the power of God without measure which enabled him to perform miracles, signs and wonders. Although Jesus was begotten by the Spirit when conceived by Mary, and inspired by the Spirit with knowledge, wisdom and a quick understanding during the thirty years leading up to his baptism, he had not received the power to perform miracles. We know this because we read in Jn. 2:11 that the turning of water into wine at the wedding in Cana, was “the beginning of miracles that Jesus did.” That is, it was his first miracle. Prior to this, he had not performed any miracles.

When Jesus was baptised in the Spirit at his baptism in water, he officially became the “Messiah,” which means “anointed,” and relates to the anointing of the Holy Spirit which empowers for service, confirming the word that he preached with signs following.

A TEST IN RELATION TO POWER

As soon as Jesus received this power, before he had the time and opportunity to use it, God sent him into the wilderness for forty days to be tempted by the devil. “Forty” is the probation number in Scripture and signifies a testing period, and it is not difficult to see the forty day experience of Jesus in the wilderness as a test. It was a test to see if he would allow his newly acquired powers to be controlled by the flesh or the Spirit - to see if he would use the power for self-satisfaction, pleasure and glory, or for the pleasure and glory of God.

The “devil” who tempted him is, of course, generally regarded as a fallen angel, but this is not taught in the narrative. Nothing is said anywhere in the temptation story - not even a hint is given, that the devil

is a fallen angel. And it has been demonstrated in previous chapters that there is no foundation in the Bible for the doctrine of a fallen-angel devil.

BACK TO SIN IN THE FLESH

It has, however, been demonstrated that there is very strong evidence pointing to the devil being sin in the flesh. As we have seen in Heb. 2:14, Jesus came in the flesh in order to do battle with, and destroy the power of sin, which is the devil. If Jesus was tempted by the devil, and temptation is caused by being lured and enticed by one's own desires, as taught in Jam. 1:14, it is not difficult to conclude that the temptation of Jesus involved a battle between the flesh and the Spirit. Heb. 5:7-9 says Jesus "in the days of his flesh though he were a son (of God), yet he learned obedience by the things he suffered. And once perfected, he became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him."

Learning obedience requires resisting the natural impulses of the flesh and refusing to succumb and surrender to them. Jesus clearly did this "in the days of his flesh," in "the things he suffered," and this included his forty days in the wilderness where he had no food or shelter, and his only company was wild animals.

A THREEFOLD TEMPTATION

Jesus was, as we read in Heb. 4:15, tempted in all points like fallen man, and it is significant that although there are countless desires that can lead to temptation and sin, 1 Jn. 2:16 places them in three categories: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." All other temptations are only variations of these. 1 Jn 2:16 says all that is in the world is summed up in these three things, and the fact that Jesus said "I have overcome the world" teaches that he did battle with them in his flesh.

Significantly enough, the temptation of Jesus involved three temptations and they relate to the three categories mentioned in 1 Jn. 2:16.

Jesus was tempted in the area of the "lust of the flesh" when, having been forty days without food, he became hungry and was tempted to turn stones into bread to satisfy the desire of his flesh for food. He certainly didn't need a fallen angel to tell him he was hungry, or that he now possessed the power to turn stones into bread.

He was tempted in the area of the "lust of the eyes" when he looked upon all the kingdoms of the world and all their glory, knowing that the

earth had been promised to him as an inheritance, and that he now had the power to take possession of it, and avoid the pain of the cross.

He was tempted in the area of the “pride of life,” when he gave thought to embarking upon his ministry and introducing himself to the Jewish nation as the promised Messiah, sent down from heaven by God. Leaping out and descending from the pinnacle of the temple into the court below, where all the worshippers and priests could see him supported and accompanied by angels, was the temptation. After all, Mal. 3:1 prophesied that the Messiah would “come suddenly to his temple.”

Jesus was therefore tempted in the three main avenues along which temptation assails a man, and came out with flying colours. He controlled and overcame the flesh so well, that it is fatally easy to imagine he never had a battle with it. His battles were subjective, of course, and never got any further than quick fleeting impulses in the mind. He dealt with them so quickly and effectively, that sin never had a chance of showing its colours in a wrong move or action or statement on his part.

ANOTHER PERSON OR PERSONIFICATION OF SIN?

It is natural to wonder that if the devil who tempted Jesus was not some other person, why does it say he “came” to Jesus, “spake” to him, “took” him up a high mountain and into the holy city Jerusalem and “set” him on a pinnacle, and asked him to “fall down” and “worship” him, finally “departing” from him for a season?

When the way sin is personified in the New Testament is understood and appreciated, being presented as a personal malignant enemy who sets out to tempt, manipulate and master man, then this ceases to be a difficulty.

PROBLEMS IF TAKEN LITERALLY

But all sorts of problems are created if we take the temptation literally, and regard the devil as another person, especially a fallen angel. If the devil was a fallen angel, Jesus would know him, and this being the case, can it be seriously imagined that he would allow such a wicked person to lead, carry and remove him physically from place to place, miles across the wilderness to Jerusalem and up the pinnacle of the temple and up the steep slopes of a high mountain, before saying “no.”

It is important to remember that the temptation took place in the wilderness. The temple was not in the wilderness but in Jerusalem. And

there are no mountains in the wilderness (or anywhere else on earth), from which all the kingdoms of the world can be seen, let alone the glory of them.

SUBJECTIVE NOT OBJECTIVE

These facts strongly indicate that the temptation experiences of Jesus were subjective, i.e. in the mind, prompted by his own flesh nature as is the case with all other men. After all, Jesus was “tempted in all points like us” (Heb. 4:15). And we are certainly all aware of how quickly our minds can transport us to other places and give flashes of thoughts that appeal to the flesh.

Gal. 5:17 says “the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary to each other,” and in Christ’s temptation, we can see a conflict or “war” between the flesh and Spirit. (The word “war” is used in this respect in Jam. 4:1. 1 Pet. 2:11. This is what spiritual warfare is all about - a battle between the flesh and the Spirit).

NOT LITERAL PHYSICAL JOURNEYS

When all the facts are taken into account, it seems evident that Christ’s temptations did not involve literal physical journeys to a temple pinnacle and mountain. Each temptation was a short and brief struggle in Jesus’ mind, as is indicated in Lk. 4:5 where reference to one of them says it took place “in a moment of time.” i.e. it was a temporary, fleeting thought.

Jesus’ mind, in a moment of time, while meditating in the wilderness, transported him to certain vantage points, to consider options that were open to him. He would not have been human, had he not been capable of doing this.

Sin in the flesh, alias the devil, is personified in a very impressive way, and there is a good reason for this which has to do with the original temptation of our first parents through the prompting of the serpent.

BACK TO THE ORIGINAL TEMPTATION

Significantly enough, the three main avenues along which temptations tempt people, which were involved in Jesus’ temptation, were also involved in Adam and Eve’s temptation. Gen. 3:6 says that Eve “saw that the tree was good for food,” (“lust of the flesh”), “and that it was pleasant

to the eyes,” (“lust of the eye”), “and a tree to be desired to make one wise,” and to become as the gods, i.e. divine (“pride of life”).

Adam and Eve failed their test by yielding to temptation and sinning, bringing sin and death upon the world. But Jesus, as a “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45) dealt with the problem that the “first Adam” caused, and he did this by conquering the serpent, - i.e. sin in the flesh.

For this reason, sin in the flesh (devil) is very appropriately personified, as if it were the actual original serpent himself standing before Jesus seeking his downfall, so that we might see Jesus as the woman’s seed who was to come and bruise the serpent on the head.

RESIST THE DEVIL AND HE WILL FLEE

As all humans can testify, the impulses of the flesh come and go. A regular movement takes place, springing up from the subconscious, without conscious thought even being necessary. When they come, they stay and dominate our thinking unless we take authority over them and resist them with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And when we resist them, they “flee from us.” As James 4:7 says: “Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” As pointed out in a previous chapter, this statement is made in the context of human thoughts and desires. The temptation of Jesus was no different. The devil “came” to him, and “departed from him” as a result of him resisting with the word of God.

The aspect of departing or “fleeing” in relation to something abstract, is a common figure in Scripture. References are made to sorrow, sighing and death fleeing (Isa. 35:10. 51:11. Rev. 9:6). 1 Tim. 6:11 says “flee from covetousness” (i.e. lust). 2 Tim. 2:22: “flee from youthful lusts.” 1 Cor. 6:18: “flee from fornication.” In each of these cases we don’t imagine that the word “flee” means that lust is an actual person we literally run away from. And neither do we need to imagine that when Scripture says “resist the devil and he will flee from you,” that a literal person jumps out of our head or off our back, and runs away from us!

SERVING THEIR OWN LUSTS

The same applies to the devil’s request for Jesus to “fall down and worship” him. Jesus’ response “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve,” indicates that the proposition of the devil was that Jesus serve him instead of God.

Should anyone find it difficult to conceive how a person could serve and make a god out of the desires of his own flesh, the following Scriptures should be helpful: Tit. 3:3 refers to people “serving their own lusts.” Rom. 16:18 refers to some who “serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly.” Plp. 3:19 refers to some whose “god is their belly.”

Now, a “god” is worshipped and bowed down to, so how can a man do that to his own belly? Obviously we are not meant to take it literally. “Belly” signifies the appetite and carnal desire of the flesh. To serve and become slaves to such, is to make it our god.

In a previous chapter we saw how the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans personifies sin and speaks of it in terms of being a ruler and master, seeking to enslave us and make us surrender and submit (bow) to his desires and will.

When Jesus experienced this in his temptation, he quite appropriately put such thoughts in their place saying: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” In so doing, Jesus applied the principle of Jam. 4:7: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” He refused to be caught in “the snare” of the devil and “be taken captive” by him (2 Tim. 2:25-26).

THE KINGDOMS BELONG TO CHRIST

Confirmation that the devil who tempted Jesus was the prompting of sin in his own flesh is particularly evident in the statement that “all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them belongs to me, and I can give it to anyone I choose.”

There is absolutely no evidence anywhere in Scripture that God handed over the kingdoms of the world to a fallen angel, and gave him permission to give it to anyone else. Such a concept is so ridiculous, it is hardly worth addressing.

Jesus knew the Scriptures which taught “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof,” and “The most High God rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whoever He will,” and that He has never given it to rebel angels.

The only person God has ever promised to give the kingdoms of the world to and all glory, and the authority to share it with others, is Jesus himself. This is seen, for example, in Ps. 2:7-8: “The Lord has said to me, you are my son; this day have I begotten you. Ask of me, and I shall give you the nations for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.” In Jn. 3:35 and 13:3 we read that Jesus said “The

Father loves the son, and has given all things into his hand.” Rev. 11:15 declares that “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.” And in Rev. 2:26 and 3:21 Jesus makes it clear that he will grant all overcomers to sit with him in his throne (i.e. share his rule), and will give them power over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron. “We shall reign with him.” (2 Tim. 2:12). “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

Now, imagine if you were promised an estate by your father as your inheritance, and it has been signed and sealed in His will. Then someone you know to be a liar and deceiver, who does not even belong to your family, comes to you claiming the inheritance is his and offers to give it to you if you serve him. Such a claim would be so outrageous that it would be funny if it were not so serious. You would think the person was either joking or had gone mad.

GET REAL

The temptation would not be real. It would be no temptation at all. It would be more amusing than impressive. For a temptation to be real and a challenge and test of faith, it has to be feasible, plausible and credible. So we must interpret the temptation of Christ in a way that meets such requirements, otherwise we can end up making a farce of the whole account.

There was no one, besides Jesus himself, who could claim that the kingdom and glory belonged to him, and this is really the key to it all. In view of this, the subjective nature of the temptation is again made apparent, being a battle in Jesus’ own mind between the will of the flesh and the will of the Spirit - between doing things his own way and in his own time, or doing it God’s way and in His time.

The temptation could be paraphrased something like this: “All these kingdoms have been promised to me and are mine for the taking. I could take possession of them now for I have the power to do so.” It was a temptation to look after self and put self first - to take control of the kingdoms there and then, without denying himself and going to the cross first. It was a very appealing thought to the flesh which hates pain, suffering and dishonour. It was clearly a flesh-inspired temptation seeking to bring Jesus into subjection to its selfish and flesh centred ways. But the Spirit in Christ immediately rejected and crucified it before it could conceive and bring forth sin.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF DUALITY

There are other examples of this duality of flesh and Spirit contending with each other in Jesus' mind, i.e. situations where his own flesh produced the temptation, and the Spirit gave the answer, all without any other party being involved. For example, we read in Jn.12:27 that Jesus gave expression to a problem, saying, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" The flesh, which prefers to avoid and escape the cross gave the reply in these words: "Say, Father, save me from this hour?" "But the Spirit, or spiritual understanding responded by saying: "But for this purpose came I to this hour." And so, after this discussion (battle) between the flesh and Spirit (feelings and faith), Jesus, the son of God triumphantly declares: "Father, glorify Thy Name." i.e. "Not my will, but Thine be done." He crucified the flesh and made his decision to serve God and not the devil.

We see the same duality of flesh and Spirit contending with each other in Jesus' mind in the garden of Gethsemane where he prayed: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." It was a request to avoid the cross. But the Spirit was totally in charge of the flesh, as can be seen in the immediate rejoinder of Christ: "Nevertheless, not what I desire, but what You desire."

THE HUMAN EGO

This statement really expresses in a nutshell what the cross of Christ was all about. It was all about dealing with "I" - the human ego. ("Ego" is the Greek word which is translated "I"). Sin in the flesh is an ego-orientated, selfish, self-seeking problem. The original sin was, in fact, triggered off by the serpent's appeal to ego - to look after self - to not deny self anything - to be as the gods.

And so pride was birthed in the human spirit, and, as the saying goes, "Pride is the mother of all sins." How true! Pride wants to be the best and have the best, and this results in becoming resentful, envious and jealous of those who seem to be better and possess better things. This leads to bitterness and hatred, and hatred can end up in murder. Every evil negative attribute of the flesh has its root in pride.

Now, because Jesus came to deal with sin in the flesh, he had to meet and confront Mr. Ego, i.e. the urge to put self and self-interest and personal welfare before anyone and anything, including service to God. And the ultimate test is when that service demands death in the prime of

life in a very painful and ignominious way. Mr. Ego does not want to die! - Not that kind of death! That is the ultimate test of the “I” factor.

Survival is the strongest instinct and passion of the flesh, and the slow cruel death of crucifixion allowed full play for this instinct to rebel and seek escape from the cross. Death by stoning or the sword would be swift by comparison, but would not have allowed the same opportunity and scope for humility, submission and obedience to be exercised and displayed. Torture tests the spirit of a man; it tests the depth of his love and faith for his cause, and the courage of his convictions and commitments.

NOT MY WILL BUT THINE BE DONE

In suffering death for all men in order to deal the death blow to ego, it was necessary for the death to be a difficult one - one that would give the fullest possible play and scope for the human ego to assert itself and attempt to circumvent the death. Humble submission to that kind of death would mean victory over the fullest force that ego can muster.

This is what the cross was all about, perfectly expressed in those words of Jesus: “Not what I desire, but what You desire.” If you take the vertical letter “I” and cross it out by putting an horizontal line through it, you have a cross. And that is what Jesus achieved during his life and finally, once and for all on the cross. He denied his own will and desires which came from the flesh, and put God’s will first no matter what it cost. He humbled himself, making himself of no reputation, and was obedient all the way to his death upon the cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and given him a name above every other name.

Other men have died horrendous deaths, but with this difference: only Jesus could have called twelve legions of angels to his rescue. Other men have not had that choice and had to die whether they liked it or not. Jesus had the choice but did not take it because it was more important to him to die for God than live for himself.

THE VEIL REPRESENTED THE FLESH

No wonder the veil tore in the temple from top to bottom when Jesus died on the cross, opening up the way into the holy of holies, which represented heaven. The veil stood as a barrier, preventing free access to the most holy place, and we are told in Heb. 10:20 that it represented the flesh. Why? Because no one had been able to conquer the barrier of sin in

the flesh and therefore all sinned and died as a result. But when Jesus conquered sin, nailing it up in his body of flesh upon the cross, the veil was appropriately torn, opening up the way into full and complete fellowship with God.

COMPARING PETER'S SENTIMENTS

Coming back to the temptation of Jesus in which the devil's proposal involved avoiding the cross, it is interesting to recall that Peter had previously expressed similar sentiments. In response to Jesus telling the apostles that he had to die, Peter reacted quite vehemently by saying he did not accept that this had to be so, and virtually affirmed that it could be and should be avoided.

Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind me satan, for you are a stumblingblock to me, for your thoughts are not according to God's will, but man's" (Matt. 16:21-23). Jesus called Peter satan (adversary), because his thoughts were not according to God's will, but according to man's, i.e. the flesh, which wants to look after number one and avoid the cross. If Peter was called satan because of such thoughts, it should not be difficult to see why similar thoughts prompted by the flesh of Jesus are called "devil" in the temptation account.

Jesus was quite harsh with Peter and this could very well have been due to personal battles he was having himself over his forthcoming pain and suffering on the cross. It was hard enough coming to terms with it without his friends telling him it wasn't necessary, discouraging him from resigning himself to it. Jesus recognized the sentiments expressed by Peter and where they came from, and he knew how fatal it would be to entertain and patronize them, and therefore rebuked him. But he also resisted and rebuked with equal vehemence the thoughts of his own flesh.

ONE MORE EXAMPLE

Before concluding this chapter, one more example could be given of Jesus giving expression to something that was appealing to the flesh, but which was not according to the Spirit, causing him to refuse to do it.

It relates to when Jesus was seized by the authorities to be taken away to be crucified. Peter, who still could not see the need for the cross, came to the defence of Jesus with a sword, causing Jesus to say to him, after telling him to put the sword away, "Don't you know that I could call on my Father for help, and at once He would send me twelve legions

of angels?”

But Jesus knew that it would be wrong to call for help and have angels come and protect him from being hurt, and prevent the authorities from crucifying him. So he followed up his statement by saying: “But if I did that, how could the Scriptures be fulfilled which say that this is what must happen?” (Matt. 26:51-54).

Now, if the thought could pass through Jesus’ mind of angels coming down to bear him up so he could avoid being arrested and crucified, then he was just as capable of the thought of angels coming down to bear him up and save him from death if he leaped off the pinnacle of the temple - especially in view of the fact that he knew Scripture gave him assurance that “God shall give his angels charge concerning you: and in their hands they shall bear you up” (Ps. 91:11-12).

IF THOU BE THE SON OF GOD

Finally, a few comments on the words “If thou be the son of God,” which occur in all three of Christ’s temptations. It is important to understand that in saying this, Jesus was not doubting or questioning his divine sonship. It is a rhetorical question and means “Seeing you are the son of God.”

Compare Rom. 8:31: “If God be for us, who can be against us?” This means “Seeing God is for us,” because there was no doubt in Paul’s mind about God being with His people.

2 Kng. 1:10 records Elijah as saying: “If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven.” Elijah was not doubting or questioning if he was a man of God. He knew he was and this was evident when the fire fell.

The same is true of Jesus. At his baptism he heard the Father’s voice from heaven declare: “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.” Jesus knew he was the son of God and so do we, “and as many who receive him, to them he gives power to become the sons of God.”

* * * * *

CHAPTER TWELVE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

In the last two chapters, examples have been given of the word devil being used in the abstract sense, i.e. in relation to the sinful propensities of the flesh which tempt and lead into sin. In previous chapters, examples have also been given of the word relating to those who are ruled and controlled by those propensities, who become the embodiment and manifestation of them.

We have seen that Judas is a particularly good example of this, being called “devil” by Jesus (Jn. 6:70). Attention has also been directed to the fact that men and women are called diabolos (devil) in 1 Tim. 3:11. 2 Tim. 3:3. Tit. 2:3, due to being slanderers and false accusers. The word devil is used many times in the New Testament in this way.

PARABLE OF TARES

For example, the parable in Matt. 13:39 refers to the devil being an enemy who sowed tares in the field among the wheat. Tares refers to darnel which, while it is growing, looks like wheat, and cannot be distinguished from wheat till the latter stages of growth, when its grain becomes black, bitter and poisonous.

Jesus explained that the tares represent “the children of the wicked one,” i.e. the seed of the serpent - servants of sin - false teachers who masquerade as teachers of the truth, but who are a counterfeit of it, and who set up false forms of Christianity in the world (“field”), which, on the surface, appear to be true, but which, at the end of the world, at the harvest (judgement), will be seen to be false, and will go up in smoke like chaff. “The son of man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers” (v41 Revised Standard Version).

PARABLE OF SOWER

In the parable of the sower (Lk. 8:12), Jesus says “Those by the wayside are those who hear the word; then comes the devil and takes the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.” The devil here can be related to sin in the flesh which is anti-God, and generates unbelief in the heart. It has been responsible on many occasions for neutralising the gospel after it has been preached and reached the

hearts of people. Many can testify to the negative thoughts that have arisen in their heart as a result of responding to the word of God.

But the devil in this parable can also be related to a person - an unbelieving or anti-God person, who criticizes, condemns and belittles new found faith, seeking to discourage, undermine and destroy it, often resorting to false accusation and lies to do so. A good example of this can be seen in Act. 13 where reference is made to a false prophet attempting to turn men away from the message of faith that Paul was preaching. Paul therefore confronted him saying: "O full of all subtlety, you child of the devil (seed of serpent), you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease trying to turn the Lord's truths into lies?!"

EPH. 6:10-12

During New Testament times the church was constantly attacked by false charges, accusations and slander, referred to as the "fiery darts of the wicked" in Eph. 6:12. Such accusations came particularly from the civil and ecclesiastical governments and authorities who were opposed to the new Christian faith, as we read in the book of Acts. Many times, as Jesus warned would be the case, Christians were brought before magistrates and tribunals, and falsely accused, whipped and thrown into prison. Paul refers to this in Eph. 6:10-12:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

It is clear from this passage that the "devil" is one and the same as the "principalities and powers the rulers of the darkness of this world." So, if we can ascertain the identity of the principalities and powers, we will know who is referred to as the devil.

CONTRADICTIONS

Tradition maintains that the principalities and powers are fallen angels, but not only does Scripture not teach this, it creates a contradiction. Jude v 6 says the sinful angels did not keep their first estate, and the words "first estate" come from the same Greek word which is translated "principality" in Eph. 6:12. This means the angels "kept not" their principality. They lost it - it was taken away from them. It would

therefore be wrong to apply any principality passage to them.

Also, Eph. 6:12 refers to the principalities and powers, being in “high places.” But the angels that sinned were cast down to the lower regions of the earth where they were bound in chains till judgement. Rom. 8:38 makes a distinction between principalities and powers and angels: “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities or powers” Principalities and powers are clearly not angels.

A careful analysis of the words and their usage in Scripture reveals that “principalities and powers” relate to human rulers and authorities, not superhuman, which means the word devil has to be understood in the same light.

The word “principality” comes from the Greek word “arche” and means that which takes precedence - chief. It has to do with that which is primary, not secondary. The “principalities” are therefore the principal or primary rulers - the chief authority - the source of command and authorization.

The “powers” when used in connection with principalities, refers to secondary powers under the command and authorization of the principalities - delegated by them.

In Lk. 12:11 “arche” is translated “magistrates” instead of “principalities,” and refers to human rulers. The same verse also uses the other word “powers.” This is how it reads: “And when they bring you to the synagogues, and to magistrates (arche) and powers, take no thought how or what to answer.”

In Lk. 20:20 we read about the Jews wanting to hand Jesus over to the “power and authority of the governor” (Pilate). The word “power” is “arche” and relates to the power of man. Arche is also translated “rule” in 1 Cor. 15:24 and refers to the power of world leaders and governments which shall be subjugated at the second coming of Christ.

The Greek word translated “powers” is “exousia” and means “authority” in a general sense. It is translated “authority” many times in the New Testament in relation to human authority. (See Matt. 8:9 etc). It is also translated “jurisdiction” in Lk. 23:7 in relation to Herod. It is also translated “powers” in Rom. 13:1 where Paul says “Be subject to the higher powers.”

FURTHER EVIDENCE

Further evidence that principalities and powers relate to human governments and authorities and not fallen angels, can be seen in Tit.

3:1 where the church is exhorted to “be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready for every good work.” Reason alone dictates that Paul would not ask the church to be subject to fallen angels! The passage is self explanatory, telling us that principalities and powers relate to magistrates, who, in this case, are associated with “good work.” The “good work” refers to mundane secular demands like keeping law and order, taking taxes and tolls etc for the building and maintenance of roads and bridges etc from which everyone, including Christians, benefit. Paul’s words in Rom. 13:1-7 should be read in connection with this. Also 1 Pet. 2:12-15.

Eph. 3:10 also makes it clear that principalities and powers refers to human power not fallen angels. It says one of the functions of the church is to preach the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers. For obvious reasons, Paul would not be exhorting the church to try and convert rebel angels. If God was not prepared to convert them and excommunicated them, He wouldn’t expect the church to attempt it.

THE RULERS OF THE DARKNESS

In Eph. 6:12, the principalities and powers, alias the devil, are also referred to as “the rulers of the darkness of this world.” Some modern versions of the Bible, which are not translations of the original Greek manuscripts, but are merely human interpretations based on a vain traditional concept, give a very free and loose rendering of these words in Eph. 6:12. They are not worth the paper they are printed on, but because they pander to the prejudice of the popular doctrine of a fallen-angel devil, (not to mention other false doctrines), they sell by the millions and multiply the error and confusion.

Here is just one example: “For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies - the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world: against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world.”

The Revised Standard Version gives a more moderate and accurate translation of the statement relating to “the rulers of the darkness of this world,” rendering it as follows: “the world rulers of this present darkness.” This is certainly consistent with the fact that principalities and powers relate to world rulers. The “world” over which they rule is, of course, in “darkness” - a very common term used in the Bible to signify ignorance of God, being unenlightened by the light of His word which has

its centre in Christ, who is the true light.

Such is the world of which the rulers are in charge. They manage its affairs and make the policies which govern it. And it is the duty and responsibility of the church to reflect the light to this world, seeking to penetrate the darkness right up to the rulers themselves in high places.

THE DEVIL IS THE KEY

Having established that the “devil” in Eph. 6:11 relates to the “principalities and powers” and refers to human rulers of the world, we have a good basis to correctly interpret the rest of the passage. The key to it is really in the word “devil,” which means false accuser and slanderer. As pointed out before, the various governments and authorities in New Testament times were opposed to the Christians. This opposition came in various ways, particularly in the form of verbal attacks, shooting the fiery darts of false accusation and trumping up false charges. Attempts were made to malign the character of the Christians and pierce through it with the darts and arrows of calumny, to bring them and their cause into disrepute, not to mention the poisonous darts of false teaching and philosophy that was aimed at undermining and destroying the Christian faith and church.

WE WRESTLE NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD

But the opposition wasn’t only verbal. It got very physical, and physical attacks were made on Christians, as on Jesus, maiming the flesh and shedding blood. Carnal men with carnal weapons, using physical metal swords and spears, and wearing physical armour, attacked the Christian community in New Testament times, causing physical injury and death.

And so in Eph. 6, Paul addresses the question as to how Christians should react and respond to this? How should physical attack be handled? Should Christians clothe themselves in physical armour and take hold of a metal sword and attack the flesh of their opponents and shed their blood?

Paul says in v11-12: “Put on the whole armour of God so that you can stand against the trickery of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood ...” These words: “we wrestle not against flesh and blood” mean believers do not enter into physical combat. The Christian’s fight is not physical, but spiritual. For this reason, the “armour” that Paul says Christians must put on, is a spiritual and not a metal breastplate, shield,

helmet and sword. In Eph. 6:14-17 he says the breastplate is righteousness, the shield is faith, the helmet is salvation, and the sword is the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. By this word, that which is of the flesh is cut away and separated from that which is spiritual (Heb. 4:12).

TURN THE OTHER CHEEK

Throughout the New Testament it is taught by word and example that Christ's followers must not engage in fleshly struggles or use physical resistance or violence. Jesus himself did not physically resist arrest or crucifixion, and rebuked Peter when he attempted to do so by drawing a sword. He told him to put it away, warning that "he who takes up the sword will perish by the sword." Jesus taught his followers to turn the other cheek when physically assaulted and not retaliate, because revenge belongs to God and He will repay. "In meekness instruct those who oppose themselves" is Paul's instruction in 2 Tim. 2:25.

Maiming the flesh and shedding blood is the way carnal men fight their carnal battles and it is not the way of Christ. The Christian's fight or warfare is not against people but principles - false spiritual principles in particular. The fight or battle is therefore not against the physical person, but against the "spiritual wickedness" or "wicked spirit" of the person or system or government that causes the spiritual wickedness.

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT CARNAL

Paul addresses the same issue in similar words in 2 Cor. 10:3-5: "For though we walk in the flesh (i.e. live as physical beings), we do not war after the flesh (i.e. we do not engage in physical combat), for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, (i.e. physical), but divinely powerful for the pulling down of strongholds." "Strongholds" literally means castles or fortresses, but is used here figuratively to signify beliefs and arguments which people protect and defend and in which they put their trust and confidence, imagining they are solid and unshakeable.

This interpretation is confirmed by Paul's explanation which follows: "Casting down imaginations (i.e. false reasonings and arguments), and every high thing (proud obstacle) that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." In this statement, Paul again stresses that the Christian's battle against the

world in seeking to advance the teaching of Jesus Christ, is not against the flesh and blood or physical personage of people, but against the evil spirit of the carnal mind - the false imaginations, reasonings and arguments inspired by sin, which result in all forms of spiritual wickedness which oppose the saving truth which is in Christ Jesus.

The “devil,” therefore, in Eph. 6:11 can be seen in both the abstract and non-abstract sense. It can relate to the sinful propensities of the flesh which are “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked;” and it can relate to those who are controlled by those propensities.

The concept of “wrestling” against something abstract like the sinful propensities of the flesh is presented in Heb. 12:4 which refers to “striving against sin” i.e. struggling to get the mastery as in wrestling.

WICKEDNESS IN HEAVENLY PLACES

Eph. 6:12 says the spiritual wickedness against which Christians wrestle is in “high places.” This is simply referring to the “principalities and powers” - the “rulers,” referred to in Rom. 13:1 as the “higher powers.” These same principalities and powers are also referred to as being in “heavenly places” in Eph. 3:10, and it is clear that the reference is not to literal heaven itself, because the same verse states that it is the responsibility of the church to reach them and teach them the Gospel.

The worst spiritual wickedness committed by the principalities and powers was rejection and crucifixion of the son of God. The power of Rome, represented by Pilate, and the power of the Jews, represented by the high priest and the high court of the Sanhedrin, nailed him to the cross. They thought they had stripped Jesus of his power and influence and triumphed over him. This, indeed, would have been the position had Jesus never been raised from the dead.

But Jesus did rise from the dead and turned, what appeared to be defeat, into victory. The resurrection of Jesus disarmed and defeated the authorities and made a fool of them for trying to exterminate him. Instead of being exterminated, he rose from the dead stronger than ever, and was elevated to a position of power far above all principalities and powers in the world. He became “king of kings and lord of lords.” It was a devastating blow to the plans and aspirations of the principalities and powers.

PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS STRIPPED

Col. 2:15 relates to this: “And having stripped principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (i.e. the cross).

But the resurrection of Jesus was much more than just a victory over the Roman and Jewish powers. It was a victory over the underlying and motivating power behind those powers, which is sin in the flesh. Sin, as ruler, prince and god of the world, was energizing and inspiring these powers to bruise the head of Christ. Instead of accomplishing this, it only bruised his heel and ended up receiving a death-blow to its own head!

It is clear from all this that in order for Jesus to achieve the maximum victory over sin, not only did his death have to involve maximum pain, but the maximum power that sin could muster in its battle against him had to be mobilized to inflict it. This would not have been achieved if Jesus had been killed by order of some small-time local council in one of the remote towns in Judea, or by a skirmish involving a band of ruffians out in the wilderness. The death of Jesus could not be a low profile event involving low profile people. It had to involve high profile people and power so that his victory would be over the best and strongest sin could offer and muster. And this was certainly achieved due to the involvement of the principalities and powers.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN THE DEVIL - A ROARING LION

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

This passage of Scripture in 1 Pet. 5:8 is often quoted to support the concept that the devil is a fallen angel, but, as in all other cases, nothing is said in the statement to this effect at all. The reference to “walks about” certainly does not imply a supernatural being, and neither does the description “roaring as a lion.”

Tradition normally maintains that their fallen-angel devil glides and sneaks about silently and secretly, whispering lies and deceit in the ear, so softly that people do not realize he is present. But if he goes about like a “roaring lion,” then who could be caught off guard by him?

In reply to this it will be said that we are not meant to take the expression literally, but metaphorically. True! But this does not help the traditional view, because lion-like characteristics are ascribed in Scripture to men, not angels; certainly not fallen angels.

ROARING RULERS

Paul, for example, had an encounter with a roaring lion, but it was not a fallen angel. No, it was Alexander the coppersmith who ranted and raged like a roaring lion at Caesar’s tribunal, casting accusations against Paul and slandering his name. Paul’s account of this is in 2 Tim. 4:14-17; and he refers to being “delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”

In Ezk. 22:25, Israel’s wicked and unscrupulous rulers are referred to as “a roaring lion, tearing the prey, devouring men’s lives.” Pr. 28:15 reads: “As a roaring lion and a prowling bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people,” i.e. dangerous and destructive. Ps. 17:9-12 says the wicked who oppress “are like a lion that is greedy for prey, and as a young lion lurking in ambush.”

In 1 Cor. 15:32, Paul says: “Humanly speaking, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus.” In view of the fact that there was no amphitheatre at Ephesus and Paul, being a Roman citizen, would not be put in one, his words are clearly a metaphorical reference to the fierce opposition he encountered at Ephesus from ungodly men. And the language in 1 Pet. 5:8 which talks about the Christian’s adversary, the devil, walking about as a

roaring lion, fits into the same category. It simply refers to ungodly men, the serpent's seed, on the prowl, looking for ways and means of attacking and devouring Christians.

AN ADVERSARY IN LAW

Two points in particular in 1 Pet. 5:8-9 confirm this conclusion. The first is in the word "adversary" in the phrase "your adversary the devil." The Greek word means "an adversary in law, an opponent in a lawsuit." An example of this can be seen in Matt. 5:25 where the word "adversary" is the same and relates to meeting him in court.

In view of this, and the fact that "devil" means false accuser or slanderer, the words "your adversary the devil" in 1 Pet. 5:8 signify opponents of Christians who falsely accuse and slander them, and seek to bring them to court and file lawsuits against them to discredit and defame them and bring dishonour and disgrace upon the church.

During New Testament times the church was subjected to such attacks from time to time, and became victim to the unscrupulous stratagems of men in authority, i.e. the "principalities and powers." Any means possible was used to level charges of condemnation against Christians to obtain a conviction. For this reason, Paul in his epistles exhorts Christians to walk circumspectly, with honesty and integrity in the world lest they "fall into the condemnation of the devil." In connection with this, see 1 Pet. 2:12. 3:16. 4:12-16.

SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN

The Judaistic Jews were the worst offenders at accusing and condemning Christians and dragging them before their courts. Jesus refers to them as "those who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie, and are of the synagogue of satan." (Rev. 2:9. 3:9.).

During his ministry, Jesus warned his disciples about them, saying: "Be on your guard (i.e. "be sober, be vigilant" 1 Pet. 5:8), for they shall deliver you up to councils (i.e. "sanhedrims," the high Jewish court), and in the synagogues you shall be beaten; and you shall be brought before rulers and kings (principalities and powers) for my sake" (Mk. 13:9).

The book of Acts provides examples of both Jews and Gentiles hounding and harassing Christians, trying to undermine their work and bring convictions against them that would put them away in prison or their head on the chopping block. Their policy was to "walk about,"

following the Christian ministers and missionaries, seeking opportunity against them, like “a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.”

THE WILES OF THE DEVIL

This is why Paul, in Eph. 6, warned believers to be on their guard against “the wiles of the devil,” i.e. the tricky cunning unjust methods and means used to frame them. “We are not ignorant of his devices” Paul declared on another occasion. Paul could speak this way from experience, for he was once a chief offender, falsely accusing the followers of Jesus, “entering into every house, seizing men and women and committing them to prison.” (Act. 8:3).

The pagans and Roman magistrates were also guilty of maliciously accusing Christians at law, and the persecution under Nero and Diocletian are well documented. Like a roaring lion, these principalities in high places, through various powers delegated by them, walked about hunting down Christians to seize and devour with all sorts of terrible afflictions and persecutions.

For this reason, Jesus told his friends “not to fear the things which you are about to suffer; behold the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried” (Rev. 2:10).

When it is understood that the term “devil” refers to anti-Christian persecuting authorities, the statement is quite straightforward and makes sense. But the concept of a fallen-angel devil only complicates and confuses it. Who has ever been thrown into prison by a fallen angel?

AFFLICTIONS OF THE DEVIL

The second point in 1 Pet. 5:8-9 which indicates that the “devil” refers to human opposition, is the fact that it says he is responsible for the “afflictions” (persecution) of the church. This, in fact, is the means by which the devil sought to “devour” the church. Peter referred to the persecution and suffering of Christians in the previous chapter (4:12-17), caused by “those who do not obey the gospel of God” i.e. men, not angels.

Finally, in 1 Pet. 5:9, the apostle exhorts Christians to be steadfast to the faith in times of opposition, persecution and suffering. Concerning the devil, he says “Whom resist, steadfast in the faith.” That is, don’t let the enemy pressure you into renouncing your faith, not even if you have to lay down your life for it. However, as pointed out in a previous chapter, they were not to resist in a physical way by resorting to metal swords and

armour, for “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.”

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE DEVIL'S DISPUTE ABOUT THE BODY OF MOSES

“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, disputing about the body of Moses, did not bring against him an abusive accusation, but said, the Lord rebuke you.” (Jude v 9).

The traditional view of this, of course, is that the devil is a fallen angel, and the “body of Moses” is taken to mean the literal physical body of Moses after his death, i.e. his corpse. The “dispute” is believed to be over the destination of the body. The devil wanted to take it to hell, disputing that Moses’ failure to sanctify the Lord at Horeb’s rock, and subsequent failure to enter the promised land, made him eligible for hell. Michael wanted to take him to heaven, disputing that mercy rejoices against judgement, and rebuked the devil for being so unmerciful.

TOO MUCH ASSUMPTION

This interpretation is based entirely on assumption. Every point is mere supposition and conjecture for which there is no Scriptural support whatever. Not only that, but it actually contradicts tradition’s doctrine of life after death which is based on the immortality of the soul.

It is generally believed that the body is only a shell, a mortal coil from which the soul departs at death to either heaven or hell. It is therefore believed that the devil is not interested in the body or corpse, only the soul. So why would the devil want custody of Moses’ corpse? And why would Michael want it if only the soul goes to heaven?

The fact of the matter is that Scripture teaches that when Moses died, the Lord buried his body “in a valley in the land of Moab (Jordan today) but no one knows the place of his sepulchre to this day” (Deu. 34:6).

MOSES IS DEAD

Scripture teaches that Moses is dead. His body is buried in a secret place, chosen by the Lord, awaiting resurrection. Heb. 11:13 says the faithful in Old Testament times “all died in faith not having seen the promises, but saw them afar off.” Verses 39-40 say they did not receive the promise and will not receive it until everyone else does, which will be at the second coming of Christ. (The transfiguration scene involving Moses was a “vision” of this. Matt. 16:28 to 17:9. 2 Pet. 1:16-18).

NO NEED TO GUESS

What, then, is Jude talking about when he refers to Michael and the devil disputing over the body of Moses? Fortunately we do not have to guess, for Scripture compared with Scripture gives the answer. The key to it is in the words of Michael to the devil: “The Lord rebuke you.” These words are a direct quotation from Zech. 3:1, indicating that the incident Jude has in mind relates to that passage of Scripture.

This is what it says: “And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said to satan, the Lord rebuke you, O satan, even the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

Now, in view of the fact that this is the passage Jude has quoted from, the logical thing to do is make a comparison between the two, and see if there are any other links or parallels that throw light on the subject.

ZECHARIAH 3

Joshua the high priest.
The angel of the Lord.
Satan.
Resist.
The Lord rebuke you.
Filthy garments.
A brand plucked out of
the fire.

JUDE

The body of Moses.
Michael the arch angel.
The devil.
Dispute.
The Lord rebuke you.
Garments spotted by the flesh.
Pulling them out of the fire.

OBVIOUS PARALLELS

Now, in some of these items, the parallel is obvious. “Satan” can be equated with “devil” without difficulty. The “angel of the Lord” parallels with “Michael the arch angel,” and the words “the Lord rebuke you” are common to both. The references to unclean garments and snatching from the fire also connect. In view of this it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that “Joshua the high priest” corresponds with “the body of Moses.” The equation seems to demand it, but the question is, does it make sense? In what way could the high priest be equated with the body of Moses?

A key is supplied in 1 Cor. 10:2 which says all Israel were “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” Now, if those who are baptized

into Christ become the “body of Christ,” would it not be reasonable to conclude that those baptized into Moses could be called the “body of Moses”? If so, then Jude’s reference to the body of Moses would not be to a corpse, but to the nation of Israel as constituted under the old covenant given by God through Moses.

Significantly enough, as those baptized into Christ become his “church”, Moses is referred to in Act. 7:38 as “he who was in the church in the wilderness.” Moses was the leader of the Old Testament church!

THE PRIEST REPRESENTED THE PEOPLE

At this point someone may point out that the parallel between Zech. 3:1 and Jude v 9 equates the body of Moses with Joshua the high priest, not the nation of Israel. This is true, but what has to be appreciated is the high priest represented the nation. His ministry was for them, for which reason he wore stones on his shoulders and over his heart, engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of the nation.

That Joshua represented the people is indicated in Zec. 3 by the fact that the Lord’s reply is made, not on behalf of just Joshua himself, but “Jerusalem,” i.e. the Jewish community. Also, taking away the filthy garments from Joshua (v 4), is explained to mean removing the iniquity of the “land,” which involved the whole nation.

BIBLE HISTORY PROVIDES THE ANSWER

Who then, was the devil and satan and what was the dispute all about? The answer is found in the historical background to Zech. 3 which is recorded in the book of Ezra. This book tells us that Cyrus, king of Persia released Jews from Babylon to restore the temple at Jerusalem, enabling them to put into effect the sacrificial rituals and services ordained by God through Moses. At the time, Joshua the son of Josedech was high priest, and Haggai and Zechariah were the prophets.

The rebuilding and restoration of the temple no sooner commenced and opposition came from the neighbouring community of the Samaritans, referred to in Ez. 4:1 as “the adversaries,” which, of course, is what satan means, and should be kept in mind in relation to the reference to satan in Zec. 3.

The Samaritans offered to help the Jews build the temple, but they turned the offer down due to the Samaritans coming from an idolatrous background and having a hotch potch religion. The Samaritans were

offended by the rejection of their offer and embarked upon a terrorizing campaign designed to intimidate and discourage the Jews. The pressure and frustration got so bad, that work stopped for several years. Then the prophets Haggai and Zechariah stood up and prophesied, encouraging the people to resume work.

The Samaritans then challenged their right to rebuild the temple, claiming they did not have permission from the Persian king to do so. Ezra 6 informs us that the Samaritans then wrote an “accusation” to the king, giving a bad report and making false charges, hoping to persuade him to stop the work. This, of course, constituted them “devil,” because, as we have seen, devil means false accuser. And, significantly enough, the word “accusation” in Ez. 4:6 comes from the Hebrew word “sitnah,” which is a direct derivation from the Hebrew word “satan.”

While the Jews were waiting for a reply from the king, restoration of the temple continued, for the eye of their God was upon them. And it was during this waiting period that Zechariah received the vision of satan being rebuked by the Lord.

ONE VERSE COVERS THE SITUATION

Zech. 3:1 actually represents in one verse, the problem facing the Jews at the time and its outcome. Before a reply came back from the king of Persia, God told His people what the outcome would be, namely, the adversary would be rebuked, implying that the restoration work on the temple would be completed and successful.

And this is precisely what happened as is recorded in Ezra 6. The king of Persia searched the archives and found that Cyrus had authorized the restoration, so he wrote back to the Samaritans and rebuked them, telling them not to interfere, threatening them with very serious consequences if they did. This is what Zec. 3:1 and Jude v 9 are talking about when they refer to the Lord rebuking the devil or satan.

From this it is evident that the three men in Zechariah’s vision each represent a body of people. Joshua the high priest represents the Jewish nation, the “body of Moses,” seeking to restore the law of Moses in the land. Michael the archangel represents the angelic hosts under his command which kept their watchful eyes upon Israel. These hosts or armies are referred to in Haggai as the “Lord of hosts,” and in Zec. 4:10 as the “eyes of the Lord.” And satan, of course, represented the Samaritan community.

A COURT SCENE

Zec. 3:1 presents the situation which existed at the time, in the form of a court case. The angel is the judge, Joshua is the accused and Satan is the accuser, for which reason he stands at Joshua's right hand because that was the position in Jewish legal proceedings (Ps. 109:6-7).

Satan (the Samaritans), didn't want Jerusalem restored. The Babylonians had destroyed the city and temple with fire and the Samaritans wanted it to remain in its burned state. But the Lord had other ideas, and that is why he said: "The Lord rebuke thee O Satan, even the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this (Jerusalem) like a burning stick plucked out of the fire?"

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN JOB'S SATAN AND OTHER OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES

In the previous chapters attention has been focussed on the word “devil” which only occurs in the New Testament. Attention will now be directed to the word “satan,” which is not confined to the New Testament, but also occurs frequently in the Old Testament. In a previous chapter it was pointed out that “satan” is not an English word translated from the Hebrew or Greek, but a Hebrew word that has been transliterated, i.e. carried over letter by letter from the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek New Testament and also the English Bible. In Hebrew, “satan” is quite an ordinary word with a simple meaning, namely, “adversary” or “opponent” - one who withstands and resists. As in the case of the word “devil,” there is nothing in the word satan itself which signifies a fallen angel.

TRUE MEANING CONCEALED

Now, the word satan occurs thirty times in the original Hebrew manuscripts, but the translators of the King James Bible have only rendered it satan sixteen times. (Twelve times in the first two chapters of Job, once in 1 Chr. 21:1, once in Ps. 109:6, and twice in Zech. 3:1-2). In these four sections of the Old Testament, the word has been left untranslated.

On the other fourteen occasions, the word has been translated into its proper English equivalent. It has been translated “withstand” once in Num. 22:32, “resist” once in Zech. 3:1, and “adversary” or “adversaries” twelve times in Num. 22:22. 1 Sam. 29:4. 2 Sam. 19:22. 1 Kng. 5:4. 11:14, 23, 25. Ps. 38:20. 71:13. 109:4, 20, 29.

In all of these references, the same word is involved which is literally rendered “satan” on the other sixteen occasions. This has been concealed of course, by the translators who decided to not give the same word consistently throughout all the references, due to doctrinal prejudice. When they felt the word could apply to their fallen-angel devil, they left it untranslated, transliterating it as “satan.” Not content with that, they also gave it a capital “S” and treated it as a proper noun.

But, when it was obvious from the context that the word could not be applied to their fallen-angel devil, they were forced to do what they should have done in all other cases, namely, translate it into its equivalent

meaning in English, and not treat it as a proper noun. If the translators had consistently translated the word as “adversary” on every occasion, much less misunderstanding would have resulted.

GOOD BAD OR INDIFFERENT

By carefully examining the thirty places in the Old Testament where satan occurs, we discover that the adversary can be good, bad or indifferent. The word by itself does not have an evil connotation or relate to a sinister character. If a good person opposes and resists a wicked person, he becomes the wicked person’s adversary or “satan” as it is expressed in the Hebrew language. Conversely, if a wicked person opposes and resists a good person, he becomes the good person’s satan.

The same principle applies to the word “enemy,” which can also describe both a good and a wicked person. In Ex. 23:22 God says to Israel “I will be an enemy to your enemies, and an adversary to your adversaries.” Here, the righteous holy God Himself is called an “enemy” and an “adversary,” in relation to Israel’s enemies and adversaries, but that does not make Him wicked!

EXAMPLES OF SATAN TRANSLATED ADVERSARY

We will now look at some of the verses where satan has been translated “adversary,” demonstrating how the word has no affinity with a fallen-angel devil.

In 1 Sam. 29:4 we read that the Philistines did not want David to join them in battle against Israel “lest in the battle he be an adversary to us.” In Hebrew this literally reads “lest in the battle he be satan to us.”

2 Sam. 19:22 records David saying to certain captains of his army who had made life difficult for him: “You have become adversaries to me.” i.e. “You have become satan to me.”

We read in 1 Kng. 5:4 that Solomon, at the peak of his power, said “The Lord has given me rest on every side, so that there is no adversary” (satan).

This is particularly interesting because it says there was no satan during this period of Solomon’s reign. No wonder the king James translators gave the word “adversary” here instead of “satan,” because the concept of there being no satan at any time in history didn’t fit in with their theology of an ever active, tireless fallen angel, continually on the prowl.

The reference to there being no satan in Solomon's day simply refers to the fact that the surrounding enemy nations were subdued and in subjection to Israel. They were "bound." Their hands were tied. They were unable to make war against Israel.

SATAN BOUND

This Scripture is helpful in connection with Rev.20 which refers to the dragon, called "satan," being bound during the millennial reign of the "greater than Solomon" - Jesus Christ. As pointed out in a previous chapter, the dragon represents a coalition of anti-Israel nations which will be "bound with chains," i.e. subdued by Christ at his second coming and kingdom.

Towards the end of Christ's millennial reign, the divine restraint on sin and rebellion will be lifted, enabling rebellious hearts to be manifested, giving the flesh one last opportunity to assert itself and defy Christ's rule, resulting in a dramatic and decisive judgement on all flesh, giving a grand finale to the millennium, resulting in God becoming "all in all."

SATAN LOOSED FROM PRISON

This rebellion resulting from the lifting of divine restraint is expressed in Rev. 20 in symbolic terms of the dragon being loosed from his prison (chains). And a similar thing happened at the end of Solomon's reign, although for quite a different reason and with a different outcome.

We read in 1 Kng. 11:14 that "the Lord stirred up an adversary (satan) unto Solomon." Reference is made here to the enemy nation of Edom, on the south-east border of Israel. During Solomon's reign, this nation, along with all others around Israel, was subdued and in subjection to Solomon's rule, resulting, as we have seen, in there being "no adversary" i.e. no satan. But the Lord lifted the restraint and "stirred up an adversary" (satan), i.e. Edom. Up until this time, Edom was confined and restricted - kept in "chains" so to speak. Then the Lord "loosed him out of prison."

1 Kng. 11:23 goes on to say that "God stirred up another adversary (satan) against Solomon." "Another satan!" How would tradition interpret this? The passage goes on to explain that it refers to "Rezon," who was king of Syria. Verse 25 says he was "an adversary" (satan) to Israel all the days of Solomon."

Reference has already been made to the satan in Zech. 3:1 showing that he also refers to men who resisted and opposed God's people and their work, namely the Samaritans.

Other examples of satan being translated "adversary" and referring to men are in Ps. 38:20. 71:13. 109:4, 6, 20, 29.

AN HOLY ANGEL CAN ALSO BE SATAN

It should be quite evident from all this, that satan is not the name of any particular person, but simply a term or title used to describe anyone who is an adversary to another. And it is also clear that one does not have to be sinister or sinful to be referred to by the word, as is evident in the case of David being referred to as satan by the Philistines.

This is further demonstrated by the fact that even a righteous holy angel due to resisting and opposing a person, is referred to as that person's satan. We see this in Num. 22:22 where we read that God's anger was aroused because the prophet Balaam went on a journey he had been told not to take, "and the angel of the Lord stood on the road as his adversary" (satan). Verse 32 says the angel said to Balaam: "I went out to withstand you." The words "to withstand you" are "satan" in the Hebrew text, and literally mean "to be satan." The marginal reference in the King James translation says "to be an adversary to you."

Here, then, is a case of an angel being satan - a supernatural satan! But it is far removed from the fallen-angel concept.

With these thoughts in mind, we turn to 2 Sam. 24:1: "The anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, and He moved David to number Israel." 1 Chr. 21:1 is a parallel account of this and says "Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel."

By comparing these two parallel accounts, we see that what one attributes to the Lord, the other attributes to satan. 2 Sam. 24:1 says the Lord moved David to number Israel, and 1 Chr. 21:1 says satan did it. This either means the Lord was satan, or He used an adversary to do it. Either view could be correct. But, whichever view we take makes no difference for it amounts to the same thing, namely, that it was the Lord's will and purpose for David to be provoked into numbering Israel. Why else would 2 Sam. 24:1 say the Lord moved David to do it?

In traditional circles where it is believed that satan refers to a wicked fallen angel, it would almost be regarded as blasphemy to suggest that the Lord Himself and His holy angels can be called satan. But once we understand the true meaning of the word and see how it is used in

Scripture, we get a completely different perspective of it.

JOB'S SATAN

Let us now turn to the references to satan in the book of Job. Chronologically, the book of Job precedes all the others we have looked at so far where the word satan occurs. In view of this, if the satan in Job refers to a fallen angel, would it not seem rather odd that from that time on, throughout the rest of the Old Testament, all the other references to satan never refer to a fallen angel? This being the case, surely suggests we should not be too quick to assume that Job's satan is a fallen angel.

The book of Job starts off by telling us that Job was a righteous man and very wealthy and influential. Then, "on a certain day, the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and satan came also among them. And the Lord said to satan, where have you been? Satan answered the Lord, saying, here and there in the earth. Have you considered my servant Job, the Lord asked? There is no one on earth as faithful and good as he is. He worships me and is careful not to do anything evil. Satan replied: Would Job continue to worship you if he got nothing out of it? You have always protected him and his family and everything he owns. You bless everything he does, and have given him enough cattle to fill the whole country. But now, suppose you take away everything he has, he will curse you to your face. All right, the Lord said to satan, everything he has is in your power, but you must not hurt Job himself. So satan departed."

The following verses reveal that Job suffered total disaster. He lost his children, servants and livestock. But, in spite of this, Job retained his integrity and did not sin by cursing God. Sometime later, the "sons of God" presented themselves again before the Lord, and satan also came with them to present himself (Job. 2:1).

"The Lord said to satan: Have you considered my servant Job? You moved me against him to destroy him, but he is still as faithful as ever! Satan replied: A man will give up everything in order to stay alive. But suppose you hurt his body, he will curse you to your face. So the Lord said to satan, very well, he is in your power, but you are not to kill him. Then satan left the Lord's presence and smote Job with grievous boils all over his body, from head to foot. His wife said to him: Are you still going to remain faithful? Curse God and die. But he rebuked her and refused to revile God."

DIFFICULT TO APPLY TO FALLEN ANGEL

These events are recorded in the first two chapters of the book of Job, in which the word “satan” occurs fourteen times, and the question is, of course, who is this satan? Naturally, tradition says he is a fallen angel, but the details recorded in the book of Job in relation to him do not line up with this.

For example, the references in Peter and Jude's epistles to the sinful angels say they were “cast down to hell, delivered into chains under darkness, reserved for the judgement of the great day.” But this is clearly not the position of satan in the book of Job! There is nothing “fallen from heaven” and imprisoned about him. Quite the opposite! He has free access to the throne of God, and ascends there with other angels to present himself and give his report.

Is it conceivable that an angel, banished from heaven for sin and rebellion, could freely return whenever he felt like it? Even the church does not allow those who are excommunicated to do this. Trouble makers are not allowed to just roll up as they please if they have been put out for being divisive. Various Scriptures make it clear that God would not allow the wicked to penetrate and infiltrate His holy courts. Ps. 5:4-5 says “Evil may not sojourn with Thee.” Hab. 1:13: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.” Matt. 6:20: thieves cannot break into heaven. Matt. 5:8: only the pure in heart can see God. Rev. 22:15: liars and deceivers are not allowed entrance into the city of God.

A MOCKERY

It is really a mockery to suggest that a maligning monster such as tradition's fallen-angel devil, would be allowed to accompany the holy angels up to heaven and stand before God in all his filthy rags of deception and sin, and put propositions to Him and even induce Him to hurt one of His finest servants. Can it honestly be conceived that Almighty God would be interested in what such a diabolical creature's opinion was of Job, let alone ask him?

The Bible teaches that God never listens to the requests and propositions of sinners and wicked rebels, let alone ask for them and act upon them! Ps. 66:18 says: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Jn. 9:31 says: “Now we know that God does not listen to sinners; only those who worship Him and do His will.”

Pity help us if some evil carnal person who is jealous of us or hates

us, and wants to see us hurt, can talk God into hurting us! This, basically, is what tradition's interpretation of Job's satan amounts to, and is really quite bizarre. It casts a grave reflection on God's wisdom, righteousness and intelligence, and has been a major stumblingblock preventing many people from becoming believers.

JOB'S SATAN WAS AN ANGEL

Now, there can be no doubt that the satan in Job was an angel - a supernatural being, because the evils he was permitted to inflict upon Job could only be done by such a being, not an ordinary human being. The evils involved control over nations (the Sabeans and Chaldeans 1:15.17); control over lightning (1:16); control over the wind (1:19); control over disease (2:7).

Now, Act. 5:32 teaches that the supernatural power of God is only given to those who "obey God," i.e. those who use it for His glory, to promote truth and righteousness. This is why Jesus was sent out into the wilderness to be tested, after receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why Simon the sorcerer was not allowed to possess or transmit the power, because his heart was not right with God. This is why the Psalmist prayed: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me," otherwise he knew that God would cast him from His presence and take His holy Spirit away from him. (Ps. 51:10-11).

Examples have already been given in a previous chapter of men possessing the power of God while their heart was right with God, but losing it when they disobeyed or turned away from God. Samson and Saul are two cases in point. God's power, being holy, i.e. "Holy Spirit," is only given to "holy" (sanctified) people to promote holy work and purposes. If a possessor of it rebels and turns away from God, it is impossible for him to retain possession of it. It would be withdrawn. This would certainly be the case with rebel angels, because God is not a respecter of persons and does not have double standards. The concept of the Holy Spirit indwelling and empowering unholy spirits (angels) is ludicrous.

SATAN'S POWER IS GOD'S POWER

Now, whoever satan is in the book of Job, one thing is quite clear: his power is God's power. He had no power of his own to bring misfortune on Job. His power was derived from, and delegated by God. It was not independent of God or unlimited, but dependent on God and

controlled by Him. If not, i.e. if satan was an independent source of supernatural power, then he would be a God - a rival God. The Bible, of course, teaches the doctrine of monotheism - one God - one source of supernatural power, and any doctrine which teaches or implies more than one God is polytheism - the false doctrine of the pagans who had a number of good and evil rival deities battling for the souls of men.

Proof that Job's satan had no power of his own and could only do what God allowed him to do and no more, is quite apparent in the narrative. Before he laid a finger on Job, he had to get God's permission to do so. He was not a law to himself. He was not free to do as he pleased, and this is a very different concept from what tradition teaches in its doctrine on the devil.

Now, at first, God told satan he was allowed to put forth his hand and touch Job's possessions. This was all God permitted at that stage, and satan could do no more. He was unable to touch Job's body at this stage because God said "You must not hurt Job himself." Then, on the second occasion, the Lord said to satan: "Behold, he is in your hand, but you must not kill him."

It is also significant that satan was only allowed to touch the outward things of Job, i.e. his possessions and outward person (physical body). Satan was not allowed to touch Job's mind. He was not allowed to inject evil ideas and desires into Job's mind and manipulate his thoughts and emotions. In this respect, Job's satan is fundamentally different from tradition's satan, who is supposed to put sinful desires into peoples' minds.

GOD WAS RESPONSIBLE

Job's satan, then, was governed and directed by God throughout Job's whole ordeal, and could only do what God permitted, and was powerless to go beyond that. This being the case means God was responsible for all of satan's actions. This presents an entirely different perspective from the traditional view, which maintains that satan refuses to obey God and works against Him, trying to frustrate and negate His purposes on earth.

But if satan was a free agent, why didn't he simply go ahead under his own steam and do his worst to Job, without going up to heaven first to get God's permission, and be bound by God's restrictions and restraints?

Throughout the book of Job it is recognized and acknowledged many times that God was responsible for Job's woes. There is not a single

reference in which the blame is levelled against satan. Satan is only referred to in the first two chapters of Job and then disappears. No reference is made to him in the other forty chapters. But statement after statement occurs throughout those chapters attributing Job's calamities to God.

Job did not react to the first series of calamities by saying "satan has been getting at me lately and has been giving me a hard time." Neither did he say: "I've had enough of these satanic attacks; I'm going to take authority over them and not put up with any more of this treatment." No! Job said: "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

God's words to satan: "You move me against him," also indicate that the power and authority to afflict Job came from God. Satan proposed the afflictions and God put them into action by allowing them to be implemented by His power. He did a similar thing to Israel, as we read in Ps. 89:40 "Thou (God) hast broken down all his (Israel's) hedges; Thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin"

SATAN NOT BLAMED

When Job was struck with boils, his wife didn't say: "Why do you let satan get at you like this? Take authority over him; rebuke him and claim healing in the name of the Lord." No! She knew the power of God was behind it. But she was a carnal woman and had a carnal reaction. She said: "Curse God and die."

Job didn't react saying: "You foolish woman, you shouldn't blame God; He never creates evil, only good. Satan is responsible for this; he's the cause of all this evil." No! Job said: "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Job again directly attributed his affliction to God, not some diabolical enemy.

Job 19:21 records these words of Job to his three friends: "Have pity upon me, O my friends, for the hand of God has touched me." Many more verses throughout the book of Job could be quoted in which the same emphasis is made. At the very end of the book in the last chapter, we read that Job was finally "comforted over all the evil that the Lord had brought on him" (42:11).

These references to evil coming from the Lord confirm Isa. 45:7: "I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things."

It is interesting to note that in Job. 42:7-8 the Lord reprimanded Job's three friends for not speaking that which was right about God, and prior to that, Job was rebuked for speaking rashly against God. But it is significant that there is no reference to the Lord rebuking a fallen angel for not speaking right about Himself and Job.

AN ANGEL NOT A HUMAN

With all these thoughts in mind, it seems clear that Job's satan was an angel, not a human. Who else but an angel could accompany to heaven other angels, referred to as "sons of God" (1:6. 2:1). (The only other reference to "sons of God" in the book of Job is in 38:7 and clearly applies to angels). Job 2:1 says "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord."

Angels are the eyes of the Lord - His "watchers," commissioned to go to and fro throughout the earth watching what is going on and reporting back to Him. "Satan" in the book of Job obviously participated in this ministry with the other angels, because the statement in Job 2:1 says he came with them to present himself before the Lord, and the Lord asked him for a report.

Now, we have already seen that an angel doesn't have to be fallen or sinful just because he is called "satan." The word simply means "adversary," and can be applied to an angel if he takes an adverse stand against someone. We saw this in relation to the angel which adversely affected Balaam, causing his foot to get crushed against a wall by his donkey.

"Satan" is not an angel's name, but simply a title, as in 1 Chr. 21:1 where we read: "and satan stood up against Israel" Instead of "satan" it should read: "The adversary." The angel is given this title because it describes his ministry and mission, which is to take up an adverse position in relation to someone.

As we have already seen, this principle also applies on the human level, when the word is used in connection with men. In Zech. 3:1 for example, the title "satan" is applied to the Samaritans, because they adversely affected the Jews. Instead of being called by their name, they were given the title which was descriptive of their position.

Some may feel that Satan in the book of Job must have been wicked, because he wanted to hurt Job. But if that is the case, where does that place God who allowed, implemented and took responsibility for it? We

can be sure of one thing: had God not seen any good arising out of Job's affliction, He would never have allowed Himself to be moved into implementing it. And He certainly would not have afflicted Job just to satisfy the ungodly desires or morbid curiosity of someone, be he man or angel.

ANGELS ARE NOT OMNISCIENT

Satan is simply one of God's messengers who questioned God's dealings with his servant Job. The reason he questioned it is because God asked for his opinion and invited comment. If the messenger's opinion must be interpreted to mean he lacked full understanding of the ramifications of God's dealings with Job, that would not create a problem, because it is made clear in the Bible that the angels, although immortal and sinless, are not omniscient. They don't know everything. Only God is omniscient.

Angels have certain limitations to their knowledge and understanding of God's ways and purposes. They only know what God chooses to reveal to them, and experience an increase of spiritual understanding as they serve God, as indeed all Christians will, who attain to immortality and become equal with them.

Evidence of the angels' limited knowledge can be seen in a statement made by Jesus when, speaking about the day of his second coming, he said "no man knows the date, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the son, but only the Father" (Mk. 13:32).

We also read in 1 Pet. 1:12 that angels had a desire throughout the ages to understand the prophecies concerning Messiah's suffering and glory. The full significance of these things was withheld from them till the time arrived for the gospel to be preached. Up until then, it was an obscure and hidden purpose to them as well as men, and they, along with all men, had to exercise faith and hope in God to reveal it.

In Rev. 5:2-4 no angel in heaven was able to open the book in God's hand. All lacked knowledge and understanding of its contents and had to wait for Jesus, the lamb of God, to open it before the contents could be revealed to them. Even Jesus himself lacked knowledge of the contents until he took the book from his Father's hand and opened it.

In fact, the whole book of Revelation was, as we read in 1:1, a revelation given by God to Jesus to show him future things. "Revelation" means disclosure of knowledge not previously known, which clearly teaches that Jesus himself, even in his highly exalted glorified position at

the right hand of his Father, is not omniscient, and only knows what his Father reveals to him.

INDIVIDUALITY OF THOUGHT

In view of the fact that the Lord asked satan for his opinion about Job, it is evident that angels are not mere machines or robots that obey God without thought, reason or initiative. Although they are God's messengers and "do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word," they are not stereotyped in their service. They have individuality of thought and expression, which may account to some degree for the tremendous variety and variation of design in God's natural creation, in which they could very well have been involved and taken part.

An example of this individuality of thought among the angels can be seen in 1 Kng. 22:19-22. This passage records how the Lord asked His angels for suggestions on how to eliminate the wicked king Ahab. One angel said one thing and one said another. Various angels had different methods of approach, indicating individuality of thought and expression. All would implicitly obey the will of God and not rebel against it, but would adopt different procedures to accomplish it.

Putting these two factors together, i.e. that angels have limitations to knowledge and understanding of God's purposes with mankind, plus the fact that they have individuality of thought and expression, helps us appreciate how one could think that Job was good because he reaped rich rewards from God for being so, and that he may not be such a good man if suddenly everything went bad for him and God took it all away from him. If there is a problem accepting that one of God's holy angels could move Him to give Job a severe testing, there is surely more of a problem believing that a wicked sinful angel could influence God this way!

SOME MERIT IN SATAN'S SUGGESTION

As it turned out, the sequel to Job's affliction reveals that he came dangerously close to doing what satan suggested he might do. Although Job never went so far as to curse God to His face, his wife said he should, and as his pain persisted, his integrity faltered, and he ended up uttering some rash words and some strong complaints. He claimed God was mean, cruel and unjust. He cursed the day he was born and spoke in terms of God not knowing what He was doing by bringing him into the world.

Under stress of bodily affliction and repeated false accusation and condemnation from his so-called “friends,” his confidence in the justice of God was undermined and waned, and he ended up justifying himself rather than God. He insinuated that God was unwise and unjust. Knowing that God was responsible for his sufferings and afflictions created this problem for him. Had he believed in tradition’s satan and had him to blame, he would not have had that problem.

Strong indictments were therefore uttered by God against Job as we read in chapters 38 to 40. God accused Job of being a “faultfinder,” and said: “Dare you discredit my justice and deny that I am just, or put me in the wrong and condemn me that you may be right and justified?” Job replied: “Behold, I am vile I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

A PURGING PROCESS

The whole affliction was a time of divine trial in which a purging and purifying process took place, bringing to the surface a spirit of pride and self righteousness which had been very deep and hidden in Job’s life. It was a period during which God was plumbing and revealing the depths of Job’s heart. Job himself recognized this and confessed it, saying, “When He has finished testing (not “punishing”) me, I shall come forth as gold” (23:10).

Job acknowledged that his whole ordeal was a divinely ordained trial designed to purify him of some dross and develop him, not an attack from a diabolical devil. Job knew that at the end of his experience he would come out a better and more mature man. “All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose” is how Paul puts it in Rom. 8:28. Job was “perfected through suffering,” and ended up with a faith that is “much more precious than gold which perishes.”

A SUGGESTION

Iwould like to conclude this chapter by making a suggestion. It is possible that the satan in the book of Job is an angel specifically appointed by God to execute affliction, calamity and disaster. There is no doubt that God does create affliction and calamity, either as a test of faith or punishment for sin, and there are many examples of this in Scripture. And it is also evident that He executes this work through an angel.

“Satan” would be a fitting and appropriate title for such an angel, in view of the adverse position he is commissioned to take against people. He could, in fact, be the leader of a particular squadron or company of angels appointed for this particular task or ministry.

In connection with this, it is interesting to note that in Zech. 6, angels are represented by horses and chariots, and the horses are different colours. There are black ones as well as white ones, and the colour describes the angels’ mission, not nature! The black ones could be “satan’s” squadron!

In relation to this we go back to 1 Chr. 21:1 which refers to satan taking an adverse stand against Israel and provoking David to number Israel. Then, in v 15, we read that God sent an angel to “destroy” the Israelites at Jerusalem.

When God brought Israel out of Egypt He warned them with these words: “Behold, I send an angel before you, to guard you on the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him and obey his voice; provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions: for My name is in him. But if you shall indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and an adversary to your adversaries.” (Ex. 23:20-23).

Putting it in modern terms, this angel was God’s “hit man” - one of heaven’s “heavies” - an adversary to God’s adversaries who inflicted adversity when necessary.

Israel didn’t heed the warning and suffered as a result: “they were destroyed by the destroyer” (1 Cor. 10:10). It is put like this in Ps. 78:49: “God cast upon them the fierceness of His wrath, anger, and indignation by sending evil angels among them.” Modern translations render “evil angels” as “messengers of calamity” or “destroying angels.” These are the angels God uses to create the evil referred to in Isa. 45:7, and could very well be signified by the black horses in Zech. 6.

As pointed out, the affliction that angels inflict is either as a punishment for sin or a test of faith and obedience. The apostle Paul experienced this; and was able to affirm: “I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:38).

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN SATAN DURING THE INTER-TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

In the preceding chapters it has been shown that from Genesis to Malachi, (the whole Old Testament period, covering four thousand years), there is no reference to satan being a fallen-angel devil. There are, however, references to holy and righteous angels being called satan, due to being used by God to be an adversary and cause affliction.

This being the case, how do we account for the change in concept from satan being an holy angel to satan being an unholy fallen angel.

Pear's encyclopaedia makes this interesting observation: "The satan of the Old Testament was first regarded as one of God's servants, but when the Jews returned from their captivity (Babylon), satan had become identified with Ahrim." (Ahrim was the Persian's spirit or god of evil, who was in continual conflict with Ahura Mazda, the god of good.).

Pear's encyclopaedia goes on to say: "The conception of a supreme source of evil took place among the Jews during their sojourn in Babylon under the influence of Zoroastrianism, a religion in which the struggle between the two spirits, good and evil, reached its height in the imagination of the ancient world." The encyclopaedia then goes on to point out that originally both good and evil were ascribed to one and the same power alone (God), but division into God and the devil developed later.

TWO GODS OR ONE GOD?

Zoroastrianism was the religion of the ancient Persians, preached by Zoroaster, a Persian, during the 6th century B.C. He taught that there was a constant conflict between Ahura Mazda, God of light and good, and Ahrim, God of darkness and evil. Although Zoroaster eliminated the many gods of the pagans, and reduced them to just two major rival deities, it was still polytheism.

Significantly enough, the statement in Isa. 45:7 that God creates both good and evil, forms part of a prophecy in which Cyrus, a Persian king is being addressed. Being a Persian, he believed that good and evil came from two separate and mutually antagonistic supernatural sources. But God refutes this concept, saying: "I am the Lord and there is none else; there is no God beside Me I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things" (Isa. 45:1-7). In this

statement, God indignantly repudiates the idea of a supernatural rival. He alone is responsible for both good and evil.

“Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?” (Amos 3:6). Because of sin, the Lord said to David: “I will raise up evil against you” (2 Sam. 12:10-11). In Jer. 21:10 we read about God setting His face against the city of Jerusalem “for evil and not for good” because of sin. 1 Sam. 16:14 speaks about an “evil spirit from the Lord” coming upon Saul.

INFLUENCED BY PAGAN NATIONS

Coming back to the point that Pear’s encyclopaedia made about satan being regarded as one of God’s servants in the Old Testament, but becoming identified with the Persian’s god of evil by the Jews who returned from Babylon: Funk and Wagnall’s New Encyclopaedia also makes the point that the belief in a supreme spirit of evil in opposition to God, “developed gradually in Hebrew theology and was affected by extranational influences” (i.e. the influences of other pagan nations such as Babylon, Persia, Greece).

This same encyclopaedia also says: “Moral evil was regarded as, properly, the act of man. Physical evil or misfortune, on the other hand, was interpreted as of divine origin, a punishment for sin inflicted by a just and holy God, who, logically, was the source of all calamity. The angels of Scripture, who foretold and executed God’s will, were considered the instruments of physical, never moral evil. The concept of an angel capable of moral evil, first occurred after the Hebrews’ contact with the Babylonians.”

The reference to “after the Hebrews’ contact with the Babylonians” refers to the period after the Old Testament, when the Apocrypha was written. The Apocrypha is a collection of Jewish books, written during the four hundred year period between the Old and New Testament. These books were not originally written in Hebrew, and, although they are included in the Greek Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, they were not regarded as genuine by the Jews, and were excluded from the canon of Scripture by the Reformation. All Protestant translations of the Bible have eliminated these writings.

Funk and Wagnall’s encyclopaedia continues by pointing out that “In the Apocrypha, which reveals both Babylonian, Persian and Egyptian influences, the older Hebrew doctrine that misfortune comes from the Angel of Jehovah, disappears, and demons or evil spirits are for the first time mentioned as the authors of calamities During the period

immediately preceding the birth of Jesus, the Hebrew concept of angels as well as demons and the devil was modified and influenced by Persian Zoroastrianism. The idea of spiritual hierarchies and orders and names of specific spirits and demons are drawn from the Persian system”.

THE ROOTS GO BACK TO THE EXILE

Hastings Bible Dictionary agrees, saying: “The Jewish exile, covering the larger part of the sixth century B.C. and the close of the seventh, wrought a great change (i.e. in thinking from the original Old Testament concept of satan). The roots of the conception of fallen national deities may be found in the influences of the exile.”

The World Book Encyclopaedia puts it in a nutshell: “In the Old Testament, satan is not God’s opponent. Instead, he searches out peoples’ sins, and accuses humanity before God. In the apocrypha, satan is the author of all evil, and rules over a host of angels.”

So then, the general consensus of opinion of these and other encyclopaedias, is that as a result of pagan influences during the exile, the Jews abandoned the Biblical concept of satan being an holy angel in heaven, appointed by God to execute adversity, and changed him into an evil wicked spirit. Ahirom, the Persian’s supreme spirit or god of darkness and evil, became the Jewish satan, and ultimately Christendom’s satan.

Knowing the deceitfulness of the human heart, it is not hard to understand how this transition of human thought took place. The ease with which man believes in evil unearthly powers, invisible ghosts and spooks, working against him, is well documented throughout history.

The Babylonian and Persian influence was very strong during the Jewish exile, and the references to the devil and satan in the Apocryphal books clearly reveal that the pagan concept of evil had been assimilated by the Jews. During New Testament times, the current Jewish belief was that satan was a supreme evil spirit in charge of a whole squadron of lesser evil spirits, called “demons,” which tempt people into sin and afflict them with mental and physical disorders. All the details of the pagan concept became part of Jewish thought and passed into their everyday language and speech.

DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT ENDORSE THE OLD TESTAMENT SATAN?

The question is, therefore: when the New Testament uses the word “satan,” is it endorsing the pagan concept adopted by the Jews as a result of exile in Babylon, or does it endorse the original Old Testament concept? Does the New Testament, like the Apocrypha, conflict with the Old Testament in this area of major Bible doctrine, or is it consistent and harmonious? As we shall see, and as could be expected, there is no conflict between the two. The New Testament endorses the Old Testament.

What has caused some confusion is the fact that some of the New Testament references to devil and satan use terms and expressions that were characteristic of the pagan view, like “Beelzebub,” “demons,” “prince of the world,” “prince of the power of the air” etc. But this was to be expected, because such terms and expressions had worked their way over the centuries into the everyday language, and had become part of the very fabric of their speech.

But the use of contemporary colloquial terms does not necessarily imply belief in the false ideas that originated them. For example, we freely use the word “lunatic,” which literally means “moonstruck” and originated in a superstition that the influence of the moon made people mad. But our use of the word is not an endorsement of that superstition.

It is particularly significant that although the New Testament uses terms and expressions current at the time in relation to satan, there are no positive assertions endorsing the pagan concept as in the apocryphal writings. Intermingled with those terms and expressions are statements which make it clear that the New Testament teaching on the subject is the same as the Old Testament.

I would even go so far to suggest that the New Testament writers deliberately did this in order to neutralize pagan associations and create the right associations. For example, in Act. 5:3, Peter says: “Why has satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?” Current first century Jewish thinking would have interpreted satan here to be an evil spirit. But Peter neutralizes this, by adding an explanatory statement: “Why have you conceived this thing in your heart?” In saying this he teaches that the lie and deception had an internal source not external.

PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR

Another example is in Eph. 2:2 where Paul says the ungodly walk “according to the prince of the power of the air,” which was a current designation for the pagan satan. But Paul is careful not to give any descriptions or elaborations which give the impression of believing in, or endorsing that concept. Quite the opposite! He gives other explanatory statements which explain and define the matter in terms consistent with Scripture.

Running parallel with the statement: “the prince of the power of the air,” is the statement: “the course of this world,” which, in the next statement is explained to relate to “the lusts of our flesh and mind” Paul then finishes off by saying: “By nature, children of wrath.” In this progression of thought, Paul neutralizes and demythologizes certain pagan associations with the expression: “Prince of the power of the air,” and puts the emphasis where it ought to be, on human nature - sin in the flesh - “the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.” Or, as it is put in Jam. 4:5: “the spirit that dwells in us lusts enviously,” referring, of course, to the sub-conscious negative urges of sin in the flesh.

Significantly enough, the devil in the sense of sin in the flesh, can be understood in a very real way as “prince of the power of the air.” As we have seen, sin is personified as a ruler in Paul’s writings, reigning unto death, and is therefore a “prince” - “prince of the world.” Having the power of death, sin deprives people of life. It stops them breathing; it prevents the power of oxygen in the air from filling lungs. Notice that Paul does not merely say “the prince of the air,” but “the prince of the power of the air.” Air has power - the power of life! And sin has the power to cut off access to it.

As a result of modern science and technology, air now has other “powers” which sin has taken advantage of to extend its influence and exercise control. Today, “air” is used to transmit the fleshly carnal principles and propaganda of man, to stimulate and excite sin and encourage ungodliness. I’m referring to radio, TV and the Internet which have tremendous power and influence, using sounds and images which can arouse the baser lusts of the flesh.

The air is also full of “evil” hurtful powers in the form of germs - viruses and bacteria. The milk factory knows this, for which reason the milk is quickly sealed to keep the air out to prevent bacteria from forming. And, when sin allows the lid to be taken off God’s laws of morality, health and hygiene and they are neglected and not kept in tight control, then

these “evil powers” in the air invade our body and inflict us with sickness, disease and death. In this sense also, sin can be seen as “prince of the power of the air”

SATAN ALWAYS USED IN A SINISTER SENSE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Now, we have seen that the word satan in the Old Testament is applied to both righteous and unrighteous persons. However, on the thirty six occasions that the word is used in the New Testament, it is used exclusively in a sinister sense. It always refers to forces and influences which are opposed to Christ and his church, and it is natural to wonder why this is.

It is also natural to wonder if the word satan is only used in the New Testament because it had worked its way into the everyday language and speech of the Jews, or if there was some other more important reason. In some respects, it is surprising that the word is used at all in the New Testament due to it being a Hebrew word, not Greek. There are actually several Greek words that mean “adversary,” yet these words have been avoided, and the Hebrew word “satan” has been carried over into the text instead.

SAME THEME IN BOTH TESTAMENTS

This suggests that this particular word has a special significance that would have been missed if an ordinary Greek word had been used instead. It is believed that the word satan is used in the New Testament to connect with the last reference in the Old Testament, thus linking the two Testaments and continuing an important theme.

The last occasion in the Old Testament where satan occurs is in Zech. 3, and, as has been explained in a previous chapter, the reference is to the enemy and accuser of the Old Testament church, referred to as “the body of Moses” in Jude v 9.

But Zec. 3 does not merely relate to an historical situation. It is also prophetic of things pertaining to the body of Christ. Zech. 3:8 specifically states that it is a “sign” or “type” of things pertaining to the “Branch” which is a title of Messiah and involves his whole body, the church. This being the case, it is fitting that the word “satan,” used to signify the adversary of the church in Zech. 3, should be carried through to represent the adversary of the New Testament church.

In Zech. 3, satan represents the Samaritans, referred to as “the adversaries of Judah” in Ezra 4:1, who opposed the laying of the foundation of God’s temple, and resisted the building and restoration of the church. In the New Testament, satan often represents the Jewish and Roman adversaries, and anyone else who opposed Christ, the foundation stone of God’s spiritual temple, and who resisted the building of his church. But, as pointed out in earlier chapters, the word is also used in relation to the impulses of sin which are opposed to the Spirit, and which are the cause of people becoming adversaries of Christ and his Church.

SATAN HINDERED US

Examples have already been given in previous chapters of these two different ways in which satan is used, and we will now look at some more, starting with 1 Thes. 2:18: “We would have come to you, even I Paul, more than once, but satan hindered us.” We don’t have to look very far to find out who the satan was here who prevented Paul and his companions from reaching and visiting the Christians at Thessalonica. The answer is given in the preceding verses (v 14-16), where Paul refers to the Jews who killed Jesus and their own prophets, and persecute the Christians, “hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles ...” Such Jews are referred to in Rev. 2:9 as “those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of satan.”

Many verses could be quoted to show that the unbelieving Jews hounded and harassed Paul and hindered his missionary movements. Act. 17 says that when Paul was in Thessalonica, the Jews were “moved with envy they set the city in an uproar and assaulted the house where Paul was staying.” On other occasions they took counsel to kill Paul and laid wait to do so. For this reason, in Rom. 15:30-32, Paul asked the brethren to pray for him to be delivered from unbelieving Jews in Judea, so that he would not be hindered from visiting the Christians in Rome afterwards.

In 1 Thes. 3, Paul continued with the same theme and expressed a fear that the “tempter have tempted you,” resulting in their faith being destroyed. Here, the “tempter” is “satan” and refers to those who were opposed to the cross of Christ and were trying to turn the Christians away from it, and rob them of their new-found faith. Jesus referred to this in the parable of the sower when he said: “Satan comes immediately, and takes away the word that was sown in their heart.” (Mk 4:15).

THE MESSENGER OF SATAN TO BUFFET ME

The unbelieving Jews, not to mention the pagan Gentiles, who opposed Paul's work, were a constant pain and irritation - a "thorn in the flesh," and Paul's words in 2 Cor. 12:7-10 are relevant to this: "To keep me from being puffed up with pride because of the many revelations I received, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of satan, to buffet me and keep me from being proud. Three times I prayed to the Lord about this and asked Him to take it away. But His answer was: My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness! Most gladly therefore will I rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

A careful reading of this passage reveals that "the messenger of satan" relates to the "thorn in the flesh," the effect of which was to "buffet" Paul. The Greek word translated "buffet" means to strike with clenched hands; to rap or buffet with the fist. It relates to dealing with, or inflicting physical violence. The same word is used in Matt. 26:67 where reference is made to members of the Jewish high court who spat in Jesus' face, and "buffeted" him and slapped him with the palm of their hands.

Paul had a similar experience as recorded in Act. 23:1-2. The high priest (satan) commanded some of his "messengers" who stood near Paul to smite him on the mouth. And this was not the only time Paul was physically attacked and assaulted for his faith, because he refers to being "buffeted" on other occasions as well: 1 Cor. 4:11.

THORN IN THE FLESH

Paul's "thorn in the flesh" clearly had nothing to do with personal physical problems like poor eyesight or whatever. The word "buffet" relates to physical persecution inflicted by others, and he goes on to confirm this in 2 Cor. 12:10 where he concludes by saying: "I will therefore take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, distresses for Christ's sake."

The phrase "thorn in the flesh" is quite common in Scripture and has its roots in the Old Testament where it is used to signify those who oppose and persecute God's people. See Num. 33:55. Josh. 23:13. Judg. 2:3. Ezk. 2:6. Metaphorically speaking, those who oppose and afflict God's people are "thorns" - a pain - an irritation.

It is important to observe that Paul implies God gave, or allowed the thorn in his flesh, for the purpose of keeping him humble and dependent upon divine grace and strength. Other statements made by Paul reveal the harrowing and humbling and unnerving effect that constant opposition and persecution had on him. For example, 1 Cor. 2:3: “And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.” Also 2 Cor. 7:5: “For when we arrived in Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side: around us were fightings, within us were fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts those who are downcast, comforted us”

It is also significant that Paul says in 2 Cor. 12:7 that the messenger of satan was sent to buffet him to prevent him from becoming proud and to keep him humble. But the traditional view of satan teaches that he sets out to promote pride, not prevent it, so a contradiction is involved here.

The concept of “satan” being used by God for Paul’s good, afflicting him to keep him humble, is reminiscent of Job’s satan who was allowed by God to afflict Job for his ultimate good. Because the word “messenger” in the phrase: “the messenger of satan” is the same word translated “angel,” some have interpreted it in the same light as Job’s satan.

SATAN’S POWER-BASE

But the phrase “the messenger of satan” implies that “satan” refers to a specific central authority, and the “messenger” a subsidiary power at his beck and call. One school of thought, on this basis, is that satan could refer to the Jewish high priest, or the Jewish high court (Sanhedrin) over which he presided. This power-base instigated and authorized persecution against the Christian community and commissioned men to act as “messengers” to harass and afflict and become a “thorn” in their side. Ironically enough, Paul himself had once been one of these “messengers of satan.” Acts 9:1-2 tells us that he was given letters of authorization by the high priest to go as his messenger to the synagogues and arrest Jews who had become Christians, and cast them into prison.

As has already been mentioned, it was the high priest who commanded members of the high court to smite Paul on the mouth, causing him to say: “God shall smite you, you whited wall” (Acts 23:1-3). In saying “you whited wall,” Paul was following Jesus’ example when he called the Jewish leaders “whited sepulchres” (Matt. 23:27). Jesus also called them “serpents” and “a generation of vipers” (v 33). In view of this, it would be quite appropriate for them to be referred to as

devil and satan, and for their servants to be called “messengers of satan.”

The expression “whited wall” or “whited sepulchre” signifies something that looks the part outwardly, but is not as good as it appears and is just a cover up. This can be related to “satan himself masquerading as an angel of light” in 2 Cor. 11:13-15, and be applied to the central authority or power-base of the Jewish persecutors of the church. The high priest, who acted as a high court judge in religious matters, claimed to be an “angel of light” i.e. God’s messenger of enlightenment, giving rulings on behalf of God. But he was blind to the truth that Jesus was the Messiah, and because of his opposition, became “satan” - an adversary and opponent - “satan masquerading as a messenger of enlightenment.” It was no wonder therefore, that his servants (messengers) also masqueraded in the same way.

SATAN’S SEAT

Speaking to the church at Pergamos where the faithful martyr Antipas was slain, and other Christians were threatened with death, the Lord said that “satan’s seat” was there. The Greek word for “seat” is “thronos” and means throne. So satan’s throne was at Pergamos which was a city in Asia Minor (Turkey). Does the traditional concept of satan believe this? Is this where their satan is based? Throughout the centuries in the past it was believed that satan’s headquarters were underground in hell!

In interpreting this verse in the book of Revelation, we need to remember that it is a book of sign and symbol. The fact that Christians were being slain at Pergamos indicates that the power of sin was very strong there, motivating men to oppose and persecute the church. The doctrine of Balaam was very strong there, as well as the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes (2:14-15). It is possible that an anti-Christian organization had its headquarters at Pergamos and used the city as a base for campaigns against the Christian movement.

Pergamos was evidently the first city in Asia Minor where emperor worship was introduced, and refusal to conform brought grievous persecution upon the Christians there. A great altar to Zeus was also erected in Pergamos, along with a temple. It is quite possible that this very building could be referred to as the “throne” of satan, signifying the stronghold of sin. All of the gods worshipped by the Greeks were displayed upon the altar. Paganism was truly enthroned there! It was a great centre of satan’s kingdom of darkness, earning for the place, the fearful distinction of being “satan’s seat.”

The expression can be compared with the remark of the historian who, referring to the court of king Charles the second, said, “Vice sat enthroned in his court.” It is not uncommon even today, when referring to a city where a particular vice is prominent and widespread, to call it a “stronghold of drugs,” “Queen of the Porns,” “Sin city” etc.

DELIVERED TO SATAN FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH

In 1 Cor. 5:3-5 Paul says that a certain immoral member in the church should be “delivered unto satan for the destruction of the flesh.” And a similar statement is made in 1 Tim. 1:19-20 where Paul says he delivered certain men to satan so that they might learn not to blaspheme.

Notice that the result of these reprobate Christians being delivered to satan is “the destruction of the flesh,” and “learning not to blaspheme” (i.e. putting to death carnal attitudes and ungodly behaviour). This is also inconsistent with tradition’s satan who is supposed to encourage blasphemy, carnal attitudes and lusts, not discourage them.

In the New Testament, delivering to satan can mean two things; firstly, abandoning a person to the consequences of his own godless desires and pursuits. Paul refers to this in Rom. 1:24: “Therefore, God also gave them up (abandoned them) to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves For this cause God gave them up to vile affections” (v 26). And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient” (v 28).

By removing offenders from His presence, i.e. by removing His presence and protection from them, God lets offenders reap the consequences of their own sinful and ungodly desires, which, as we have seen, are called “devil” and “satan” in Scripture. Sometimes parents have to do this to a rebellious child, by releasing him to his unrestrained desires. If the experience brings him to his senses and causes repentance and a willingness to put the flesh to death and reform, then the spirit will be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

EXCOMMUNICATION

Secondly, delivering over to satan can mean (and actually follows as a natural consequence of what has been said,) excommunication, i.e. expelling the offender from church, which results in him being handed

over to the world, which is “satan.”

This is actually evident in the passage under consideration in 1 Cor. 5 where it is twice stated by Paul to “put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” This was the procedure recommended by Paul in many of his writings. Such course of action was a “delivering unto satan.” Tit. 3:10 records Paul as saying that after the first and second warnings, an offender should be rejected. 2 Thes. 3:6, 14 says Christians should withdraw themselves and have no company with those who become un-christian in attitude and conduct. Rom. 16:17 says “avoid them” and Gal. 5:12 says “cut them off.”

To put a person out of the church was to put them back out into the world, which is satan, where sin rules and reigns. The phrase: “deliver him unto satan” runs parallel with Jesus’ statement: “let him be to you as a heathen man and a publican,” i.e. treat him as a worldly person. (God did this to the nation of Israel: Ps. 106:39-42).

But the purpose of excommunication was positive, to shock or shame the person into coming to his senses and repenting and being restored. As Paul says in 2 Thes. 3:14-15: “Have no company with him that he may be ashamed.” This, I believe, is what Paul means when he talks about handing a person over to satan for the destruction of the flesh. His hope and intention was that the fleshly sins which caused the excommunication might be put to death, resulting in restoration.

LEST SATAN GET AN ADVANTAGE OF US

In 2 Cor. 2:7-8 Paul makes it clear that if a person repents, he must be forgiven and received back into fellowship by the church. One reason for this is given in v 11: “Lest satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices.” This stands to reason, for if an offending brother who repents is not received back into fellowship, sin and the world would come out as the victors, chalking up another victory to the flesh over the Spirit.

The world is usually very quick to criticize and condemn the church for narrow-mindedness and lack of tolerance, and would soon accuse it of being legalistic, lacking mercy and kindness if it did not receive a repentant member back. Paul says in 1 Tim. 5:14: “Give the adversary no opportunity to speak reproachfully; for some have already turned aside to satan.” This refers to some Christians who had turned back from the way of the cross, and defected to the world, causing reproach and scorn to be cast upon the church.

BOUND BY SATAN

In Lk. 13:11-16 we read about a woman who had a bad case of curvature of the spine for eighteen years. Jesus referred to her as “a daughter of Abraham whom satan has bound.” “Satan” here simply refers to the great adversary of mankind - sin, which has caused countless degenerative effects in the human body.

As we know, man was cursed with mortality as a result of sin, and this has resulted in numerous crippling effects, ending in death. Jesus demonstrated his power and authority over sin, not only by living a sinless life, but also by delivering people from the fetters of infirmity, sickness and disease, which sin had inflicted.

Sometimes people’s infirmities were due simply to the degenerative effects of original sin, committed by our first parents. Sometimes, as we read in Jn. 9:1-2, infirmity was due, not to any particular fault of the person himself, or those before him, but for the glory of God by providing the opportunity for His grace and power to be manifested. But sometimes infirmities can be due to specific personal sins committed by the individual. 1 Cor. 11:29-32 relates to this, pointing out that certain Christians had been “chastened (judged) by the Lord,” due to abuse and misuse of the Lord’s supper. This resulted in many being weak and sickly and some had even died.

This connection between sin and sickness is apparent on various occasions when Jesus, after healing the sick, would say: “Thy sins be forgiven thee,” or: “Go away and sin no more lest something worse comes upon you.” Quite an array of Scriptures could be quoted to show the relationship between sin and sickness. For example, see Ps. 38:1-8. 103:3.

It is a major theme in the Bible, and the words “devil” and “satan,” being synonyms for sin, are naturally used from time to time in connection with sickness and infirmity. This is why, for example, victory in Jesus’ name over the power and dominance of sin, seen in the sick being healed, is referred to parabolically by Jesus in Lk. 10:18 as satan falling from heaven. God’s power in Christ caused the adversary to lose his grip on humanity and take a tumble from his position as ruler over mankind.

THE WORKING OF SATAN WITH ALL POWER AND SIGNS

2 Thes. chapter two refers to a “man of sin” in whom all the powers of sin will be working in the end-time. Significantly enough, this

working of sin is referred to as “the working of satan,” resulting in “wicked deception,” and “lying signs and wonders.”

It will naturally be wondered how sin in natural human flesh, could perform supernatural and superhuman signs and wonders. The answer to this is that 2 Thes. 2 does not say the signs and wonders are supernatural. It says they are “lying wonders,” and the Greek word for “lying” is “pseudos,” from which the word “pseudo” is derived, which means falsehood and deception. It signifies something that looks real and genuine on the surface, but in reality is not. Instead of being real and genuine, it is artificial, a counterfeit - a sham.

The magicians in Egypt are an illustration of this. Being “magicians” they practised sleight of hand, and all manner of cunning craftiness was up their sleeve, and they were able to appear to duplicate some of the signs and wonders performed by Moses. But in reality it was a deception and a con.

The “power” in which the magicians operated was not supernatural but natural; the human spirit, not the Holy Spirit, was in control, and the same will apply to the man of sin. Dan. 11:36 refers to him and says: “He shall do according to his will,” i.e. the will of sinful flesh. This is why he is called a “man of sin.” He will be the full embodiment and expression of sin - sin incarnate! Adam Clarke’s commentary expresses 2 Thes. 2:10 in these words: “with every art that cunning can invent, he will delude and deceive.” Being a full and complete expression of sin, he will fully manifest “the deceitfulness of sin.”

GOD SHALL SEND STRONG DELUSION

In view of the fact that the man of sin will be responsible for pseudo signs and wonders that will deceive many, why does 2 Thes. 2:11 say “God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie” (pseudos). This clearly implies that God permits the deception, if not arranges it. Why? Because it will separate the wheat from the chaff - the true believers from the false - those who know and love the truth from those who don’t - those who have proper spiritual discernment from those who haven’t.

This is why God raised up Pharaoh and allowed his magicians to do their tricks. A separation was made between those who knew the difference between the power of God and the power of man. For this reason, Deu. 13 tells us that God will even go so far as to allow someone who worships false gods to give a sign or wonder which comes to pass,

“to test you to know whether you love the Lord and obey His voice”. (i.e. His word). Obviously, the real criteria or test of truth and genuineness is not in the signs or wonders a person may perform, but whether they believe and teach things that are consistent with God’s word. People who don’t know that word and are sign-seekers, are very vulnerable and easy prey for deception. Neglect of God’s word can obviously have serious consequences. 2 Thes. 2:10-12 clearly states it is because people do not welcome and love God’s truth, that He sends the strong delusion, causing them to believe a lie.

Ezk. 14:9 says: “And if a prophet be deceived to utter a prophecy, I the Lord have deceived that prophet” Why? Because as the context shows, the prophet did not love and honour God’s truth, but preferred the error and falsehood of his own carnal thoughts and imaginations. 1 Kng. 22:23 actually records how the Lord sent an angel to be a “lying spirit” in the mouth of false prophets who had turned their back on God’s word.

NO POWER BUT GOD’S

In relation to the man of sin, the words that Jesus spoke to Pilate recorded in Jn. 19:11 equally apply: “You could have no power at all against me, unless it were given to you from above” (i.e. from God, not a fallen angel)! “There is no power but of God; the powers and authorities that exist have been put there by God” (Rom. 13:1). “The Most High God rules in the kingdoms of men and sets up over them whoever He chooses even the basest of men” (Dan. 4:17).

The man of sin, like Pilate, would be powerless to do anything unless it were given or granted by God. This is seen in Rev. 13 where the man of sin is represented by a beast. Verse 5 says: “Power was given to him to continue forty two months.” Also verse 7: “And it was given (granted) unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues and nations.”

In verses 13-15 reference is made to the beast’s publicity agent, who “does great wonders ... and deceives those who dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he was given power to do.” But it is important to note that nowhere is it stated that the power was given by a fallen-angel devil. No! It was given, i.e. granted, allowed, permitted by God - the same God who granted pagan powers such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon etc in Old Testament times to rise in power, conquer the world and rule the nations.

From Revelation chapter six to the end of the book, the word “given”

occurs many times in relation to many different events, emphasizing God's total control over human affairs. Rev. 17:17 tells us that God "puts" (same Greek as "gave" or "granted") into the heart of the beast and ten horns to fulfil the divine will and destroy the mother of harlots with fire. For this reason, her destruction is referred to as a judgement of God (Rev. 18:8, 10, 20).

So then, the man of sin is a man motivated by sin, i.e. "satan," and is therefore a liar and deceiver, but his rise to power can only be achieved by being "given" or "granted" by God. A fallen-angel devil has nothing to do with it.

Dan. 11:36 brings these two aspects together. It firstly says: "the king shall do according to his will" (i.e. the will or lusts of sin in the flesh - the "devil"). The verse then goes on to say that he shall only "prosper till the indignation be accomplished," i.e. till the divinely appointed period of tribulation has run its course. "For what has been determined (by the will of God), shall be done."

The interplay between the human and divine will can be seen here, and helps us understand how it is that, although God allows the man of sin to deceive, it can be expressed in terms of God Himself sending strong delusion.

CONCLUSION

This brings us to the end of part one of "That old serpent called the devil and satan," in which it has been shown that the devil is not a fallen angel, but relates to fallen man. So we cannot breathe a sigh of relief, saying "So there's no devil after all." No! The devil is closer to us than what we realized. And this requires us to face up to the fact and challenge, and deal with it in the way Jesus taught us, by taking authority over our own sinful will and desires by wielding the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and not look for a scapegoat to blame in the form of a fictitious fallen angel.

Otherwise we become a shadow boxer, fighting an imaginary enemy. But, as the apostle Paul said: "I am no shadow boxer; I really fight. I severely discipline my body (flesh) and bring it into subjection, making it know its master (Christ), for fear that when I have preached to others, I should myself be disqualified" 1 Cor. 9:26-27).

Understanding the true nature of the devil is of fundamental importance because it reveals to us who the real enemy is, and it is vitally important in any warfare, to be able to identify the enemy and know who

he is, otherwise we end up shooting at shadows. Knowing the truth about the devil delivers from all manner of superstitious spooks, and brings greater responsibility and awareness for our own thoughts and desires, and this results in greater soundness and stability of mind. But most important of all, it gives a much more satisfying understanding of who the devil was that Jesus died to destroy, resulting in a greater appreciation of the cross.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

PART TWO DEMONS

Attention has already been drawn to the fact that two quite different Greek words have been translated “devil” in some translations of the New Testament. The two words are “diabolos” and “daimon.” They are quite distinct from each other and have a different significance. Unfortunately, the King James translation has made no distinction between them, and has indiscriminately translated them both into the same English word “devil,” causing unnecessary confusion. It would have been better if the translators had translated “daimon” by its obvious derivative “demon,” and only used the word “devil” for diabolos. Many modern translations have done this.

Diabolos, as we have seen, relates to both the sinful impulses in the flesh and those people who are ruled by them. But “daimon” relates to invisible malignant influences that invade the body and mind, causing both physical and mental illnesses, and there are many references to them in the New Testament.

Traditional thinking on this subject sees in these demons evidence of a personal supernatural fallen angel. However, it is significant to note that firstly, there is not one demon passage in the Bible that identifies demons with fallen angels. Secondly, as has been explained in the preceding chapters, there is no foundation anywhere in the Bible for the doctrine of a fallen-angel devil.

The belief that demons are fallen angels is based entirely upon assumption. There is no evidence in the Bible to support this view. Whatever demons are, they are not fallen angels.

Some writers who actually believe in a fallen-angel devil have nevertheless openly admitted that Scripture is silent regarding the origin and identity of demons. For instance, Myer Pearlman, a traditional believer, in his book “Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible” p 91 says: “The Scriptures do not describe the origin of demons; that question seems to be part of the mystery surrounding the origin of evil.”

A VOID IS CREATED

Once it is realized and accepted that fallen angels do not exist, and that none of the demon passages identify demons with fallen angels, a void is created in the whole subject of demonology which has to be filled with other facts.

In our search for these facts it is important to keep in mind the distinction between diabolos and daimon. Diabolos, being sin in the flesh, is the cause of pride, envy, jealousy, anger, malice, wickedness etc as we read in Gal. 5:19-21. However, the function and effects of demons is quite different for they have nothing to do with sinful propensities.

There are no references to demon possessed people denying God or belittling Christ, or trying to set up a false, counterfeit religion. Quite the opposite! Jam. 2:19 says demons believe in God and tremble, and during the ministry of Jesus they confessed and proclaimed him as the son of God.

Demons are referred to in the New Testament as harmful forces which invade and possess people, inflicting them with various ailments and disorders, and are particularly associated with abnormal states of mind - madness, dumbness, lunacy, insanity.

In view of this, it is evident why there is no reference in the Bible to demon possessed people trying to set up their own religion. This would be impossible due to them being mentally incapable of doing so. No one would follow them because they were regarded as being mad and irrational, and people were generally afraid of them and kept their distance from them. The demon possessed were social outcasts in New Testament times.

The question that must be asked, therefore, is: if satan is a fallen angel and responsible for putting demons into people, making them mad, what is he trying to achieve? Because nobody listens to maniacs or takes them seriously, they have no credibility. Such a satan would have to be mentally deranged himself and totally irrational (not cunning and intelligent), to imagine that by driving people crazy, and alienating them from society, he could destroy people's faith in God, and undermine Christ's work.

DOCTRINES OF DEMONS

The reason for saying this is because the words in 1 Tim. 4:1 about some in the latter days departing from the faith, giving heed to "doctrines of demons," has been interpreted by tradition to mean that doctrines taught by demons would cause this departure from the faith and result in a false, counterfeit religion. However, in view of the fact that maniacs have no credibility and would not gain much of a following even if they did preach "doctrines," and would therefore not be a threat to the true faith, suggests that the statement "doctrines of demons" means

teaching about demons, not teaching by demons.

SPEAKING LIES IN HYPOCRISY

The statement that follows in 1 Tim. 4:2 is certainly true in relation to this. After saying “some will give heed to doctrines of demons,” it says “speaking lies in hypocrisy.” Much that has been taught in Christendom about demons falls into the category of fable and fantasy - lies. Paul warned about this in 2 Tim. 4:3-4 where he predicted that the time would come when the church would not tolerate sound teaching, but would turn its ears away from the truth to fables.

As we shall see, the doctrine of demonology originated on the basis of a lie - the serpent’s lie: “thou shalt not surely die,” which has been perpetuated in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. And many ministers, trapped in the system, who know that tradition’s doctrines on the immortality of the soul and demons are unscriptural, go along with them anyway and become hypocrites, falling into the category and condemnation of “speaking lies in hypocrisy.”

Some time ago, publicity was given to a man at Danbury in the U.S.A. who was sentenced to twenty years in prison for stabbing his landlord to death. The case attracted international attention because he claimed he was possessed by demons at the time of the stabbing and was therefore not responsible. The prosecution argued that he had been drinking and that an argument led to the stabbing. The superior court judge repeatedly rebuffed the “demon defence,” calling it “unscientific” and “irrelevant.” The state’s attorney said the jury “had successfully ferreted out the plethora (over indulgence) of lies and reached the truth.” Many other cases could also be quoted where similar “lies” have been told, blaming demons instead of accepting responsibility and guilt for personal weakness and sin. Such cases are covered by Paul in his statement about people departing from the faith, subscribing to doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy.”

CONFUSING DEMONS WITH THE FLESH

Even Hal Lindsay, a believer in the fallen-angel devil, in his book: “Satan Is Alive And Well On Planet Earth,” draws attention to this, saying: “Some well meaning Christians today have a tendency to go overboard about demons. I want to be sure no one falls into the trap of attributing to demons what is actually the work of the flesh. You may have

heard people speak about the “lying demon,” the “lust demon,” the “envy demon,” and others. I do not believe that there are specific demons such as these who can only do one thing. Consider a fellow who is constantly thinking about sex. He is consumed by lascivious thoughts every day. If he has heard of such things, he may begin to think, “Maybe I have a lust demon.” He shares his thoughts with some of his Christian friends, and they have a little prayer meeting and “cast the demon out.” Sanctimoniously they may say, “We’ve cast out the lust demon. Praise the Lord.” Our Christian friend, thus assured by his own feelings and the pronouncements of his friends, takes his wife to a restaurant, smug in his victory over himself. A curvaceous waitress in a mini-skirt comes to the table, and in a flash the old demon is back. The danger in this concept is that a deed which is actually a part of the flesh or the old sin nature is attributed to a demon. It is vital that we assign things to their proper cause. There is no “lust demon” per se. Lust is a sin which comes from the flesh.”

DEMONS ARE NOT SUPERNATURAL

Not only does the Bible never identify demons with fallen angels, it also never teaches that they are supernatural. Quite the opposite! On one occasion Jesus eliminated demons by allowing them to be transferred from a demoniac into a herd of pigs, which then stampeded down a hill over a cliff and drowned in the sea. If demons were supernatural, it would be impossible for them to be destroyed by casting them into the sea.

Someone may suggest that the demons vacated the pigs before they hit the water. If this was the case, what was the point in Jesus allowing the pigs to plunge over the cliff into the sea? Was he tricked and outwitted by the demons, because it was in response to their request that he transferred them into the swine. If the demons were not destroyed, but escaped, then Jesus was deceived by a Brer Rabbit tactic! But if they were destroyed by drowning, then they were not supernatural, which is the point at issue.

There is no doubt that those possessed by demons sometimes manifested abnormal strength, but this is quite different from supernatural strength, and this distinction needs to be made. For example, reference is made in the gospels to a demoniac who broke a chain by which he was bound. But what we are not told is how well the chain was made, how rusty it might have been, or how much of a hammering and tugging it endured before it finally gave way.

In contrast to this, Samson manifested supernatural strength. When

the Philistines bound him with two new ropes, the Spirit of God came upon him and the ropes “became as flax that was burnt with fire and they dropped off his hands” (Judg. 15:13-14). Samson also took hold of a city gate and pulled it up - doors, posts, lock and all, and carried it upon his shoulders to the top of a hill over fifty kms away (Judg. 16:1-3). He also took hold of the two central pillars of a Philistine temple, leaned forward and pulled them over, causing the whole structure to collapse (Judg. 16:29-30).

In Acts 19:16 we are told that a man possessed by a demon attacked seven men, overcame them and prevailed against them. But the seven men were not hardened soldiers or professional wrestlers. They were sons of one of the chief Jewish priests, and were not necessarily very strong, robust, or courageous men. Due to the superstitious dread that people had towards demoniacs, the men could very well have been unnerved and intimidated by the attack, and therefore not put up a very good fight. Being unexpected, it caught them off guard by surprise, not giving them enough time for a properly organized and co-ordinated resistance. On the other hand, Samson slew a thousand Philistines with the jaw bone of an ass (Judg. 15:15). Now that was supernatural!

THE LATENT POWER OF THE SOUL

As is well documented, anger and fear can set the adrenaline flowing in the body, resulting, under certain circumstances, in an amazing increase of strength. Men confronting death have performed some amazing physical feats normally not possible. A woman is reported to have lifted the back of a car off the ground to release her child upon whom the car had rolled.

Abnormal strength can also be displayed under hypnosis. For example, a person can be hypnotized to become rigid, and then be placed in an horizontal position with only his head and heels resting on the back of two chairs. Men can then sit on him without his body sagging or giving way. Hypnotism has revealed the latent powers of the body and mind. The way in which weight lifters psyche themselves up to lift heavy weights is a form of self hypnosis, and contributes a lot towards their ability to lift abnormally heavy weights. Experiments have demonstrated that the unconscious mind has amazing power over the functions of the body and brain. Being made in the image of God, i.e. inferior replicas of Him, we all have the potential for greater strength, but in certain mental conditions, when the mechanism malfunctions, the strength is not used in an orderly

manner, and can become dangerous and threatening to life.

In ancient times, being a pre-scientific era, when people tended to be much more superstitious, there was a tendency to regard anything outside the realm of normal strength, as being supernatural. When a demoniac displayed abnormal strength, it was therefore thought the supernatural power of the gods had taken possession of him.

The same even applied to magic. For example, Act. 8:9-11 records how a man called Simon “used magic and astonished the people of Samaria, and he claimed to be some great one. They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, this man is the great power of God.” Just because Simon could do things not normally done, his ability was attributed to supernatural power. The people thought he was possessed by God. But he was just a clever magician who was able to capitalize on the ignorance and naivety of the people, as many fraudsters and con-men have done since among primitive and gullible tribes, and sometimes not so primitive!

Unfortunately, many Christians have also been too quick to attribute unusual and abnormal phenomena associated with demoniacs, to supernatural sources, when the phenomena is simply the outworking of a malfunctioning brain.

It does seem, however, that some in New Testament times either did not believe that demons were supernatural, or, believed that they were, but with certain limitations. This is inferred from Jn. 10:21 which says some of the Jews said: “Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?” Why not, if demons are supernatural?

DEMONS AND SPIRITS

In studying the subject of demons, comparing the various verses where the word occurs, several facts emerge. One of those facts is that demons are sometimes referred to as “spirits.” The Greek word is “pneuma,” and, although it is quite a different word from “daimon,” the two words are used interchangeably in the New Testament.

For example, in Mk. 7:25-29 we read about a girl possessing an “unclean spirit,” and her healing is referred to as “the demon is gone out.” Many examples like this could be quoted in which “spirit” is used synonymously with “demon.”

As in this case, a demon or spirit is often referred to as being “unclean.” The reason for this is because those possessed, especially the mentally deranged, became a prey to unclean habits and living, being

driven into unclean conditions and situations, making them ritually unclean according to the Jewish law. For example, reference is made in the gospels to demoniacs living naked among tombs and dead bodies, no doubt not observing basic rules of hygiene and sanitation. This is not uncommon with the insane.

DEMONS ALSO ASSOCIATED WITH PHYSICAL DISORDERS

Another fact to be observed in relation to demons is that they are not always and only associated with mental illness. They are also associated with various physical disorders. For example, deafness, epilepsy and convulsions are attributed to demons: (Matt. 4:24. 17:15. Mk. 1:23-26. 9:17-25. Lk. 4:35. 9:37-). In Matt. 12:22 blindness is attributed to a demon. And in view of the way Jesus “rebuked” a demon in Lk. 4:35, and then “rebuked” a great fever in v 38-39, suggests demons were regarded as the cause of fever.

In Lk. 13:11 we read about a woman “who had a spirit of infirmity,” i.e. a demon causing infirmity. The infirmity was a physical one. For eighteen years she was bent over and couldn’t straighten her back. She suffered from what we would call curvature of the spine or arthritis.

WRONG DIAGNOSIS

It is evident that in New Testament times, anyone who did not speak or act normally, was regarded as being possessed by a demon. For this reason, because John the Baptist’s behaviour pattern was different from normal, in relation to his eating, drinking and clothing, the people said “he has a demon” (Matt. 11:18).

And, because Jesus’ teaching and ministry was unconventional and radical, like laying hands on unclean lepers, eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, showing grace to harlots and tax collectors and ministering to Gentiles, not to mention his many unusual miracles, signs, wonders and healings, he was also regarded as being mad, possessed by a demon. He was actually accused of being possessed by a demon on four different occasions (Jn. 7:20. 8:48, 52. 10:20). He was even accused of being in league with Beelzebub, the Prince of demons (Matt. 10:25. 12:24).

It is clear that the mannerisms and methods of John and Jesus and their ministry, were wrongly diagnosed by the people. How wrong can

one be?! What the people attributed to an evil spirit (demon), was in fact, the work and effect of the Holy Spirit!

Now, the point that arises out of this is: if what they thought was demon possession in relation to Jesus and John, had nothing to do with demons at all, then on how many other cases was their diagnosis wrong? i.e. In how many other instances did they blame demons when it had nothing to do with demons at all?

Another point to observe is this: although it is recorded that Jesus and John were regarded as being demon possessed, the New Testament simply tells us what the people thought and what their diagnosis was, not expecting us to believe the same. And this should be kept in mind in other cases where demons were regarded as the cause of certain unusual and irregular functions of body and brain.

In New Testament times, the disorders attributed to demons were mostly those which could not be related to a simple obvious condition. Lameness, for instance, was not attributed to demons, because the abnormal condition of lame people's limbs provided a physical explanation for their manner of walk. But mentally deranged people, deaf and dumb people looked like others - there was no simple physiological explanation - no obvious physical manifestation of illness that they knew of. So, not knowing the cause, the disorder was attributed to demons. Demons were a very convenient scapegoat to blame for every disorder that could not be medically or scientifically diagnosed. Basically, demons were a cover-up for ignorance.

DEMONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Now, in laying a foundation for the subject in hand, it is of particular interest to note that there is no reference to demons in the Old Testament. Although the Old Testament covers nearly four thousand years of history from the creation of man; no illness, physical or mental, is ever attributed to demons. This is very significant, and provides one of the keys to the understanding of the origin and nature of demons.

But, before that line of enquiry be pursued, it should be pointed out that the word "devils" does occur in the King James translation of the Old Testament, but it has nothing to do with the "devils" (demons) in the New Testament. The word "devils" only occurs four times in the Old Testament and has been translated from two different Hebrew words.

One of those Hebrew words is "sair" and is translated "devils" in Lev. 17:7 and 2 Chr. 11:15. Both of these verses refer to sacrifices and

worship being offered to “devils.” The Hebrew word “sair” literally means “hairy one,” and in addition to it being translated “devils,” it is also translated “hairy” twice; “rough” once; “kid” 28 times; “goat” 23 times; “satyr” twice. As can be seen, the word is mostly translated “kid” and “goat,” and the references are in connection with sacrifice.

As far as the two passages are concerned where sair is translated “devils,” the first one in Lev. 17:17 refers to the period when Israel was engaged in false worship in Egypt, worshipping the false gods of Egypt. The second passage in 2 Chr. 11:15 refers to the period when Jeroboam, an apostate king of Israel who had lived in Egypt, made and set up idols of “devils and calves” in high places for worship. The “devils” were simply idols having the appearance of goats. Sacrifices were made to these and calf idols.

Goats and calves were a symbol of fertility and therefore figured prominently in the fertility cult and rituals of the pagan nations. From goat to demon in pagan belief was an easy transition, due to ascribing inherent powers to their goat idos.

HALF MAN AND HALF GOAT

As has already been pointed out, the Hebrew word “sair” has also been translated “satyr,” and originally referred to wild goats. Later in history the satyr was regarded as a mythical creature, half man and half goat, an hairy creature with horns, tail and goat’s legs. This creature became the Greek god Pan, one of the woodland deities of Greece and Rome. In medieval times satyrs were regarded as the incarnation of evil spirits, which supposedly haunted waste and desert places.

(It is from the name “Pan” that the English word “panic” has been derived. The creature was so frightening in appearance that people who thought they had seen him and were confronted by him, were put in a panic! And the word “pandemonium” combines the two words “Pan” and “demon,” and was used by the poet Milton to signify uproar and utter confusion.)

In the light of these pagan devils, it is not difficult to see how the idea of an hairy devil, complete with horns, cloven hooves and tail, was adopted by an apostate Christendom which had departed from the faith, giving heed to the seducing spirits of paganism and doctrines of demons. The whole concept of such a devil or demon finds its origin in heathen idolatry and was superimposed on the Bible devil.

Talking about satyrs, the following article appeared in a newspaper

under the heading of “Half-human creature born” and related to Accra, the capital of Ghana, West Africa: “A creature that was half-human, half-goat, has been born dead here, a local veterinary service reported yesterday. The creature, brought to the veterinary laboratory on Wednesday, had a human face, goat’s ears and four legs, the service said. The animal, which conjured up images of the satyr from Greek mythology, was being kept as a laboratory specimen. The laboratory refused to divulge further details.”

If this report is true, and happened as a result of unnatural connection between a man and a goat, it would not be the first time. Reference to such behaviour in Ex. 22:19 indicates that abominable practises like this were taking place way back in history, and could account for the development of the pagan doctrine on satyrs and demons, and ultimately Christendom’s devil with hairy legs and horns.

MAN’S OWN INVENTIONS

The other two occurrences of the word “devils” in the Old Testament are Deu. 32:16-17. Ps. 106:36-39. In these verses the Hebrew word is “shed,” and it is quite clear from the context that it also relates to false gods (idols). This is certainly evident in Ps 106:36-39. Verse 36 says “they served their idols,” and v 37 says “yea, they sacrificed ... to devils,” then v 39 says “they were defiled by their own works” (i.e. the idols), “and went lusting after their own inventions.” In this passage, “devils” are explained to be idols, the works of men’s hands, the product of human invention.

The same applies to the other passage in Deu. 32:16-17: “They provoked Him (God) to jealousy with strange gods ... they sacrificed unto devils which were no gods ... to new gods.” Here again it is evident that the “devils” relate to “gods” - false pagan gods or idols which “were no gods.” They didn’t exist. They were the figment of imagination.

According to Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon, the Hebrew word “shed,” translated “devils,” comes from a root word which means to rule. It therefore carries with it the idea of “lord” or “master,” which, of course, is how the pagans regarded their idols.

Also of significance is the fact that the noun “shed” is from the same root as “shad,” which is the Hebrew word for “breast.” The breasts symbolized fertility, which was the underlying motive behind idolatry. This is why goats and calves were sacrificed, and why idols were made in their form, shape and image. Both goats and calves were the main source of milk, which was fundamental to prosperity to rural people. Men

sacrificed them and worshipped images of them, so that their fertility would be continued, and their wealth maintained along with the safety of the herds.

The Egyptian god Isis was a many-breasted idol, and was probably worshipped by the Israelites in Egypt before the exodus, and later when they apostasized and reverted to the Egyptian gods. In the New Testament, reference is made to the Greek goddess Diana in Act. 19. The idol was in the shape of a carved female figure with many breasts, again symbolizing fertility.

Significantly enough, in certain instances, the Hebrew word “shed” can also signify “destroyer” or “devastator.” Those who worshipped this god knew that if blessings of fertility were withheld, destruction and devastation would be the result. In reality, of course, due to such gods having no real existence, they could neither bless nor destroy. However, if anyone worshipped such gods, seeking fertility and prosperity from the creature instead of the Creator, i.e. from idols and images in the form of goats, instead of the God who created the goats, then such worship would result in destruction and devastation as a punishment from God!

IDOLS POSSESSED BY DEMONS?

The pagans, of course, and especially the Greeks, believed that demons possessed idols, and that worship of idols was worship of demons. And the Jews were influenced by this notion during the period of the Greek empire, when the Greek language and philosophy spread like wild-fire throughout the then known world. For this reason, during the third century B.C. Ptolemy Philadephus, a Greek king who ruled over Egypt at the time, commissioned the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, so that it could be read by the wider Greek-speaking world. This translation is known as the LXX or The Septuagint. In this translation, the Hebrew word “shed” in Deut. 32:17 has been translated into the Greek “daimonia,” which is derived from “daimon,” and is the Greek word for demons.

Now, those living in New Testament times had access to this translation and quoted from it. This is why the apostle Paul, when quoting Deu. 32:16-17 in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 10:20), uses the Greek word “Daimonion,” translated “devils” in the Authorized version and “demons” in the Revised versions.

The Greek Septuagint version also uses “daimonion” (demons) in Isa. 65:3, and interestingly enough, says they don’t exist. This is how it reads:

“... they offer sacrifices to devils (demons) which exist not.” Now, if the demons in which the pagan idolaters believed, did not exist, they obviously could not possess and indwell idols. They only existed in the worshipper’s mind. They were just a figment of the imagination.

Ps. 96:4-5 confirms this. It is the divine assessment and verdict on the gods worshipped by the heathen. It says: “All the gods of the nations are idols.” Now, idols are inanimate, useless lifeless blocks of wood and stone. But, if the gods worshipped by the heathen were real living spirits or demons which possessed idols, why doesn’t Ps. 96:4-5 say: “All the gods of the nations are spirits” or “demons.” The fact that it says the gods of the nations are idols, and idols are lifeless blocks of wood and stone, clearly teaches that idols are not possessed by living entities, be they demons or spirits or whatever.

Coming back to 1 Cor. 10, reading from verse 19, Paul says: “What am I trying to say? Am I saying that the idols to whom the heathen bring sacrifices are really alive, and are real gods, and that these sacrifices are of some value? No, not at all.” In this statement, Paul says he does not believe that there is any life or living entity possessing idols.

Demons clearly do not possess inanimate images and objects, idols or ornaments. Unfortunately, many branches of Christendom believe they do and have adopted the pagan idolater’s superstition, believing that houses and ornaments and artefacts can be “possessed” and require exorcism. There is not a single reference in Scripture to demons being cast out of idols, houses, ornaments, artefacts etc. This modern trend is another “departure from the faith” as a result of erroneous “doctrines of devils.”

Having stated in 1 Cor. 10:19 that there is no life or living entity in idols, Paul goes on to point out that the pagans think differently. They believe that demons exist and possess idols, and therefore their worship of an idol, in their mind, is really worship of demons.

In view of this, Paul says Christians should not attend pagan festivals at which idols are honoured and food offered to them is eaten in a fellowship meal by the worshippers. Even though Christians know an idol is nothing and that food offered to it is unaffected, they should not participate, because idol worshippers would conclude that they believe the same as themselves. In a pagan’s mind, it would mean fellowship with the demons which they believed possessed the idols, and this would have a disastrous effect on the stand that Christians took against idolatry, rendering their testimony hollow and hypocritical.

THREE FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES VIOLATED

As shall be pointed out shortly, it was believed during New Testament times that demons were departed spirits of the dead, elevated to the rank of minor deities which functioned as intermediaries, i.e. mediators between men and the major deities. This doctrine violated three major fundamental doctrines of Christianity, making it clear that the apostle Paul would not have subscribed to it or endorsed it. The three major doctrines of Christianity are: 1. Man is wholly mortal and at death becomes unconscious (“asleep”), and cannot regain consciousness without resurrection at the second coming of Christ.

2. There is only one God (Deity). The concept that demons are deities is diametrically opposed to the Biblical doctrine of monotheism. Demonology in New Testament times was clearly polytheism.

3. There is only “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). There are not many intermediaries in the form of demons, as believed by the pagans, and as believed by the Roman Catholics who believe their people live on after death, and have “canonized” some of them (not to mention Mary) and regard them as intermediaries.

In view of the way the doctrine of demons believed by the pagans in New Testament times so seriously violated fundamental doctrines of Christianity, it is clear that the apostle Paul would not have subscribed to it. To do so, would involve contradiction of his teaching and hypocrisy. His view is clearly stated in 1 Cor. 8:4: “We know that an idol has no real existence and that there is no other God but one.” (Paul’s words in v 5: “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many, and lords many,” do not mean that he believed in other gods or demons. His words “that are called” mean “so called” and modern versions translate it this way. Paul is clearly speaking hypothetically from the pagan point of view. His own point of view is stated in v 6: “But to us there is only one God.”)

LAST WORD FROM JESUS

The Lord Jesus Christ, in his message from God in the last book of the Bible, confirms this. Rev. 9:20 refers to idolaters who “repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons and idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood, which can neither see, hear or walk.” Demons are linked here with idols, the works of mens’

hands, and are pronounced to be lifeless and useless.

Can you imagine an idolater responding by saying to Jesus: “You have missed the whole point. It is not the lifeless blocks of wood we are worshipping, but the demons possessing them, which are real living entities that can see and hear and travel about.” If this were truly the case, would not Jesus know it and address the issue? Would he be so shallow and superficial to ignore or overlook it and leave himself open to such argument and criticism? No! He clearly did not believe that idols possessed live or living entities in the form of demons or any other shape or form. For this reason he equates demons with idols, putting them into the same category as “the works of mens’ hands.”

In connection with this, Rev. 18:2 is interesting. It is actually a quotation from Isa. 21:9 and a comparison between the two verses is revealing. Both passages use the words: “Babylon is fallen,” then following that, Rev. 18:2 refers to “demons,” but Isa. 21:9 refers to idols. Once again, the connection between idols and demons is obvious. In view of the fact that an idol has no real existence, the equating of demons with idols is one of the Spirit’s ways of saying that demons have no real existence; they only exist in the minds of those who believe in them.

EVIL SPIRITS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Although there are no references to demons in the Old Testament, there are two references to “evil spirits,” but they have nothing to do with demons. On both occasions the evil spirit is said to have been sent from God, not a fallen angel.

The first reference is in Judg. 9:23 which records how God, by His control of circumstances and events, caused a disagreement to occur between two parties, to bring judgement upon a wicked leader. The verse describes this in terms of God sending an evil spirit between them, and the meaning of this is quite clear: a disagreement and ill-feeling developed between them, causing them to fall out. The “evil spirit” simply means an evil attitude or disposition, as in the case of “sorrowful spirit” (1 Sam. 1:15), “contrite spirit” (Ps. 34:18) etc. The “evil spirit” had nothing to do with demons.

The second reference to an “evil spirit” in the Old Testament, is in 1 Sam. 16:14-16. It relates to king Saul, and says his evil spirit was also sent by God. Due to sin, God withdrew the Holy Spirit from Saul and blessed David instead, making him successful, prosperous and popular, preparing him to take over Saul’s position as king of Israel. This made Saul jealous

and angry, resulting in him getting into terrible states of depression and violent rages.

Professor Rendle Short, in his book “The Bible and Modern Medicine” says: “King Saul would now be diagnosed as a typical example of manic-depressive insanity.” He then goes on to point out that “The Old Testament says “an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.” But Josephus, looking at the story from the point of view held by Jews in his day says Saul was demon possessed.” Many in Christendom today would share Josephus’ view, which contradicts the Old Testament record.

Josephus was a Jewish historian who had been influenced by the pagan views of Greek philosophy, particularly the immortality of the soul, upon which the Greek doctrine of demons was based, and therefore believed the same. This is well documented in his writings.

It is clear that king Saul’s intense gloom, severe persecution complex, and outbreaks of homicidal violence, were caused by God rejecting him and blessing David instead. It made him jealous of David and on several occasions he tried to kill him. Envy and jealousy leads to hatred which leads to murder, and is all of the flesh, as we read in Gal. 5:19-21. Saul was like Cain, who, because his brother Abel’s works were better than his own, hated him and killed him (1 Jn. 3:12). It all sprang from a bad mental attitude - an “evil spirit” inspired by sin in the flesh.

But, because Saul’s evil spirit resulted from God withdrawing the Holy Spirit from him and giving it to David instead, it is referred to as being caused by God.

The fact that Saul’s evil spirit departed from him when David played his harp to him, also indicates that the problem related to his own personal mental anxiety and depression. The soft soothing music caused his sullen depressed mood to lift from him. A fallen angel demon would not be frightened away by a harp!

Saul’s evil spirit was clearly his own carnal response to unfavourable conditions appointed by God, which knocked his ego and hurt his pride. So Saul only had himself to blame, not God nor a demon, and for that reason he fell under the judgement of God and perished.

A LYING SPIRIT

What has been said about an evil spirit from the Lord also applies to the reference in 1 Kng. 22:15-23 of God sending an angel to be a “lying spirit” in the mouth of the false prophets of wicked king Ahab; to induce him into battle to be killed. By His control of circumstances and

conditions, God is able, through an angel, to generate an atmosphere of confidence and a sense of well-being, resulting in false prophets feeling God is with them and their nation, and will bless whatever the king wants to undertake. They would therefore feel confident about encouraging their king to go into battle with the enemy and gain victory.

But, as often proves to be the case, predictions based on wishful feelings and emotional atmosphere are a deception, and can turn out to be a lie and a disaster. However, if God arranged for an angel to generate a favourable atmosphere and condition which brought about a positive and confident feeling in the false prophets, causing them to encourage king Ahab to go into battle, then, by a figure of speech, Scripture refers to it as God sending an angel to be a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets.

GOD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART

The same applies to statements in the book of Exodus to God hardening Pharaoh's heart. If the record is read carefully it will be seen that when God's judgements fell on Egypt, Pharaoh's heart was softened and he repented and promised to obey the Lord. But when God lifted the judgement and gave Pharaoh respite, he then hardened his heart and refused to keep his promise.

Because Pharaoh hardened his heart as a result of God lifting the judgement and making the conditions and atmosphere feel more favourable, Scripture, by the same figure of speech, refers to it in terms of God hardening his heart. In reality, the hardening was due to Pharaoh's own negative reaction and response to God's grace and mercy.

Paul relates to this kind of abuse of the grace of God in Rom. 2:4-5: "Do you despise and think lightly of God's great goodness, tolerance and patience? Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But you have a hard and a stubborn heart and are storing up wrath for yourself"

NO REFERENCES TO DEMONS IN OLD TESTAMENT

So then, there are no references to demons in the Old Testament, and the references to "evil spirit" and "lying spirit" have nothing to do with them. Evil spirits or demons are never associated with sickness or disease in the Old Testament. Not once do we read about them possessing or being cast out of anyone.

In Dan. 4 reference is made to a mental illness inflicted on Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, causing him to grovel on the ground and act like an animal. He became insane and in New Testament times his condition would have been attributed to demon possession. But the Old Testament makes no such connection. It attributes it to God - a judgement of God designed to humble the king due to an over inflated ego and pride.

Now, if, as tradition believes, demons are fallen angels that fell prior to the fall of man, why is there no record of them possessing people and inflicting them with sickness and disease during the four thousand years of Old Testament history? Why are there no references to demons in the Biblical record until New Testament times? These questions have an important bearing on the whole subject, and must be taken into account in any conclusions drawn.

Although the Old Testament makes no reference to demons, it does refer many times to sickness and disease. And it is significant to note that it very clearly and positively attributes sickness and disease to one specific source, namely, God! He is the only supernatural power associated with sickness and disease.

COMPARING OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES

Also of particular significance, is the fact that certain disorders mentioned in the New Testament as being caused by demons, are mentioned in the Old Testament as being caused by God. For instance, in Matt. 12:22. Mk. 9:25 etc deafness, dumbness and blindness are attributed to demons. But in the Old Testament in Ex. 4:11 the Lord says: "Who has made man's mouth? or who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?"

Zecharias, the father of John the Baptist was dumb at one stage and could not speak. Who caused it? Lk. 1:20 says he was struck dumb by God as a result of his unbelief. But any of his Jewish contemporaries who were not acquainted with the facts, probably attributed his condition to demon possession. Remember that John the Baptist himself was accused of being possessed, as well as Jesus, because they did not conform to convention.. The people during those times had become very preoccupied with demons, with the result that one could hardly have a nervous twitch without being accused of being possessed.

Talking about dumbness, listen to what God said to the prophet Ezekiel: "And I will make your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth,

and you shall be dumb” (3:26). Here again the Lord claims responsibility for dumbness, and, as in the case of Zecharias, Ezekiel was later released from that condition.

Regarding blindness, we read in Jn. 9:3 that a man was born blind “so that God’s power might be displayed in him.” This implies that God either allowed it or arranged it for His glory. Act. 13:8-11 informs us that God, through the apostle Paul, inflicted blindness upon Elymas the sorcerer as a punishment for his opposition to the gospel. This also resulted in glory to God, for it caused others to believe.

The point was made earlier that the way in which Jesus “rebuked” a fever suggests it was regarded as being caused by demons. But in the Old Testament, in Deu. 28:22, fever is listed as one of the curses inflicted by the Lord to punish those who sin and rebel against His law.

Jesus encountered and healed lepers during his ministry. Not knowing the cause, those living at the time probably attributed it to demons. But God’s control of leprosy is demonstrated a number of times quite dramatically in the Old Testament. He told Moses to put his hand into the fold of his cloak and then take it out and it would be leprous as snow (Ex. 4:6). This was to be done as a sign to prove he had been commissioned by God. We also read in Num. 12 that God struck Moses’ sister Miriam with leprosy for speaking against her brother. And 2 Kng. 5 tells us that God caused Naaman’s leprosy to be transferred to Gehazi as a punishment for his sin of covetousness and lying.

Under the law of Moses, which was in operation at the time, anything unclean on the human body, like leprosy or running issues, came under strict legislation. The affected person was unclean and had to stay outside the camp, isolated from the community. Now, if leprosy and other disorders were caused by demons, surely God would have made provision in the law for the priests to perform exorcisms and cast them out. But there are no such provisions made, and no such proceedings ever took place.

The Old Testament does not record a single exorcism. Instead, the law recommended putting the affected persons into quarantine and washing in water, which modern science now knows to be a very scientific approach. Under the law during Old Testament times, no incantations or magical formulas were allowed by God, but there was widespread use of them by the pagans for healing, and unfortunately, the Old Testament church was influenced by them and adopted them.

During his ministry, Jesus encountered a man with a withered hand and healed him (Matt. 12:10). The Old Testament also tells the story of a

man whose hand was withered by God. His name was Jeroboam, a wicked king of Israel. 1 Kng. 13:4 says that as a result of him pointing his hand out in a threatening gesture towards God’s prophet, “his hand dried up so that he could not pull it again to himself.”

PLAGUES AND PESTILENCES

The number of occasions recorded in the Old Testament in which God sent pestilence or plague on individuals, cities and nations, are too numerous to mention. Many disorders caused by these divinely inflicted diseases would have been attributed by the pagan nations to their gods or demons. But the Old Testament is emphatic: the power of the One and only God, the God of Israel, was in control. Such pestilence was an “evil” created by Him, usually as a punishment for sin.

When God delivered Israel from Egypt and assembled them at Sinai, He made it clear to them, as we read in Deu. 28:21-29, that if they rebelled against Him, He would punish them with “pestilence, wasting disease, fever, madness, blindness, inflammation, boils, ulcers, scurvy, incurable itch etc.”

Verses 59-61 say: “The Lord will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions; afflictions severe and lasting, sicknesses severe and persistent. Moreover, He will bring on you all the diseases of Egypt which you were afraid of, and they shall cleave to you. Also every sickness and every plague which is not written in the book of the law, them will the Lord bring upon you until you be destroyed.”

Notice how all embracing God’s warning is here. “Every sickness (i.e. mental and physical), and every plague” not mentioned in the list, will be sent by God, not a fallen angel demon.

The question therefore, that must next be addressed is: Why is it that demons are not associated with mental or physical disorders in the Old Testament, but they are in the New Testament? Why does the Old Testament attribute sickness and disease to God, but the New Testament to demons? Does the Old and New Testament contradict? What are the demons in the New Testament that are associated with human disorders?

* * * * *

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

SOME IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS

The fact that demons are not associated with mental or physical disorders in the Old Testament, but are in the New Testament, indicates that this form of diagnosis came into fashion among the Jews during the inter-testament period, i.e. during the period between Malachi (the last book in the Old Testament), and Matthew (the first book in the New Testament).

Malachi was written around four hundred B.C. which means the inter-testament period was about four hundred years. The question is, therefore, did God give a special revelation during this period that demons were the cause? No! There is no record of such a revelation. All the indications are to the contrary. Take, for example, the following prophecy from Amos 8:11: “Behold, the days come says the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord (i.e. a prophet who speaks it) and shall not find it.”

This was the position during the four hundred years between the two testaments. The sun went down on the prophets, resulting in no direct revelation from God. That is why there is a gap in the canon of Scripture between Malachi and Matthew. And the problem was in Israel’s history, that when they had no prophets to keep them on the strait and narrow, they became an easy prey for pagan philosophy and practise, strayed from Old Testament truths, and wandered into superstitious fables and myths. (The same applied of course even when they had prophets if they refused to listen to them.)

BACK TO THE INTER-TESTAMENT PERIOD

Now, as pointed out in chapter sixteen, the four hundred year inter-testament period followed the period of exile in Babylon, during which the Jews came under the influence of the pagan doctrines of Babylon and Persia. Various encyclopaedias have already been quoted, pointing out that satan in the Old Testament (in the book of Job) was first regarded as one of God’s servants used by God to inflict adversity. But, as a result of Persian influence, satan came to be identified with Ahriman, the Persian god or spirit of evil and darkness, who was in continual conflict with Ahura Mazda, the god of good and light.

Reference has been made to Funk and Wagnall's new encyclopaedia which says the belief in a supreme spirit of evil in opposition to God "developed gradually in Hebrew theology, and was affected by extranational influences." (i.e. the influence of nations such as Babylon, Persia and Greece etc). The same encyclopaedia also says that "In the Apocrypha" (a collection of uninspired Jewish writings written during the inter-testament period), "which reveals both Babylonian, Persian and Egyptian influences, the older Hebrew doctrine that misfortune comes from the angel of Jehovah, disappears, and demons or evil spirits are for the first time, (i.e. in Jewish writings), mentioned as the authors of calamities" The encyclopaedia goes on to say: "During the period preceding the birth of Jesus, the Hebrew concept of angels, the devil and demons was modified and influenced by Persian Zoroastrianism." The encyclopaedia then goes on to confirm that "the idea of spiritual hierarchies and orders and names of specific spirits and demons" was drawn from pagan sources.

GREEK PHILOSOPHY

It was, of course, during the inter-testament period, that the power of Greece arose under Alexander the Great, and conquered the world. During this period the pagan philosophies and mythologies of the Greeks made a tremendous impact and had a profound effect on the world, greatly influencing all races, including the Jews.

As far as the Greeks were concerned, God's wisdom revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures in relation to the cause and source of evil, was foolish. They also rejected Scripture's teaching on the mortality of the soul. Like all pagans, they believed the soul was immortal, and that at death, it left the body and lived on in a disembodied state. Their hope of life after death did not require a body, and for this reason they treated the Christian hope of physical resurrection as a joke. This is indicated in Act. 17 which tells us that in response to Paul's preaching on resurrection at Athens, some of the Greek philosophers mocked. And, in response to Paul's preaching of Jesus, they said "he (Paul) seems to be talking about foreign demons." (or "foreign deities," because they believed that demons were deities i.e. gods).

In view of this, it is not surprising that the apostle Paul says in 1 Cor. 1:17-23 that the preaching of the gospel was "foolishness" to the Greeks. Rather than be guided by the divine revelation in the Scriptures, they preferred to lean to their own flesh feelings and carnal thoughts and

imaginings, which are based on guess work and assumption. They were, of course, largely influenced by the heathen philosophies of the previous pagan empires such as Persia, Babylon and Egypt, all of which had stamped the world with their superstitious myths and legends, in turn, with ever growing momentum. They filled the air and the underworld with a whole host of devils and demons, surrounding themselves on every side with them.

FACING THE FACTS

Whether we like it or not, we have to face the fact that all references to demons in the New Testament come from a Greek word, not a Hebrew word - a word that has no origin or connection with the inspired Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures. The word traces back, not to the Old Testament, but to the inter-testament period when the Greeks rose to power and indoctrinated the nations.

As a result of the Greek empire, the Greek language spread throughout the world, and became the fashionable language at the time and for centuries afterwards. Not only were gentile nations affected, but also the Jews, and it was in this language that the New Testament was originally written.

This is where the word “demon” originated. It has been translated from the Greek word “daimon.” The word existed in the Greek language from an early period, and the true original meaning can only be obtained from the writings of the ancient Greek writers. So the all-important question is: in what sense was the word “daimon” used by the Greeks? What was their concept of “evil spirits?” The answer to this is very important, because it will supply us with the answer as to what those in New Testament times thought demons were.

THE GREEK CONCEPT OF DEMONS

Volumes of ancient Greek literature have been preserved and passed down throughout history, making our investigation quite simple and easy. We don't have to assume anything, because the Greek view on the subject is well documented in many ancient historical records. According to most lexicons, “daimon” means divine, deity, divinity, a god or spirit - a minor deity, being inferior and subordinate to major deities. For this reason the noun “daimonion” is translated “gods” with a small “g” in Act. 17:18 in the Authorized Version.

Plato, (428-348 B.C.) the renowned Greek philosopher, whose volumes of writings have come down to us, says that demons are the departed spirits of the dead, and Hesiod, an 8th century B.C. Greek poet, says the same. Homer (11th Century B.C.) in “The Odyssey and the Iliad,” told stories of Greek heroes who were killed in battle and lived on afterwards as gods (demons). In the writings of Lucian, a Greek sophist and satirist who lived between 120-180 A.D., it is stated that a demon was regarded as “the ghost of a dead man.” Liddell and Scotts’ Lexicon says “demon” was the name by which Socrates (468-399 B.C.) called his genius, or spirit (immortal soul), which he believed he possessed. This Lexicon goes on to point out that the general meaning of the word among the Greek speaking world was “departed souls.” The encyclopaedia Britannica is therefore quite right when it says demonology finds its basis in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

CANONIZED AND DEIFIED SOULS

It is evident from the writings of the Greek poets and historians, that they believed the souls of men were, at death, promoted, i.e. canonised or deified, and became “daimon” (“demons”). They were elevated to the rank of “gods” (minor deities), and acted as intermediaries or mediators between the major superior gods and men, and were used by them to distribute good and evil. In view of this, it is significant that “daimon” is derived from “daio,” which means “to distribute.” It might be said therefore, that in the Greeks’ view, “satan” is a major deity, such as Ahrim, the Persian god of evil and darkness, and “demons” are his “angels” or “messengers” - departed spirits from the dead who act as his agents.

Believing that demons were departed spirits of the dead, the Greeks naturally believed they were immaterial entities, able to enter and possess idols and human beings and inflict mental and physical ailments. And, as mentioned in a previous chapter, the Roman Catholics adopted a similar doctrine by canonising the departed spirits of certain people, and elevating them to special ranks of sainthood. These saints (particularly Mary), are regarded as intermediaries between the supreme God and men, and are prayed to for help. They have the power to protect or punish, to do good or evil, as did the pagan demons. For this reason, in the prayer before the mass, Roman Catholics invoke the aid of not only “all angels,” but also “all saints.”

The Latins (Romans) also held the same view as the Greeks, that

demons were departed souls of the dead, and they were largely influenced by Greek philosophy. Various ancient Latin writings confirm this.

JEW'S INFLUENCED BY PAGAN PHILOSOPHY

There can be no question or doubt that the Jews were influenced by this doctrine, and it was deeply rooted and ingrained in their minds when Jesus came on the scene in the first century A.D. Thayer's Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament says that Josephus (first century Jewish historian) makes mention of demons taking possession of men, but he sees in them, not bad sinful angels, but the spirits of wicked men deceased. Josephus clearly asserts that those called daimonia are the "spirits" of wicked men who enter the living, and kill those who receive no help.

Being a Jew, Josephus reflected the current Jewish teaching on demons during the period when the New Testament was written, and reveals that the Jewish concept was the same as the Greek. No wonder Jesus said to the leaders and teachers of the day "How ingeniously you neutralize the word of God by your traditions;" "In vain do you worship me, teaching for doctrine the traditions of men."

SUPERSTITIOUS NONSENSE

The doctrine of demons led to all sorts of superstitions and rather bizarre nonsense, as is evident in Josephus' writings and the apocrypha. References are made in these writings to things relating to demons and exorcisms that are downright ridiculous, and one would have to be naive and gullible to believe it. For example, Josephus makes reference to releasing a person of a demon by putting the root of a particular plant to the nostrils of the person, and drawing the demon out through the nostrils.

Another reference is made to a certain shrub which produces a particular root, which, if either the urine or menstrual blood of a woman is poured on it, and is then carried away hanging in a downward position from the hand, it can then be used successfully to drive out demons. Reference is also made to setting up a cup of water a little distance from a demoniac, and commanding the demon to overturn it as he went out of the man, and thereby let the spectators know that he had left the man. The pagan doctrine of demons gave rise to all sorts of extravagant imaginations and claims, as it still does in various circles today, and it

soon becomes obvious why Josephus' writings and the apocryphal writings never found their way into the canon of Scripture. Those who believed in this sort of nonsense became extremely demon conscious - paranoid. Fear of these unseen powers caused the people to become pre-occupied and obsessed in their minds about them. Every slightest irregularity or abnormality in human behaviour or appearance would be attributed to demons.

In the apocrypha, reference is made to driving out a demon by making smoke from the liver, heart and gall of a fish, and holding it in front of the person possessed. A case is also given of a woman who had seven husbands, all of whom died. The reason given is because a demon was in love with her, and killed her husbands out of envy. The demon was driven away by making smoke from the organs of a fish in the bride chamber.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

Superstitions such as these were typical of those held by the Jews who had been influenced by the pagan doctrine of demons. The obvious question to be asked is, how could such foolish and harmless methods involving smoke etc, cast out demons if they are supernatural? One answer to this question is summed up in the word "psychological."

It is now known and generally accepted that many illnesses and ailments are psychological, i.e. they only exist in the mind and are simply imagined but not real. This is particularly the case with hypochondriacs, who have a morbid concern and anxiety about their health, always thinking something is wrong with them, resulting in regular visits to the doctor. In the event of believing that their problem is caused by a demon, they will immediately feel better if convinced the demon is cast out.

There could certainly be no inherent healing power or efficacy in the primitive and superstitious methods which involved plants, fish and smoke. But if a person really believed these methods had the power to deliver, then the right psychological basis would exist for it to take place. I know of a case of a person who was convinced she could not go to sleep each night without a sleeping pill. The nurse started giving her another harmless pill that looked the same, and, because she was convinced in her mind that it was the same, it had the same effect.

A young boy was convinced by his older brother that a ghost was in the wardrobe. One day the older brother forced him inside and blocked the door, resulting in the younger brother yelling and screaming in fear until

the door was opened. There was, of course, no ghost, but in his mind it was real.

There is the case of the man who got locked in a large freezer and because he thought it was turned on, he died believing he was freezing. It was not on at all but his false imagination convinced him it was and led to his unnecessary death. I have seen people in a warm room convinced it is freezing under hypnosis, resulting in them shivering and trying to wrap themselves up. One crawled under a carpet!

MIND OVER MATTER

The power of the mind can also be seen among the Australian aborigines, when the witch doctor points a bone at a member of the tribe to signal death. All the resources of medical science cannot break the psychological fixation and deadlock in his mind that death is inevitable and unavoidable, and it is only a matter of time before he dies. Accounts can also be cited of a group of people conspiring against a person, one by one, independently telling him that he looks ill, until eventually he feels it.

The power of the mind is really quite amazing, and much has been observed and written about the effects that positive and negative suggestions and thinking can have on a person. “Mind over matter” is truly a very real phenomenon.

The ease with which man believes in invisible unearthly powers working against him has been well documented throughout history. And both history and experience has shown that, once people become convinced that their troubles are due to a demon, it is very difficult to reason with them and convince them otherwise. Often, those who try to help them, even when it is known that the problem has nothing to do with a demon, have to “go along” with them in their delusion, initially at least, to make any headway.

When a person firmly believes he is possessed by a demon, and that a particular kind of ritual exorcism is the only way he can be delivered, then such a method has to be adopted. Many missionaries working among primitive tribes have found this out and have resorted to a ritual exorcism, even though they knew what the medical problem was and had the medicine to cure it. And, as could be expected, such missionaries perform the exorcism in the name of Jesus, and attribute the cure to the power of God and give Him the glory!

THE MAIN POINT

Now, the main point of what has been said so far, is that those living in New Testament times, contemporary with Christ and the apostles, believed demons were departed spirits of dead men, elevated to the rank of gods. They did not believe they were fallen angels. This point is important so let it be stated again: those in New Testament times did not believe that demons were fallen angels!

This means therefore, that the traditional doctrine that demons are fallen angels not only has no foundation in Scripture, but is also different from, and contrary to what was believed and taught in the first century. Now, this puts tradition in a difficult position, because it has no foundation for its present view, and would not want to adopt the other view that demons are the departed spirits of the dead.

Even though tradition believes in the immortality of the soul, it does not believe that the human spirit can return after death to possess another body and communicate with it or through it. This being the case, tradition is forced to conclude that although Jesus used the Greek word “daimon,” he did not sanction or endorse the pagan concept behind the word.

The unavoidable conclusion is that Jesus accommodated himself to the language of the time, without in any way believing or supporting the false pagan concepts behind it. This would mean that when people talked to Jesus about demons, they had departed human spirits in mind, but he had something quite different in mind.

It is significant to note that, although Jesus ministered on many occasions to people possessed with demons, he never identified the demons with departed spirits of the dead or fallen angels. As quoted earlier from one traditional writer: “The Scriptures do not describe the origin of demons; that question seems to be part of the mystery surrounding the origin of evil.” This is quite true. Although the New Testament refers to demons many times, it never explains their origin, nature or identity.

THE LAW OF ACCOMMODATION

Now, the question is: was it right for Jesus to use the word “demon,” which had a false pagan concept or doctrine behind it, if he didn’t believe it? Well, it has always been a common practise to use a word or expression which has a false theory behind it, without actually endorsing the concept. And when this is done, very few would be so legalistic to say

it is being dishonest, deceitful and hypocritical to do so. We all do it all the time! It is one of those inevitable and unavoidable facts of life, and Jesus was not the first or last to do it.

For example, the ancients believed the earth was flat and had four corners. We now know that this idea is incorrect and unscientific. Scripture however, in spite of knowing the earth was round (Isa. 40:22), accommodated the terminology of the ancient pagan concept, and referred to “the four corners of the earth” (Rev. 7:1). But, using such words which had a colloquial significance, did not mean an endorsement of the false unscientific view which originated it.

The Bible likewise accommodates the expression of the sun rising and setting, but this does not endorse the false theory held for millennia that the earth was stationary and that the sun travelled around it. We still use the expression today, but do not sanction unscientific notions about the solar system.

UNDENIABLE FACTS OF SCIENCE

The fact of the matter is that man had to wait for the science of astronomy to advance, and for knowledge of outer space to increase, before he could arrive at the truth of the solar system, not to mention many other sciences. The invention of the telescope was the key to this, and revolutionized man’s knowledge of outer space overnight. As we shall see, the same applies to the “inner space” of man’s mind and body where the “demons” operate. The invention of the microscope has proved to be the key to this and has revolutionized man’s knowledge of sickness and disease and the real causes of it.

But, unfortunately, many minds are like concrete: all mixed up and permanently set! Traditions are so important to some that even when science proves beyond a shadow of a doubt they are wrong, they still cling tenaciously to them. Doctrinal pride prevents them from moving on to higher ground. To justify their stand, they come up with all sorts of arguments trying to prove that science is carnal and “of the devil,” “not of God” etc.

When Galileo and other astronomers, as a result of the telescope, could prove that the earth was not the centre of the universe, that it revolved on its axis, and that it travelled around the sun instead of vice versa, the church branded them as heretics and threatened to burn them at the stake unless they repudiated such notions which contradicted their teaching. If the church had had its way, we would still be living in the

dark ages today, holding to all manner of superstitious unscientific beliefs that originated in paganism.

There are some today who still believe the earth is flat. They are known as “the flat earth society.” Talk about none being so blind as those who can see! But, as shall be pointed out, current traditional thinking on demons is just as outdated, unscientific and unbiblical, and is not far removed from the superstitious beliefs of the pagans.

MORE EXAMPLES OF ACCOMMODATION

A classic example of using words without endorsing their original meaning can be seen in our calendar. Many of the names used to label the months and the days of each week, were originally borrowed from pagan sources and relate to pagan gods or rulers. Pope Gregory (16th century A.D.), reformed the calendar, but left many of the pagan names on it. For example, January was named after Janus, a Roman god, and “Sunday” literally means “day of the sun,” a day which pagan sun worshippers held sacred to the sun. And so we could go on through the list of months and days of the week. Today these are contemporary colloquial expressions and we use them freely, but we do not have in mind and do not endorse their pagan origins. And if anyone suggested that we shouldn’t use the words if we don’t believe and accept their original significance, we would think they were being very unreasonable, impractical and unrealistic.

The word “disaster” originally had an astrological significance, meaning “the stars are against you.” Back in history, anything that was “disastrous” was due to the evil of the “astar” or stars. But who today is going to refuse to use the word because of its astrological origins and associations? And who is going to think that anyone who uses the word must believe in astrology?

When we use the word “demonstrators” (demon-strators), we don’t mean that all who are involved are demon possessed. And when we use the word “pandemonium,” derived from Pan-demon, we don’t believe that all the demons have been let loose, causing uproar and confusion. The same applies to “lunatic” which occurs twice in the New Testament (Matt. 4:24. 17:15). It literally means “moon-struck” and originated in the superstition that madness is caused by the moon’s influence. But how many today, when using the word, are endorsing such a myth? And who would be so unreasonable to say the Bible must believe it just because it uses the word?

WITCHCRAFT

Sometimes we talk of someone being “bewitched,” but we don’t subscribe to the pagan superstition of a witch having us under her spell. Likewise, when the apostle Paul used the word “bewitched” in Gal. 3:1, he did not insinuate that he believed in such witches either.

In Gal. 5:20 Paul puts witchcraft (spiritualism) into the same category as idolatry, and says it is a product of the flesh, not departed spirits of the dead or fallen angels. Interestingly enough, the Greek word translated “witchcraft” is “pharmakeia,” from which we get our word “pharmacy.” In Greek it relates to both medication and magic, and is elsewhere translated “sorcery” in the New Testament. Strong’s Concordance relates the word to drugs and a druggist.

Drugs, of course, put the mind into an unreal world - a world of fantasy, fiction, illusion and delusion - a world in which things that are seen do not really exist, but which the mind is deceived into imagining exist. It is therefore a very appropriate word to use in relation to spiritualism, because spiritualists have been deceived by the flesh into imagining the dead are still alive and can be contacted and communicated with, and it is from this deception that the demons of paganism developed.

So many examples could be given of words and expressions which we freely use denominatively, which have a pagan or superstitious origin, without believing the fictions originally represented by them. And all the facts require that the same applies to Jesus’ usage of the words “demon” and “unclean spirit.” His conformity to the words and terms of his day, did not have to mean that he believed in the pagan delusions that lay behind them. This is particularly apparent in relation to Beelzebub.

BEELZEBUB

According to popular Jewish belief, Beelzebub was the prince of the demons, and the Jewish leaders claimed that it was through being in league with him, that Jesus was able to do his miracles of healing and deliverance. But in reality, Beelzebub was one of the imaginary gods of the ancient pagan Philistines, as we read in 2 Kng. 1. Yet, in spite of this, Jesus replied to the accusation of being in league with Beelzebub, saying: “If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your own disciples cast them out?” The word “If” indicates that Jesus’ statement is hypothetical. It could be paraphrased “If, as you say, I by Beelzebub” It is not a

statement of fact, affirming personal belief in Beelzebub. Jesus would not believe in, or endorse such a pagan belief.

The words of Professor Rendle Short are worth quoting, taken from his book: "The Bible and Modern Medicine": "The Bible describes people as they were, without glossing over their irrational beliefs and shortcomings. Even when it does not state that the beliefs were irrational, it by no means follows that it asks us to accept them."

Failure to realize this has led many astray. It is truly amazing how many read about demon possessed people (lunatics) in the New Testament, and accept what they say as being rational, and build a doctrine of demons on that basis. Building a doctrine of demons on the irrational utterances of the insane, is irrational in itself, and more will be said about this in a later chapter.

FILLING THE VOID

Now, when it is realized that demons are neither fallen angels nor departed spirits, a void is created which has to be filled with some other information or facts. In finding that information, it is important to remember that although demons in the New Testament are mostly associated with mental disorders, they are also associated with physical disorders, such as deafness, blindness, epilepsy, fever, dumbness, curvature of the spine.

It is also important to remember that, for the most part, disorders which could not be related to a simple obvious physical condition, were attributed to demons. Unless there was a physiological explanation that they knew of, demons were blamed. Demons were a convenient scapegoat for all disorders that could not be medically or scientifically diagnosed.

It hardly needs to be pointed out that medical science two thousand years ago in New Testament times, was very backward and primitive compared with today. Men were extremely limited in their understanding of the cause and effect of disease, and therefore limited in their ability to properly diagnose. In view of this, therefore, it goes without saying that it would not be surprising if certain mental and physical conditions which they did not understand, and therefore attributed to demons, are now understood in quite a different light. That is, what used to be attributed to demons, still involves the same symptoms today, but is diagnosed in different terminology.

The fact must also be taken into account that certain mental and physical disorders which used to be attributed to demons, can now be

cured or controlled by drugs, antibiotics, immunization, surgery, physiotherapy, chemo-therapy, laser, psychiatric treatment etc. And one thing is certain: disorders caused by supernatural powers would not be able to be controlled or cured by such methods.

EPILEPSY

For example, epilepsy was attributed to demons. Mk. 9:22 refers to the father of an epileptic son saying to Jesus: “Many times the evil spirit has tried to kill him by throwing him in the fire and into the water.” This is how epileptic fits and convulsions were interpreted in those times. If an epileptic has a fit near fire or water, he can end up falling in, and in ancient times this was interpreted to mean the demon was trying to kill him.

But it is now known that epileptic fits are caused by a short-circuiting of, or surge of energy in the brain, and can now be monitored and controlled by drugs. Medical science claims to be close to being able to eradicate the condition entirely by injecting a new drug they are developing.

The fact of the matter is that our body is controlled by the mind, and the thought processes of the mind are electrical impulses. As in any electrical circuit, wires can get crossed, touched or damaged, causing a short-circuiting and malfunction of the system, resulting in sparks flying and a blackout.

Cases can be cited of people undergoing a brain probe or surgery, whose arm or leg would jerk or convulse when a particular part of the brain was touched. This helps us to understand how pressure in the brain through a tumour or blood clot, can result in unusual and irregular actions and manifestations of the body. In New Testament times it would be attributed to demons, but today we are more enlightened.

HALLUCINATION

Certain cases of delusion and hallucination, which used to be attributed to demons, can now be treated by anti-psychotic drugs which affect the chemicals in the brain, which those in New Testament times also knew nothing about. In an interview on radio with a doctor recently, reference was made to demons in terms of “unseen, complex chemicals which, in a state of imbalance, cause mania.”

There is no doubt about it: the human body is one vast complex

chemical factory, and if the chemical combinations get out of balance, an imbalance in mind and body functions will result. This is evident in the effect of hallucinogenic drugs, which distort a person's understanding of himself and his surroundings. These drugs temporarily change the chemistry of the brain, affecting the senses, emotions, reasoning and the brain's control of muscles and certain body functions. The changes may be pleasant or highly unpleasant and frightening.

Hallucinogenic drugs are sometimes called psychedelic (mind revealing) drugs. The most powerful is LSD. This drug and two others, STP and DMT, are made chemically, and upset the chemical balance of the brain, causing hallucination - a mental state in which a person sees, hears, tastes, smells or feels something that is not present.

Some hallucinogenic drugs come from plants and have long been used by primitive peoples. In ancient times, the effects would have been attributed to demons. In view of this, it is significant that "demons" in Rev. 9:20 are linked with "sorceries" (v 21.) The Greek word for "sorceries" is "pharmakeia," which, as mentioned before, relates to drugs. Sorcerers used drugs to induce hallucination and psychic reactions. In sorcery, the use of drugs was generally accompanied by an appeal to occult powers. But, as Gal. 5:19-20 says, it was all of the flesh. It had nothing to do with fallen angels or departed spirits of the dead.

A study made over a period of three years of twenty two communes in the U.S.A. revealed that widespread reports of psychic phenomena could be attributed to altered states of consciousness induced by drugs in some cases, and by yoga-type meditation in others. The diabolical spread of drugs in the world today is one of the tragic developments of the end times. It is clearly of the "devil" (sin in the flesh), and is filling peoples' heads with "demons" so to speak.

GIANTS

In ancient times, men of unusually tall stature (giants) were regarded as offspring of demons. Even Christendom has regarded the "giants" in Gen. 6 as the result of fallen angels (demons) intermarrying with women of the world. But we now know that it is a chemical from the pituitary gland which controls our size and height. Specialists are now able to inject the chemical into children stunted in growth, with positive effects. In the early stages of experimentation before the right dosage was known, overdose resulted in some children growing to abnormal height.

Up until our 20th century end-time knowledge explosion, prophesied

in Dan. 12:4, men knew next to nothing about the chemical balance, genetic make-up and constitution involved in human beings, not to mention bacteria, viruses, cells in the blood and tissue, hormones, atoms, electrons and protons etc. In the past, men were ignorant of simple basic facts such as too little sugar in the blood can affect the way the mind functions. In our modern times of increased knowledge, man is discovering that his theories regarding the inner space of the human mind and body, were as unscientific and primitive as was his knowledge of outer space.

THE SHAKING PALSY

Parkinson's disease, which causes those inflicted, to shake and tremble, was once called "the shaking palsy," and was attributed to demons in ancient times, because no medical or scientific explanation could be given for the shaking. Some have even regarded the reference to demons trembling in Jam. 2:19, as relating to the shaking palsy caused by demons. But we now know that it is caused by a virus, which attacks and damages a particular internal region of the brain, resulting in a disorder of the central nervous system. Drugs have been developed which have helped those suffering with the disease.

Multiple-sclerosis, Legionnaires disease etc etc are also caused by viruses, but in ancient times were attributed to demons, because nothing was known about viruses or even bacteria.

We saw earlier that curvature of the spine was attributed to demons in New Testament times, because its cause could not be understood or explained in physiological terms. Sometimes bad posture can cause it, or arthritis, not to mention spinal diseases which those in ancient times knew nothing about and had no names for, except "demons."

BLINDNESS

We also saw that in certain instances in the New Testament, blindness was attributed to demons. There can, of course, be many different causes of blindness. Blindness can be caused by diabetes, a disease caused by excess sugar in the blood and urine, due to insufficient supply of insulin from the pancreas. Cataract are another disease which can result in blindness, causing the crystalline lens to become opaque. Glaucoma is also an eye disease that can lead to blindness, caused by the intraocular fluid increasing and pushing the lens and iris forward. Tropical

germs can cause inflammation of the eye and result in blindness due to lack of medical attention. There are also eye cancers that cause blindness. Those in ancient times knew nothing about any of these diseases, so they blamed demons for them.

DUMBNESS

Dumbness, of course, was also attributed to demons. In the past, many cases of dumbness (the inability to speak) was simply due to being born deaf, resulting in not being able to hear words and learn to speak and communicate. Because the person had ears and looked normal, there seemed to be no physical reason why he couldn't hear, learn and speak, so demon possession was regarded as the cause.

Interestingly enough, in some places in the New Testament, demon possession involving dumbness, is linked with deafness. For example, Mk. 9:25 refers to Jesus delivering a person of a "dumb and deaf spirit." And Mk. 7:37 says Jesus "has done all things well; he makes both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

Dumbness can also be caused by a malfunction of the brain-cell development of a baby in the womb, or brain damage at birth, or a knock on a vulnerable part of the head, or a blood clot in the brain etc. A blood clot in the brain causes a stroke, affecting people in different ways, depending on what area of the brain is affected. Some people become speechless ("dumb"), and paralysed down one side of the body. The ancients were also ignorant of these facts and would have diagnosed the symptoms as demon possession.

There was a case of a young woman who became paralysed down one side, with one arm bent up which she was unable to straighten. In New Testament times she would have been regarded as being possessed by a demon. But her condition was diagnosed as being a psychosomatic disorder. She had suffered an extreme emotional disturbance, connected with a love affair which had a very tragic ending. It was not until her emotional trauma ("spiritual condition") was treated through counselling and prayer, that the effects of the "binding" could be removed.

It is only in our modern times that we have come to understand the relationship between mind and body, and realize that what goes on in the mind can have profound physical effects. Sometimes a mental shock can leave a person with a stammer, making it difficult to get the words out. Fear can paralyse and even kill. But the ancients did not know this so demons were the stock and trade explanation for it.

BACTERIA AND VIRUSES

Demons were blamed for fever in New Testament times, but we now know that fever is commonly caused by an antibody such as a virus or bacterium. In fact, as a result of bacteria and viruses being discovered, a major breakthrough was achieved concerning the cause of numerous sicknesses and disease.

We have already seen that there are some obvious connections between demons and viruses, and more will be said about this in the next chapter. Viruses and bacteria are invisible (to the naked eye) malignant forces which invade and possess the body and brain, inflicting physical and mental disorders and diseases. Healing necessitates expelling - casting them out, and this, to a large degree, is what Jesus' exorcisms achieved. Many of the "demons" were the demons of sickness and disease, now known as viruses and bacteria - bugs and germs.

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CHAPTER NINETEEN DEMONS AND VIRUSES

It is clear that the language used in the New Testament in relation to demons, presents them as malignant influences, invisible to the naked eye, which invade and possess human beings, inflicting various disorders. This, precisely, is what germs do, and “evil spirits” is quite an apt description of them, because the word “spirit” in ancient times signified something invisible that could pass into, and possess humans.

In modern medical circles today, the language relating to bacteria and viruses is not far removed from the ancient descriptions of demons. Such anti-bodies have to be attacked, and the person “possessed” has to be dispossessed. The bacteria or virus has to be “driven out.”

Viewed in this light, the supposed pagan demon, though a myth theologically, was a reality physiologically. The disorder in each case of demon possession was caused by a real disturbing presence, and the popular name for it was “demon.” Therefore, when referring to this and removing it, Jesus called it “demon” - the name by which it was universally known.

It mattered not that the notion in which the name originated was incorrect. It was facts and not their names that Jesus came to deal with. He did not come to attempt to teach science to an unscientific and primitive world, but to teach the gospel and manifest the power of God. He left the scientific explanations for the scientific age, when knowledge on such matters increased and the evidence was made available to the people.

When you think about it, the Greeks were on the right track, in principle, when they concluded that certain disorders were due to a malignant influence invading and possessing people. Where they and the church went wrong, was in philosophising about it, assuming and imagining things, being led by their own opinions and feelings, instead of the word of God. “Beware lest anyone take you captive and lead you away through philosophy and vain deceit, based on the tradition of men, according to the principles and propositions of the world, and not according to Christ.” (Col. 2:8).

“CASTING” AND “HEALING”

In reaching a satisfactory conclusion regarding the nature of demons, it is significant to note that the word “healing” is used synonymously with “casting out” demons. For example, in Matt. 12:22 a person

“possessed with a demon, blind and dumb,” was brought to Jesus. The record simply says that Jesus “healed” him, making him able to see and speak. On other occasions, where demons are involved, the record often says they were “cast out.” Matt. 4:24 also uses the word “healed” in relation to those possessed with demons, and puts them into the same category as the “sick.”

In Lk. 7:21 we read: “and in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits.” Jesus is here described as “curing” (same word as “healing” in the Greek) people with “evil spirits.” The fact that they needed curing or healing implies physical sickness or infirmity, usually caused by viruses or bacteria. The Greek word for “healed” is “therapeuo” from which our English word “therapy” is derived. It occurs many times in the New Testament and is used primarily in relation to curing physical disorders resulting from natural causes. And damage to the cells of the body and brain, by virus attack, fits into this category.

It is evident, then, that the words “healed” and “cured” are applied equally to both physical and mental sickness, not just physical. And, as pointed out in the last chapter, both physical and mental sicknesses are “rebuked,” cast out and caused to depart, not just mental disorders (Lk. 4:39. Act. 19:12).

Matt. 8: 16-17 tells us that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in Isa. 53:4 which says: “He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.” A close examination of the context of Matt. 8:16-17 reveals that demon possession is included in the category of “sicknesses.” Once again this suggests physical disorders such as those now known to be caused by natural influences such as viruses and bacteria.

SIN AND SICKNESS

The context of Isa. 53:4 teaches that sin can be one of the causes of sickness. After stating that Jesus took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses, verse 5 goes on to say “he was wounded for our transgressions (sins); he was bruised for our iniquities.”

The connection between sin and sickness is conveyed by other Scriptures as well. Ps. 103:3 states that God “forgives all your iniquities; He heals all your diseases.” This is a Hebrew parallelism in which the same thing is stated twice, in different words. If disease is caused by sin, then the healing of disease implies forgiveness of sin.

Jesus, in fact, made this point when he said to a paralytic: “Thy sins

be forgiven thee” (Matt. 9). Some objected to Jesus forgiving sins, so he replied saying: “Which is the easiest to say, thy sins be forgiven thee, or, arise and walk?” Sin had caused the paralysis, so being able to stand up and walk implied forgiveness of sin. This being the case, Jesus chose to draw attention to it by saying: “thy sins be forgiven thee.”

In Jn. 5 we read about Jesus saying to a man he healed, “Behold, you have been healed, sin no more lest a worse thing come upon you.” The man had an “infirmity” which elsewhere is attributed to a demon (Lk. 13:11). According to Jesus, it was due to sin. This shows that there was a connection between demon possession and sin.

For example, reference is made in Mk. 16:9 to Mary Magdalene “out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons.” Now, Lk. 7:37-39 says she “was a sinner.” She was well known in the town and everyone knew “what type of woman” she was, i.e. loose and immoral. But Jesus said: “her sins which are many, are forgiven” (v47). Mary had many demons because she had many sins! The relationship between demons and sin is again evident here.

Even in the parable of the unclean spirit, as recorded in Matt. 12:43-45, the same connection is made. Jesus talks about seven wicked spirits entering a man, and concludes by saying, “Even so shall it be also to this wicked generation.” The man in the parable represented the nation of Israel, and Jesus taught that the wickedness (sin) of the nation would result in demon possession - irrationality and madness. And so it happened. The nation was mad enough to reject their Messiah, but became even madder in rejecting his resurrection. Their madness became even more fanatical and irrational when they rebelled against the Romans and suffered a terrible siege which brought disease and death.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEVIL AND DEMONS

The reason for drawing attention to the connection between sin and demons is to explain the connection made in some Scriptures between the devil, satan and demons. It is apparent that, although devil and demon are quite different words, and relate to different things, there is nevertheless a connection.

For instance, the woman referred to in Lk. 13 who had a “spirit” (demon) of infirmity,” is described by Jesus as being “bound by satan.” Also, in Matt. 12:22-30, Jesus links demons with satan by referring to his work of casting out “demons” in terms of casting out “satan.” And, when the seventy said to Jesus: “Lord, even the demons are subject to us

through thy name,” Jesus replied: “I beheld satan as lightning fall from heaven.”

Not only can we see a relationship between the devil, satan and demons in these verses, we can also discern the nature of the relationship. As has been demonstrated, the devil and satan relates to sin in the flesh which causes sin, resulting in God sometimes inflicting sickness. And demons relate to malignant forces, such as viruses and bacteria, which cause sickness and disorders. In this sense, demons are satan’s ministers (servants) or messengers (angels).

Now, this all ties in perfectly with the Old Testament teaching that God creates evil, such as sickness and disease as a punishment for sin. But, because sin is the fact or principle that moves God to inflict disorders, sin (i.e. the devil or satan), is referred to as the first cause in the matter. For this reason, some Scriptures refer to the devil or satan being responsible for afflicting people with various disorders. In reality, it is God who afflicts on the basis of sin becoming enthroned in peoples’ lives.

Therefore, as far as sickness and disease are concerned, God is the one who inflicts, sin (devil and satan) is the principle that moves God to inflict, and demons (viruses) are the method or process by which God’s affliction takes place. After all, who made the viruses and bacteria? The answer is: the same person who made the thistles and thorns mosquitoes and scorpions - God, not a fallen angel.

A PROBLEM

Some may feel that this creates a problem. If God is the inflicter of demons, would this not make a farce out of Jesus casting them out? Would this not be the Father and son in conflict with each other? No! Because it was with reluctance that God inflicted sickness in the first place, and was pleased to release people from it through His son. It was through love that He sent His son and gave him power over sin and sickness, so that those who were willing to repent and believe, might be delivered. In so doing, grace and mercy triumphed over law and judgement. Grace abounded and was magnified! But Jesus made it clear, as already pointed out, that those who were healed and delivered, must “sin no more lest a worse thing come upon you.”

The principle involved here can be compared with God sending flies and other scourges upon Egypt, and Moses casting them out when Pharaoh humbled himself and repented. Anyone acquainted with all the facts would never imagine that Moses and God were working against each

other!

TRADITION IN NO POSITION TO THROW STONES

Now, the suggestion that demons can relate to viruses, and that Jesus simply accommodated himself to the language of the day, has been rejected by some traditionalists on grounds that it makes Jesus a deceiver, encouraging pagan superstition instead of truth. It is argued that if Jesus did not believe that departed spirits of the dead caused the disorders, he should not have used the word “demon” which signified such spirits to those living at the time.

However, tradition is in no position to argue this way because it is forced to adopt the same approach. In view of the fact that demons were believed to be departed spirits of the dead in New Testament times, and tradition does not accept this but believes they are fallen angels, it also, in order to uphold conviction, has to fall back on the principle that Jesus simply accommodated the word demon without endorsing the pagan concept behind it. If not, tradition is compelled to believe that demons are departed spirits of the dead and not fallen angels.

JESUS DID NOT COME TO TEACH SCIENCE

Jesus’ mission was to teach spiritual truths, not science, and he did this in the language of the people. He no doubt knew more about the true origin and nature and function of disease than what he let on, but concealed it due to the inability of the people to understand and comprehend it. As Pr. 12:23 says: “A prudent man conceals knowledge.” On one occasion Jesus said: “I have much more to tell you, but now it would be too much for you to bear” (Jn. 16:12). This statement can be applied to both the natural and spiritual creation.

Facts can be quite confusing and devastating to those who are not ready for them and not capable of comprehending them. Many parents know how true this is in relation to their children. Often facts are concealed due to their minds being incapable of understanding.

During the Pre-scientific age of two thousand years ago, when Jesus walked the earth, it would have been a hopeless task trying to explain viruses and bacteria to people. There were no words available in the vocabulary of those times that could be used to describe such micro-organisms, and no microscopes to prove that they existed. Had Jesus attempted to teach the people about them, he would probably have been

regarded as more “possessed” (mad) than ever.

After all, many centuries later, in 1687, when the microscope was finally invented, and germs (bacteria) could be seen, they were not connected with disease. It was not until the nineteenth century that man started to suspect that they were the cause of many sicknesses. Up until then many different theories had been postulated, and demon possession was one of the popular ones.

DOCTOR SEMMELWEISS

Among the most important pioneers in this field was Doctor Semmelweiss. Believing that the high death rate in maternity wards was due to infection of some sort, he introduced in 1847 strict measures of cleanliness in his wards, insisting that all doctors and surgeons wash their hands before performing pelvic examinations of expectant mothers.

In those days, doctors and surgeons came straight from performing an autopsy, and, without washing their hands, performed internal examinations of expectant mothers, as well as surgical operations. This, of course, resulted in blood poisoning and a very high death rate.

The ignorance at the time of the existence of germs and their harmful effects was such, that Semmelweiss was belittled and ridiculed by his professional colleagues when he insisted on them washing their hands. And, if this was the reaction of professional medical men in the nineteenth century, when germs could actually be seen under a microscope, then what chance would Jesus have had of convincing the primitive uneducated people in the pagan unscientific world of the first century?

Even though Semmelweiss’ experiments resulted in a dramatic decrease of deaths in his ward, the medical world took little interest and played it down. A quarter of a century later, Louis Pasteur attempted to convince the world by a series of brilliantly designed experiments, that germs cause infection and disease. But again the response was ridicule from both the public and the medical profession. But ultimately his work achieved recognition among more open-minded scientists of his day.

THE OLD WINE IS BETTER

However, initially, in spite of overwhelming evidence, the majority preferred to stick with their old outdated, traditional theories, resulting in countless thousands of unnecessary deaths and suffering.

Professor Rendle Short, in his book “The Bible and Modern

Medicine,” points out that it was the “great service” of Hippocrates, the father of medicine (third century B.C.), “to separate medicine from magic and the supernatural, and to make it a rational science. He denied that epilepsy was caused by a god or demon.The common people were not impressed with Hippocrates sober theories and treatments.”

SCIENCE HAS ITS LIMITATIONS

In some countries even today, where ideas on demons are similar to those in New Testament times, doctors find that their use of modern scientific methods are often useless unless the hypothetical “demon” is first ritually “cast out.” And it is not unknown for modern medical men to speak, in all seriousness, to the person afflicted, in terms of “casting out the devil,” during the process of healing. Expressions and actions according to what the natives are accustomed, have to be accommodated before headway towards healing can take place.

No other method or approach can successfully break the psychological fixation that they have on being possessed by a demon. When people are convinced in their own mind that they have a demon, the best scientific methods fail to break the deadlock. This is particularly so when those afflicted are mentally or emotionally unbalanced or deranged. You cannot reason and rationalize with irrational minds, least of all about science and modern medicine. Jesus knew this and never attempted it.

And so, when Jesus and the apostles came in contact with those who believed in the demons of paganism, they spoke and acted within the confines of the belief. Any other approach would have resulted in making a mentally disturbed person more disturbed and confused. After all, malignant influences were real and had to be “cast out” before soundness of mind or body could be restored. God obviously does not refuse to heal a person who has an incorrect or unscientific understanding of the true origin and nature of demons. He is not that narrow-minded or legalistic!

It should also be remembered that Jesus never used magical rites, incantations, or the superstitious ritualistic rigmarole practised by the pagan exorcists, such as those referred to in Josephus and the Apocrypha. His exorcisms were free of all hocus pocus and mumbo jumbo, and basically involved a short and brief word of command, commanding the demon or demons to depart.

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CHAPTER TWENTY

SPEAKING TO DEMONS AND DEMONS SPEAKING

If demons relate to viruses, bacteria, chemical imbalance etc, the question will naturally be asked: “how could they speak and how could Jesus speak to them?” Reference is made in the Gospels to demons speaking and of Jesus speaking to them, rebuking them, casting them out and causing them to depart. In view of this it has been concluded that demons must be personal intelligent forces, not impersonal unintelligent forces like viruses and chemicals.

In answer to this, it is firstly significant to note that there are examples of Jesus using the same kind of language, action and procedure when dealing with a disorder caused by a virus, not to mention other things in the natural world which do not have a personal intelligent existence. For example, as already pointed out earlier, Lk. 4:39 records that Jesus “rebuked” a fever, which we now know is caused by a virus. Reference is also made in Matt. 8:26 to Jesus “rebuking” the wind and the sea. But who today, on that basis, would argue that the wind and sea must be personal intelligent forces?

Regarding the references to demons “departing” from people, the same language is also used elsewhere in relation to diseases caused by bacteria and viruses. For example, in Mk. 1:42 we read that when Jesus gave the word for a leper to be healed, and touched him, “immediately the leprosy departed from him.” We now know that leprosy is caused by a germ (bacterium), and so when it says “the leprosy departed from him,” it means the germ was driven out of his body.

Someone may argue that there is a difference between germs and demons because demons can leave one body and transfer themselves to another, as in the case of the swine. But so can germs! For example, we read in 2 Kng. 5:27 that leprosy was transferred from one man to another; from Naaman to Gehazi. It is well known today that many germs are contagious and can travel from one person to another by coughing, sneezing, kissing etc.

In Act. 19:12 we read that during Paul’s ministry, “diseases departed” from the sick. Once again we have the same terminology used elsewhere in relation to demons, but used here in relation to physical sickness and disease caused by germs.

The expression “cast out” is also used in Scripture not only in connection with demons but also in relation to abstract things such as sins and emotions. Job. 39:3 refers to “sorrows” being “cast out,” and Mic.

7:19 makes reference to “sins” being “cast” into the depths of the sea.

There are, in fact, many examples in both the Old and New Testament of impersonal unintelligent things being addressed and spoken to, prior to the power of God being brought to bear upon them. We read in Matt. 21:19 and Mk.11:21 about Jesus speaking to a fig tree and cursing it, saying: “Let no fruit grow on you from this time forward, forever.” Moses spoke to a rock and asked it to give forth water (Num. 20:8). Joshua addressed the sun and moon, saying: “Sun, stand still you also moon ...” (Josh. 10:12). In Ezk. 37 we read that the prophet Ezekiel was told by God to address a pile of dry bones in a valley, saying, “O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.” The same prophet was also told by God to speak to the mountains and hills, rivers and valleys (Ezk. 6:1-3).

Speaking to demons, therefore, in view of these examples, does not necessarily have to mean they were personal intelligent entities.

DEMONS SPEAKING

The question will naturally be asked: “how can it be explained that demons were not only spoken to, but also spoke?” In answering this it should firstly be pointed out that there are two ways in which the word demon is used, as in the case of the word devil. As we have seen, the word “devil” is used in an abstract sense in relation to the “spirit” of man, i.e. those evil sub-conscious impulses of sin which possess the flesh and tempt with wicked thoughts. But, when a person is controlled by those sinful impulses, he becomes the embodiment and manifestation of them, and is called “devil” himself.

In the same manner, if a “demon” possesses a person and controls him, and is manifested in his speech and actions, he becomes a walking talking demon himself. For this reason, it is not surprising that some references to demons or evil spirits are actually referring to people themselves who were possessed. In this light, it is not hard to understand how demons could speak!

An example of this can be seen in Mk. 3:11 where we read about “unclean spirits (demons) when they saw Jesus, fell down before him, and cried, saying, thou art the son of God.” Here, the “unclean spirits” clearly refer to the people themselves who were possessed. How else could it be explained that they “fell down.?” It was also the people who cried out!

Another example can be seen in Jam. 2:19 where it is said: “The demons also believe and tremble.” The word “tremble” means to quiver or shake physically. It is a physical phenomenon and the experience requires

a body. If demons are disembodied, immaterial and invisible, i.e. entities that have no body and cannot be seen, then how can they tremble or be seen to be trembling? James is obviously referring to the people themselves who were possessed by demons, such as we read in Mk. 3:11 where reference is made to demons falling down in front of Jesus, crying out to him, confessing him to be the son of God, no doubt trembling as they did so.

Mk. 5:7 also records how a demoniac flung himself down at the feet of Jesus, and cried with a loud voice (probably trembling as he did so), saying, “What do you want with me, Jesus, thou son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.” This demoniac, and others, clearly believed in God, and this is what James refers to when he says “the demons believe and tremble.” It is significant that none of the demon-possessed encountered by Jesus during his ministry are referred to as not believing in God! Demons did not rob them of their faith in God!

It was mentioned earlier that some have suggested the trembling could refer to the shaking palsy or Parkinson’s disease. But the reason for trembling is indicated by the demoniac when he said to Jesus: “torment me not.” Demoniacs were subjected to terrible tortures in those days by the ignorant and superstitious, in attempts to drive the demon out of the body, causing much pain and agony. When Jesus came to deliver them, they were afraid of being hurt as they had been previously by other exorcists. Although the demoniacs were mentally deranged, they were still human and had feelings, and could feel pain, and trembled at the prospect of it.

The close association between a demoniac and demon can also be seen in some modern translations of Matt. 17:18 which say Jesus rebuked a demoniac himself instead of the demon: “Jesus rebuked the boy, and the demon departed out of him, and the boy was cured from that very hour.”

A DUMB DEMON

Also consider Lk. 11:14: “And Jesus was casting out a demon, and it was dumb.” Or, as Mk. 9:17 puts it: “And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought to you my son who has a dumb spirit.” The passage in Lk. 11 continues: “And it came to pass, when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke.” In these verses, both the demoniac and demon are referred to as being “dumb,” i.e. unable to speak, usually due to being born deaf.

Now, how do those who believe that demons are fallen angels

interpret these references to dumb demons? The pagan concept in New Testament times was that they were the departed spirits of dumb people, causing dumbness in whoever they possessed. Does tradition believe in dumb angels? It is forced to if it insists demons are fallen angels. But how could supernatural angels be dumb? It is a contradiction of terms to believe that someone supernatural is dumb. Dumbness is impossible in the supernatural realm, and even if someone supernatural was dumb, they would be able to heal themselves!

At this point tradition would gladly accept that it was the demoniac himself who was dumb, and that the principle of metonymy is involved in the reference to a dumb demon.

UNCLEAN SPIRITS LIKE FROGS

Rev. 16:13-14 is interesting in connection with all this. It refers to “unclean spirits like frogs, issuing out of the mouth of the dragon, beast and false prophet.” These “unclean spirits” are then called “spirits of (out of) demons.” Now, if demons are evil spirits, how could unclean spirits come out of them? Is that what tradition believes - that spirits possess spirits?

It is evident that the unclean spirits come out of the dragon, beast and false prophet, and this identifies the dragon, beast and false prophet as demons. In an earlier chapter it was pointed out that they are symbolic of an end-time confederacy of nations which is instrumental in inspiring nations to invade Israel, resulting in the return of Christ and the battle of Armageddon resulting in their judgement.

So we have here another example of the word “demons” relating to people. The reason they are called that is because they are mad - crazy - insane, to do such a stupid thing as invading Israel and entering into conflict with the Lord.

The fact that the unclean spirits in Rev. 16 are depicted as coming out of the “mouths” of the dragon, beast and false prophet, indicates that they symbolize a message or propaganda which incites the nations to war. The rantings and ragings of Hitler could be cited as an example. And what a demon he was! A real madman! The dragon, therefore, is not only “devil” and “satan,” but also “demon.”

The unclean spirits are said to be “like frogs.” Now, even tradition, at this point, would have to concede that this is not to be taken literally, otherwise it would have to be concluded that their fallen angel demons look like frogs.

The frogs are clearly symbolic, and relate to the message or propaganda that emanates from the mouth of the dragon, beast and false prophet. Frogs, of course, are known for jumping - in unpredictable directions. And propaganda for war is like that, as war-mongers jump from nation to nation seeking confederates and croaking for support.

BELIEVE NOT EVERY SPIRIT

A similar principle is illustrated in 1 Jn. 4:1-3, which reads: “Beloved, believe not every spirit ... because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” Here, “spirit” refers to the false prophet. It then goes on to say: “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.” This refers to the true Christian confession. Now, confession requires a mouth, tongue, throat and voice. And it is the Christian himself who makes the confession, due to the conviction generated in his own spirit by the Holy Spirit inspired Word. Those who do not confess the truth are therefore not influenced by the Holy Spirit, but the human spirit, which is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9).

Ezk. 13 refers to this: “The false prophets prophesy out of their own heart. Thus says the Lord, woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing.” The same connection between “false prophets” and “spirit” here, is the same as 1 Jn. 4:1-3. The “spirit” or “spirits” in these verses, refers to people who claimed to be possessed by a divine spirit of inspiration. The same applies in 2 Thes. 2:2 where the word “spirit” is rendered “ocular utterance” by the New English Bible. The Amplified Bible renders it “some pretended revelation of the Spirit.”

SHIFT OF PRONOUNS

In relation to demons speaking, it is evident from a careful reading of the passages concerned, that the vocalization of the sounds came from the person possessed, and this is who was really speaking and being spoken to. This is indicated in a number of places by the shift of pronouns from the demon to the demoniac; i.e. in one statement the words are attributed to the demon, and then in the next statement they are attributed to the person possessed.

For example, Mk. 5:7-9. This passage says Jesus had addressed a demon saying: “Come out of the man.” This resulted in the demoniac himself crying out: “I adjure thee by God that you torment me not.” Jesus then addressed the demoniac, and asked him “what is your name?” The

demoniac answered, saying, “My name is legion, for we are many.” Verse 10 continues, saying: “And he (the demoniac) besought Jesus that he would not send them (the demons) away out of the country.” Here, the demoniac speaks on behalf of the demons which he believes are in possession of him. Then we read in v 12 that “they (the demons) besought him saying, send us into the swine that we may enter into them.”

The shift of pronouns from the demons to the demoniac is quite apparent here. In one breath the statement is attributed to the demoniac, and in the next breath to the demons. The demoniac and demons are presented as being one and the same voice, using the same voice box and vocal chords.

In connection with this, a comparison between the parallel accounts in Mk. 5:10 and Lk. 8:31 is interesting. Mk. 5:10 says “He (the demoniac) begged Jesus.” Lk. 8:31 says “They (the demons) begged Jesus.” One verse says it was the demoniac who spoke whereas the other verse says it was the demons. Now, if demons are separate, distinct and independent personalities (fallen angels) from the people they possess, why do some Scriptures treat them as one and the same voice and person? I believe the answer is not because two separate parties were involved, but different personalities were, and there is a difference!

SCHIZOPHRENIA

We have all heard of the expression “schizophrenia,” which relates to split personality, sometimes involving dual personality or multi-personality. These are well documented mental conditions in which there is a dislocation or disintegration of the personality, i.e. a disconnection between the thoughts, causing a person to think he is somebody or something else, resulting in oscillating between that personality and his own. One minute he can be himself, and the next minute he swings to the other personality.

In ancient times, the complex and contributing factors which caused this, were not understood (and we are still learning about them today). Therefore, any other personality displayed by a person was regarded as a demon or demons.

To a lesser degree, we all experience a dual personality, referred to in an earlier chapter as Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, referring to the positive and negative sides of our personality. As Paul says in Rom. 7: “It is not I who does it, but sin (the devil) who dwells in me.” In this passage the dark side of his personality, involving the malignant influences of sinful

propensities which possessed his flesh, are personified, and treated as a separate person.

If we are on a downer, we might say, “I’m not myself today.” Well, if we aren’t ourselves, who are we? Someone we don’t want to be! It is common for people to be possessed or overtaken with a different spirit or mood or feeling, from what normally possesses them. But it has nothing to do with demons of course. “Double mindedness” is also another experience common to all, and is referred to in the Bible in Jam. 1:8. 4:8. When we overreact to a situation and get angry, and the adrenaline takes over, or takes possession of us, we act out of character. Later we may remark: “Whatever possessed me to do that?” Or, someone might say: “Whatever has got into you?” But they don’t have a fallen angel demon in mind.

VOICE MODULATION

Even the voice can change to accommodate a new personality, but it doesn’t require supernatural power to do it. Almost every normal rational person can voluntarily alter his voice to a different pitch or sound if he wants to. Under hypnosis, this ability is even greater. Some actors, showmen and entertainers are very good at impersonating the voice of other people. The changed mental or emotional state of a person angry, upset or in pain, can also involuntarily produce a voice with a different pitch and sound.

Talking about changed personalities: there is an account of a man being taken to a mental institution because he was convinced he was Napoleon. “Oh dear,” the supervisor said, “not another. We already have six who think they are Napoleon.” In ancient times when it was believed that demons were departed spirits of the dead, anyone claiming to be someone else who had died, would be regarded as being possessed by that person’s spirit. But if six others claimed to be the same person, even the pagans would have to be suspicious about that!

The human ego wants to be famous and a certain turn or imbalance of mind, fed by that ego, can lead to a person being deceived into thinking they are somebody famous. I know a person, fitting into this category, who became convinced he was Jesus Christ. On the negative side, there are also those who are deceived into thinking they are Adolf Hitler. There is an account of one mental patient saying to another: “Who are you?” He replied, “Adolf Hitler.” “You can’t be,” said the other man, “I am.”

Sometimes some people have multi-personalities. In ancient times

they would have been regarded as being possessed by many demons. Some have suggested that Mary Magdalene, who is referred to as having seven demons, may have had a multi-personality disorder, resulting in many sins. A movie was produced some years ago entitled: “The seven faces of Eve” and related to a woman who had seven different and distinct personalities. The film may have been based on fiction, but this can in fact happen.

A “FOWL” SPIRIT

Sometimes some forms of mind dislocation can cause people to think they are an animal or a bird. I read of a case of a man who thought he was a rooster. Each evening he wanted to get up into a tree to roost. Those who believe mental disorders are due to being possessed by a fallen angel demon, need to ask what possible purpose is served and achieved by causing a man to think he is a rooster!

We saw earlier that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, due to pride, was inflicted by God with a mental disorder which caused him to think he was an animal. He ended up grovelling around in the grass of the field on all fours with other animals, until, as Dan. 4:36 puts it, “my sanity returned to me.” This is interesting because his insanity is not attributed to demon possession, and the return of his sanity is not attributed to casting out a demon. Instead of saying he was restored to his right mind by driving a demon out, it says it happened as a result of his sanity being put back in. In this particular case, losing sanity was due to God taking it away. The Babylonians, being pagan, would have believed that the king was possessed by a departed spirit from the dead or one of their evil gods, but the Biblical record makes no reference to such influences.

ALCOHOLIC SPIRITS SPEAK

Coming back to the subject of demons speaking, it seems evident from the shift of pronouns that it was the mentally deranged person himself who was speaking, but under the delusion he was someone else. A deranging influence or malfunction of the mind, affected the mechanism of the brain or the thinking processes, and because the deranging influence was regarded as a demon, the voice was attributed to it.

An example of this principle can be seen in the expression: “It is the drink that is speaking,” which is sometimes said in relation to an intoxicated person who is speaking irrationally. Alcohol, as we know,

affects the brain cells and changes personality and speech. Pr. 20:1 says “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging.” But in attributing speech to drink, we don’t mean that drink is a separate personality possessing the person. Drink by itself could never speak or mock; it needs a human brain, tongue and voice to do that. Demons cannot speak either; they also need a human brain and tongue. And when these malignant influences cause irrational speech, they are, as in the case of alcohol, referred to as speaking themselves.

In some cases, alcohol can so affect the mind as to not only cause the tongue to speak irrationally, but also cause uncontrolled violent physical actions which are totally out of character of a person. In fact, in some cases when the “spirit” of alcohol invades and possesses a man’s mind, the behaviour pattern, involving ranting and raging and raving is identical to certain cases of insanity. This accounts for the expression: “the demon of drink.” In extreme cases, alcoholics can end up in mental asylums, with totally deranged minds, losing all knowledge of who they are, and taking on an entirely different personality from what they were. Back in history, when it was not known that alcohol destroys brain cells, such people would have been classified as demon possessed, and their mutterings would have been regarded as demons speaking.

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CHAPTER TWENTY ONE MANY CAUSES OF MENTAL MALFUNCTION

As a result of modern medical science, we now know that mental conditions affecting both body and brain, can be caused by a number of physical factors which the ancients knew nothing about. Just as the body can be inflicted with diseases, caused by bacteria and viruses, resulting in the physical organs and limbs losing control and acting abnormally, so also the brain can be inflicted, resulting in abnormal speech and behaviour.

Syphilis, for example, which is a serious venereal disease, is caused by a germ which, if not checked by penicillin in the early stages, affects not only the body, but also the brain, resulting in insanity. In ancient times, the symptoms caused by this germ would have been regarded as demon possession. Reference to a modern medical dictionary soon reveals the many different germs and viruses that can get into the brain and cause disorders.

Hardening of the arteries, a disease of old age, may harm the nerve cells of the brain, because the blood does not flow properly to the brain. Sometimes the brain cells simply wear out and the mind no longer functions properly. Poisons from body infections may also harm the brain, or infection may occur in the brain itself. Imbalance of hormones can affect the mind and chemical imbalance can have the same effect. I know a person who experienced a profound disturbance and disorientation of mind and change of personality as a result of certain drugs prescribed by her doctor. She started having vivid visions which she couldn't distinguish from reality and kept hearing voices during the daytime.

Tumours, cysts, blood clots etc in the brain can affect the mind, not to mention the body, causing paralysis, slurred speech or loss of speech altogether. Brain damage at birth or after birth can also have detrimental effects on the function of mind and body. Sheer old age can result in a senile state of mind which, in extreme cases, is a form of insanity. In such cases, the mind has just worn out. Even younger people, through stress, can have a "mental breakdown" which, in extreme cases, can result in an unbalanced mind and irrational speech and behaviour. An article which appeared in a secular magazine recently, relating to a young man who had suffered a severe bout of depression, said that for more than six years he had been "battling his own private demons."

INCREDIBLY COMPLEX

The human brain is an incredibly complex piece of machinery, and, although tremendous advances in knowledge have been made, man still has a long way to go in the plumbing of all its depths. Science is still baffled about many functions of the mind, and often uses psychological jargon to cover its lack of practical explanation. But it has learned from history not to be in a hurry to attribute to demons, what time and increased knowledge will no doubt, as in other cases, prove to be caused by entirely different factors and influences.

Some time ago a woman was being interviewed on television after an operation on her brain. During the operation and probing, she was conscious, and at one stage, when a particular part of her brain was touched, her leg moved involuntarily. Also, at one stage she said, “where is the radio?” She could hear music playing when the electric current from the probe touched a certain spot of her brain. Every time the surgeon touched that spot, the music played. When he withdrew the probe, the music stopped.

Now this all suggests that this is the kind of response that either brain damage or a variety of things like a tumour or cyst could produce, so that when people affected say they can hear voices or music, you can’t deny that for them there are voices and music. There may be no sound in outer space, but it exists in that complex world of inner space. And they are as convinced of that world in which they are living at the time as they can possibly be, because it is very real to them. It may only be a recall, or just a jumbling up of a whole series of impressions, rather like a dream or nightmare can be, in which things that have no reality are reproduced. Some of these problems can be due to an “electrical” problem in the brain. Some are clearly a physical problem, because they can be controlled with a drug. For this reason, on some occasions when Jesus ministered to people possessed by demons, the record says he “healed” them.

Shock can stop the flow of body chemicals resulting in mental imbalance and even cause paralysis in parts of the body. Fear is a powerful emotion and can create pictures or images (“visions”) of what is feared. There are accounts of soldiers, so fearful of the enemy springing a surprise attack at night, that they ended up imagining that they could see the enemy coming towards them and shot at them. The mental panic and trauma of fear can drive a person crazy and even kill him. Soldiers have died in their trenches through fear. Some have attributed the death of Ananias and Sapphira to heart attack caused by fear of divine judgement

(Acts 5).

FEAR OF DEMONS CREATES DEMONS

Fear of demons can create them in the mind. There is a saying that “you see what you believe.” This is a faith principle but unfortunately it also applies when faith is misguided. When there is a lot of talk and emphasis on demons, and vivid spine-tingling stories told about so-called demon possession, it can create demons in peoples’ minds and a fear of them. And this unfortunately, can lead to more demons than ever - legions of them.

Take, for example, the film “The Exorcist.” It was nothing more than celluloid images being projected by light on to a screen, but it upset and unbalanced the minds of a number of people who saw it. Now, it was only what was seen and heard on the screen which had this effect because it was all acted. There was no “evil spirit” there at all, just a vivid representation of it. Yet some young girls (and maybe others not so young), ended up screaming in the night with the sheer horror of what had been impressed on their mind from this external source of fiction and fantasy.

The film created or generated an evil “spirit,” not meaning a fallen angel, but an evil “atmosphere” or “essence,” which invaded and possessed the minds of the impressionable and fearful who lacked knowledge and who were therefore gullible - people who had a high susceptibility or sensitivity. Of course, some of those affected may also have been previously influenced by others who believed in demons, and therefore already had a pre-occupation and pre-disposition towards them, so that all it needed was a film like that to tip the balance.

Now, the effect that the “spirit” or “atmosphere” of this film had on some people is interesting in connection with the subject of demons. You see, the pagan world in New Testament times had that kind of atmosphere - an atmosphere full of all sorts of “spirits,” i.e. the influences of false doctrine, pagan propaganda, and the tensions and fears and superstitions that went with them. It was an age when there was widespread talk and fear about demons, and that kind of pre-occupation easily produces a phobia, i.e. morbid fear and paranoia.

Madmen yelling and screaming and frothing at the mouth, were not hidden away in asylums where nobody could see them. They were chained up and could be seen and heard by the people and were not a pretty sight, but scary, like wild animals. And because their condition and

appearance was believed to be caused by demons, the result was a terrible fear of demons. Such a belief naturally strengthened and increased belief in demons, and generated much unhealthy fear of them, and probably caused bad dreams and nightmares. The point being made here is that to see these mentally deranged people who were believed to be demon possessed, would have the same effect on people in those days, as did the film: "The Exorcist" in our day.

In fact, taking the matter a stage further, any church that subscribes to the same pagan belief, and talks constantly about demons and attributes every disorder to them, runs the risk of creating more and more demons in peoples' minds. And to create these kind of demons then cast them out, is like setting up a straw man and knocking him over.

FOCUSSING ON EVIL GIVES IT LIFE

Some newspaper articles which appeared in recent years in relation to the subject in hand are worth quoting. The first one taken from the N.Z Herald is entitled: "Excessive demon deliverance causing problems." It says: "Over-emphasis on exorcism in some churches is said to be driving people into psychiatric institutions. Chaplain at Kingseat Hospital in south Auckland, the Rev. David Guthrie, believes too much emphasis on exorcism - known as demon deliverance - is creating more problems for the mentally unstable." He said that "in his seven years at Kingseat he had seen many patients who had become pre-occupied by demons after being exorcised. The fear created by excessive demon deliverance can tip the balance between people coping or going to pieces and ending up in hospital. The attitude that mental illness is just demon possession takes away patients' responsibility and accountability for themselves."

Most of the cases he has observed have been in Pentecostal churches some deliverance sessions had become ludicrous with people being told they had demons of nicotine and fear. He said "horror films such as "The Exorcist" were also a problem. After that sort of movie is shown, there is always an increase in hospital admissions, with people paranoid about seeing demons." Dr John Sturt, of the Christian Care Centre in Mt Eden, also said that "unwise and excessive use of demon deliverance could aggravate mental illness." He said that "in the nine years he had worked at the clinic he had met many people who had been seriously disturbed or confused after being exorcised." Referring to the blaming of demons for every disorder, and casting them out indiscriminately, he says "this blanket diagnosis does a lot of harm." Dr

Sturt said he regularly met people confused after exorcisms. One patient had up to forty spirits cast out of him but was worse off emotionally afterwards. He was concerned that over emphasis on exorcism stunted the progress of people who need to deal practically with emotional and mental difficulties, in some cases for more than ten years focussing on evil to some people, gives life to it.”

BAD COUNSELLING

In response to the article, others replied. One was a young man who had been involved in “a particularly virulent strain of Pentecostalism.” He was an accomplished musician and suffered a depressive illness. Counsellors in the church told him he was possessed by “the spirit of Beethoven” and advised him to destroy his entire classical record collection and burn all his music. His ability to play chess without sight of a board was attributed to supernatural demonic influence, rather than what reality suggests - a highly developed visual memory. In addition, he was informed that much of his creative writing and art was satanically inspired.

He mentions others who came under similar treatment. One, a highly intelligent and talented girl, took her life two weeks short of her twenty first birthday. He said: “I could go on almost ad-infinitum. There seems to be no ground unreached by these mindless self-appointed counsellors. It is sad and incidentally anti-biblical that they often see marked talent as having demonic rather than God-given origins. The true nature of their warped sickness becomes graphically clear when one subjects their beliefs to logical examination. What sort of sick soul could possibly see Beethoven’s powerful and beautiful music as coming from the devil?”

Many bizarre cases involving exorcism have been publicized over the years, some ending up in court. One case involved a husband and wife, members of a Pentecostal church, holding their twelve year old son down, repeatedly bashing him over the head with a brick, believing he was possessed by a demon. They ended up killing him. Another case involved a man ordering the destruction of all the figurines, trinkets, flower beds and green house, which he declared to be evil, and which belonged to a woman he believed was possessed. He then, with others, forcibly held the forty nine year old woman on a kitchen chair for about four hours in forty degree heat, despite her struggles, while her womb, stomach, and neck were pushed in an effort to exorcise the demons believed to be in her. The force exerted, especially on her neck, fractured her larynx and triggered a

fatal heart attack.

These incidents highlight Paul's warning in 1 Tim. 4 about people in the last days departing from the faith, subscribing to doctrines of demons. And it is an interesting fact of history, that since the Pentecostal churches have sprung up, with their emphasis on demons and exorcisms, that so-called "demon possession" has sprung up with them and increased by leaps and bounds. Believing that they possess the healing power of the Holy Spirit, they are naturally eager to exercise and demonstrate it. But, until they can approach a ranting raging lunatic, as Jesus did, and in just a few words without any ceremony or ritualistic rigmarole, completely restore his sanity, people of discernment will not believe that they are operating in the same power of the Holy Spirit in which Jesus and the apostles operated.

THE DEMONS KNEW JESUS

Before concluding this chapter, attention should be given to the fact that demoniacs knew that Jesus was the Christ, the son of God, and declared him to be so, and Jesus rebuked them and would not allow them to make this confession publicly (Mk. 1:25, 34. 3:11-12. Lk. 4:41).

How did the demoniacs know that Jesus was the Messiah, the son of God? Tradition, of course, believing demons to be fallen angels, maintains that they, being angels, knew the true identity of Jesus and caused the demoniacs to declare it. But that would be the last thing a rebel angel would want to do if he was against Jesus and didn't want people to know he was the Messiah.

According to 1 Cor. 12:3, "no man can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." In Matt. 16:13-17 we read that Peter, in response to Jesus' question: "Who do you say I am?" answered: "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." Jesus replied to this saying, "You are favoured indeed Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."

The Father, by His Spirit, went ahead of His son, preparing people by quickening them to the truth of who he was, and demoniacs were no exception. Being mentally deranged, they needed this help and inspiration more than anyone, in order to believe and receive Jesus and submit to his ministry. It is really a serious mistake to attribute the conviction and confession of these men to an evil spirit when it was the work of the Holy Spirit. This, in fact, is what the Pharisees did, attributing the miracles of Jesus to Beelzebub instead of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that it was an

unforgiveable sin, being blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

TELEPATHIC POWERS

Having said that, it must also be conceded that there are certain kinds of mental disorders which produce a kind of intuition - a sharpened perception for some things - telepathic-type powers. Some mentally unbalanced people can be extremely cunning and perceptive - quite brilliant in some things. There can be a very thin dividing line between brilliance and madness. Sometimes it can be due to a person being hyper-sensitive and therefore easily offended and upset, that their mind becomes disturbed and unhinged, resulting in them being admitted to a psychiatric unit, but still remaining sensitive to the vibes and atmosphere given off by people. We read in Lk. 4:14, 37 and 5:15 that the fame of Jesus spread into all regions of the country, so it certainly would not have been difficult to pick up snippets of information concerning him, from the excited crowds, much in the same way that a woman referred to in Act. 16 picked up information about the apostles, then proclaimed that they were “the servants of the Most High God.” In her particular case, the confession was right, but the spirit, reason and motive behind it was wrong, and for this reason Paul stopped her.

APOSTLES NOT ALLOWED TO CONFESS

Regarding Jesus commanding the demoniacs to not publicly proclaim that he was Christ, the son of God, it is important to know that he did not just pick on them. He wouldn't even allow his own apostles do it. When Peter made the same confession, Jesus “charged his disciples that they should tell no one that he was the Christ” (Matt. 16:13-20). Jesus then went on to explain why: “The son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day” (Lk. 9:20-22).

The prevailing Jewish idea of the Messiah was nationalistic and warlike. They expected him to be militant and aggressive, and to use military force to expel the occupying forces of the Romans, and then set up the throne of David in Jerusalem and restore the independent kingdom of Israel to what it used to be in David and Solomon's time. This, of course, is Messiah's ultimate mission at his second coming, but not at his first coming.

The mission of his first coming involved being rejected by his people

and put to death by the Romans, as part of the process of making atonement for sin. Without this, there could be no forgiveness of sin nor eternal life, and therefore no everlasting kingdom. To seek the everlasting kingdom first, before the problem of sin and death was dealt with, was to put the cart before the horse.

JESUS AVOIDED GLORY

In view of this, Jesus played down his Messiahship, because it was not the time for the expectations it raised and excited, to be fulfilled. He also had to be very careful to avoid giving a false and dangerous impression of his mission, lest the occupying Roman forces felt threatened and arrested him before his preaching ministry was completed.

In spite of this, the religious leaders were, at one stage at least, afraid that the Romans would come and destroy the city, temple and nation, when they saw the miracles performed by Jesus and the crowds that followed him (Jn. 11:47-48).

On another occasion, when Jesus perceived that the people were about to come and take him by force and make him king, he took off into the mountains by himself to avoid this premature event (Jn.6:15). Also, in Mk. 9:1-8 we read about the transfiguration of Jesus in which his future glory as king was revealed. But verse 9 says Jesus commanded his apostles to tell nobody what they had seen until he rose from the dead. Had the apostles broadcasted the glorified Messiah, the people would have found it harder to see him as the Lamb of God who had to be slain for the sins of the world.

JESUS AVOIDED PUBLICITY

Jesus was even against people broadcasting his miracles and healings. It is recorded many times that when he healed someone, he would strictly charge them to not go around publicizing it. See Matt. 9:30. 12:15-16. Mk. 5:41-43. 7:32-37.

On one occasion, recorded in Mk. 1:40-45, Jesus healed a leper and told him not to broadcast it. But he did, resulting in such a crowd of people gathering around Jesus and such a congestion, that he could no longer enter the city openly and had to stay out in the country. However, people still kept going out to him, but the majority of them were just miracle seekers - people wanting to see signs and wonders and get free bread. They were not so interested in the true bread - the Word of God

which Jesus represented and which he taught, and which alone could give eternal life.

For these reasons also, Jesus did not want his healings and miracles to be advertised. And it was for the same reasons that he would not allow the demoniacs to broadcast the fact that he was the Messiah the son of God. It had nothing to do with trying to put a gag on fallen angels!

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CHAPTER TWENTY TWO THE GADARENE MANIAC

Brief reference has already been made to the episode involving the Gadarene maniac but more needs to be said about it. It is recorded in Matt. 8:28-34. Mk. 5:1-17. Lk. 8:26-36. The traditional view is, of course, that fallen angels possessed the man and several points need to be made in relation to this view.

Due to being possessed, the man lived naked among the tombs and had to be chained like a wild animal. When he broke the chains, the demons drove him out into the desert. But when he was chained up, he cried out day and night, cutting and bruising himself with stones. He was so fierce that everyone was scared of him, resulting in people keeping their distance and avoiding the area.

Now, the question that has to be asked is: “what would a fallen angel hope to achieve by reducing a man to this condition? Was this a clever and smart thing to do? How could a naked, fierce, raving screaming lunatic be a good advertisement for a clever, subtle rebel angel? How could this encourage others to join his rebellion?” Making madmen like that certainly didn’t destroy peoples’ faith in God or undermine Christ’s ministry. Quite the opposite! It gave Christ greater opportunity and scope to demonstrate his power by healing them.

The smartest thing for a fallen angel to do would be to not make people sick, so that Jesus would not have the opportunity to manifest his power by healing them. Such an angel would be wiser to set up an attractive counterfeit religion with handsome, sophisticated and intellectual men as leaders. Madmen were social outcasts with no credibility whatsoever. They did not attract, but repelled people. Tradition’s subtle fallen angel does not equate with this. Making people mad would be a foolish and self-defeating thing to do.

DO DEMONS LEAD MEN TO CHRIST?

Another point to consider is that when the demoniac saw Jesus at a distance, he ran to meet him and flung himself down in front of him. Now, according to the traditional view, it was not the demoniac himself who recognized Jesus, but the demons who possessed him. If this be the case, why didn’t they direct the demoniac away in the opposite direction from Jesus? Why cause him to run to Jesus and bow before him knowing they would be no match for his power?

Not only did the demoniac worship Jesus while possessed with demons, he also confessed Jesus to be “the son of the Most High God.” This was an acknowledgement of a very important fundamental truth. According to tradition, it was the demons who knew this truth, not the demoniac. Why, then, did they cause the demoniac to confess it? Why did they lead him into, and inspire him with this truth? How strange for rebel angels to be leading people to Christ to worship him and confess him as the son of God!

POSSESSED BY SIX THOUSAND ANGELS?

A third point is that the demoniac, in response to Jesus asking for his name, said: “Legion,” because many demons had entered him. A legion was, in those days, a division of six thousand men in the Roman army. So the question that must seriously be asked is: “Was this man possessed by six thousand fallen angels?” Hopefully, those who subscribe to the traditional view will not feel comfortable about answering this question in the affirmative.

As shall be pointed out, this concept of being possessed by six thousand demons was the delusion or hallucination of the madman’s own deranged mind, due to the influence of the pagan philosophy rampant at the time. After all, the man was mad, and mentally deranged people are not logical or rational. They don’t think straight or talk sense. And anyone who takes seriously their insane and irrational utterances, will end up believing the same, as is evident in many “doctrines of demons” today.

The fourth point is that the demoniac begged Jesus not to send the demons “out of the country” (Mk. 5:10). (The reference in Zech. 13:2 to Messiah removing the unclean spirit out of the land, may have had something to do with this request). The account in Lk. 8:31 says the demons begged Jesus not to command them to depart “into the deep.” (The Greek word for “deep” is “abussos” and means abyss, bottomless pit).

Now, if these were fallen angels speaking, expressing fear of being cast out as a result of an encounter with Christ, then why, as mentioned before, didn’t they direct the demoniac away from Christ in the first place, knowing he was coming, or vacate the madman beforehand? Why hang about when they knew they were no match for Jesus? Everything that is said about the demons indicates that there was nothing cunning or clever about them!

Rather than be sent out of the country or into the deep, the demons

begged Jesus to send them into a herd of two thousand pigs feeding on the hill side. Jesus obliged with the result that the pigs immediately stampeded down the steep hill, plunged over the cliff into the lake and drowned.

Now, if demons control the mind and body of those they possess, why did they drive the pigs into the sea? If demons are highly intelligent and cunning forces, and they wanted to enter the pigs instead of being cast into the deep, why did they instantly frustrate their own wishes by immediately driving the pigs straight over the cliff into the deep and destroy them? How strange that during the period that all six thousand of these forces possessed the man, they never plunged him into the sea, yet when they were thinned out and distributed among two thousand pigs, which works out at three demons per pig, the pigs immediately ran headlong into the sea! Three demons ended up doing to one pig, what six thousand never did to the man.

A BRER RABBIT TACTIC?

Someone will say, "No, you've got it all wrong. It was Jesus who caused the pigs to leap into the deep, not the demons." But, if the demons were supernatural fallen angels, that creates another problem: they would be immortal, unable to die (Lk. 20:36), which means they could not drown. Not only that, but being able to possess people at will, they could vacate the pigs before they hit the water, and go and possess someone else. Jesus would know this, so if he believed that demons were supernatural forces, incapable of being drowned, why would he destroy two thousand pigs if it did not result in drowning the demons?

These questions must be answered, otherwise we are faced with a situation in which it was not a case of Jesus tricking and outwitting demons, but the reverse. If we are not careful, we end up with a situation where demons played the same trick on Jesus that Brer Rabbit played on the fox, i.e. the trick of reverse psychology, telling him not to throw him into the thorn bush, whereas that was really where he wanted to be thrown, knowing he could escape if thrown there.

"LEGION"

Regarding the nature and identity of the "Legion" which possessed the demoniac: a key is supplied in the word "healed" (Lk. 8:36). It says: "He who had been possessed with demons was healed." And, as a

result of this, verse 35 says the man was “in his right mind.” The Greek word for “healed” on this occasion is “sozo,” and according to Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, “the idea is that of saving from disease and its effects.” The word is sometimes translated: “make whole,” and is used in the sense of healing a physical sickness or disorder, which we now know can be caused by bacteria or a virus.

For example, a woman with a blood issue (haemorrhaging) for twelve years was “made whole.” (Mk. 5:28, 34). Jairus’ daughter was sick, but when Jesus laid hands on her, she was “healed” (Mk. 5:23). Mk. 6:56 says all the “sick” who touched Jesus were “healed,” and Mk. 10:52 says a blind man was “made whole.” In all of these places the Greek word *sozo* is used, and relates to physical malfunctions and disorders. The fact that the same word is used in relation to the demoniac, suggests that “legion” also pertained to a physical disorder or malfunction of the mind.

Interestingly enough, there is a similar sounding word, namely “lesion,” which means damage, injury, especially pathologically. The word can relate to morbid change in the functioning or texture of organs.

In view of the fact that the word “healed” means to save from disease, it suggests the demoniac had a diseased mind. And, in view of the fact that disease is caused mostly by bacteria and viruses, the “legion” which possessed him could be seen as thousands of anti-bodies. Healing the disease resulted in him being put “in his right mind.” Prior to that he was in a wrong mind - an irrational and illogical mind. All his talk about legion (in the sense of departed spirits) was the product of a deranged mind - hallucination.

SHIFT OF PRONOUNS

As pointed out in a previous chapter, the shift of pronouns from the demoniac to the demons shows that the vocalization of sounds came from the demoniac himself. One minute he is talking for himself, then the next minute he talks as if he were a demon which he believed possessed him. It was the maniac himself who cried out when he saw Jesus, saying, “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou son of the Most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.” He said this because Jesus had said to him, “Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.”

Notice that Jesus only spoke to one unclean spirit, i.e. a single deranging influence, not a multiplicity of influences. Jesus didn’t say “unclean spirits.” The man, of course, imagined he was possessed by a multitude of demons. For this reason, when Jesus said: “What is your

name?” the man replied, “my name is legion, for we are many.” “Legion” was either the name with which he was branded by the local superstitious population, or his own hallucination. It must be emphasized that we are dealing with the utterances of a mentally deranged man. He was insane, and therefore irrational, and it would be irrational for anyone to regard his utterances as being rational and factual and to build a doctrine on that basis. Such a doctrine would indeed be a “doctrine of demons” in the sense of “from” demons, and would certainly result in departure from the faith and some rather bizarre beliefs.

The order of speaking then, in the episode of the demoniac is, 1. Jesus addresses the demon and says: “Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.” 2. The man replies: “What have I to do with thee Jesus, thou son of the Most high God. I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not.”

Notice how the man speaks, although Jesus seems to address the demon. Then Jesus asks the man, “What is your name?” The man answers, but seems to identify himself with the demons in his answer: “My name is legion, for we are many.” The man then beseeches Jesus not to send the demons out of the country; and then, apparently, the demons ask to be sent into the swine. Mk. 5:10 says: “He (the demoniac) begged Jesus not to send them (the demons) out of the country.” But Lk. 8:31 says: “They (the demons) begged him.”

The fact that one attributes the statement to the demoniac and the other attributes it to the demon, along with the fact that the man answers when Jesus addresses the demon, indicates that the man is the speaker throughout. Because his statements are due to a mental impediment, regarded in those days as demons, his speech was attributed to them.

Jesus therefore addressed the demon as well as the man, as was the expected procedure in those days. The speech was for the benefit of both the demoniac and any witnesses present, that they might know that divine power was being directed towards the problem.

COMMON PROCEDURE

Jesus clearly accommodated himself to the procedure expected during those times, of one who sought to deliver another from an unclean spirit. It was also a psychological necessity for Jesus to address the supposed demon, in order to fulfil all the conditions required to effect a full and total cure. As mentioned in a previous chapter, even today, doctors have to “go along” with some mental patients in their hallucination or delusion, when they imagine they are someone else,

before being able to help them.

When a mentally disturbed or deranged person thinks he is Napoleon, or that Napoleon's spirit and the spirits of all his army possess him, and speaks as if he is Napoleon, a psychiatrist knows that in order to help him, you cannot come straight out into the open and frankly tell him that it is all just imagination and hallucination. No! He goes along with him and talks to him as if he is Napoleon, in order to draw him out and expose the problem before seeking to expel it. The utmost care and tact is required when dealing with those who are mentally deranged. A fast and loose approach can tip the balance and cause more damage as a result. For this reason, when the man told Jesus that his name was "legion," Jesus did not deny it or tell him he was deluded. He went along with him in his delusion, drew it out and delivered him from it.

It may be argued that the fact the demons were transferred from the lunatic to the pigs, proves they were personal intelligent forces. But this is not a valid argument. We read in 2 Kng. 5:27 that the Lord transferred leprosy from one man to another. But that doesn't make leprosy a personal intelligent force. Leprosy is caused by germs which are contagious and can pass from one body to another. And, as we shall see, the transfer of demons from the demoniac can be understood in the same light.

SEVERAL REASONS FOR TRANSFERRING DEMONS

It is not difficult to think of several reasons why Jesus transferred the demons into the pigs. One reason is because the demoniac requested it and needed to see it to be convinced they had departed from him. By causing the pigs to stampede and act like they suddenly got a bee in their bonnet, leaping over the cliff and into the sea, the demoniac was presented with dramatic visible evidence that his problem had been removed from him and cast into the depths of the sea. A tremendous psychological benefit would have been achieved by this, which, in view of current beliefs on demons, was necessary for a complete cure to be effected. This is why ancient exorcists put a jar of water on a table and commanded the demon to knock it over as he came out. It was done to provide proof that the person possessed was delivered. Such exorcists no doubt used sleight of hand or some other trick to knock the jar of water over, but there was no sleight of hand involved in two thousand pigs leaping over the cliff!

Another reason for the transfer of demons into the pigs and their subsequent destruction, is because they had no business being there in the first place. During the reign of Herod, Gadara and Gergesa, where the

demoniac lived, were cities that belonged to Judea, and were inhabited by Jews to a large extent. The Jews were forbidden by God's law to eat pork. Whether the pigs belonged to Jews or not, makes no difference. The land in which they were being farmed was part of the land promised by God to Israel where His laws were expected to be kept. History had proved that it was madness to defy the divine laws, and the madness of the maniac can be regarded as a sign of this.

A CONNECTION BETWEEN DEMONS AND PIGS

Since the advent of modern science we have a much better understanding of why God did not allow His people to eat pork. The pig is now known to be a carrier of infectious parasites, and causes a serious disease known as trichinosis, if not cooked and treated properly. God's law prudently pronounced pig meat to be unclean and unfit for human consumption, because uncooked meat was widely eaten and sterilization was unknown. The larvae of the parasite find their way into a person's muscles and form cysts. Widespread muscle pain can result, and is usually associated with fever. The larvae may also reach the lungs and brain, and affect the thinking processes and personality.

An article appeared in a local newspaper recently, entitled: "Worms in brain," saying: "After months of severe headaches and prolonged dizzy spells, a middle aged Chinese cadre went to the hospital for a check-up, and was told he had more than 120 worms inside his skull. The man, surnamed "He," was checked by doctors at the 196 Military Hospital in southern Guangdong province. A brain scan found more than 120 tapeworm larvae, commonly known as bladder worms nesting inside his brain cavity. Doctors found that the patient had a history of eating raw crab and undercooked pork, which led to the sickness, but medical treatment had brought about improvement in his condition. Medical staff hope that people will pay highest attention when eating raw fish, crab, shrimp or undercooked pork."

CYSTICERCOSIS

There is also a condition known as "cysticercosis," caused by the infestation of man by the larval stage of the pork tapeworm due to eating infected pork. Normally, man is only the host of the adult worm, each fertilised segment of which may contain as many as forty thousand eggs. The eggs then develop into the larvae which remain in the infected

pork. Once the larvae have been ingested by man, the development into the adult tape worm takes place. The eggs grow and develop tiny hooklets which become fastened to the mucous membrane of the bowel, and are then absorbed into the blood stream, and carried to their final lodging place, which they occupy like little demons.

Now, because the brain has the greatest blood supply, the majority of the larvae, as they are now, end up in the brain tissue. The total infestation varies from one larvae to hundreds. Except in the brain, the cysts become walled off, so that both host and parasites are protected. But, in the brain there is no “walling off” mechanism. The cells of the brain tissue fight the organism, and this battle invariably results in degeneration of the brain tissue. And this explains the many mental and neurological symptoms which occur in this condition.

Epileptic-type manifestations are caused by the disease, as well as hysteria, psychosis, temperamental changes, acute progressive dementia and maniacal outbursts often of a religious character. This disease was recognized as a cause of epilepsy and schizophrenia arising out of the blue in British troops returning from service in the East. (Schizophrenia, of course, has to do with split-personality or multi-personality, causing a person to oscillate between his own personality and another, as in the case of the Gadarene demoniac).

ALL SORTS OF POSSIBILITIES

The fact that parasites from pork can cause this when they get into the brain, opens up all sorts of possibilities with regard to the Gadarene maniac and his request to transfer the “demons” to the pigs. It is not impossible that he contracted his illness from diseased pork causing a diseased mind - a brain containing thousands of malignant cysts. “Legion” would be quite an appropriate name for them!

Of course, the demoniac would not be aware of such cysts, but it may have been observed in those days that his particular type of affliction occurred among keepers and eaters of pigs, and the impression may have been made on him in saner days. Being a Jew, he would have been taught from childhood that eating pork was a sin, and if he had been committing that sin, his guilty conscience could have convinced him that his mental sickness was caused by it, making a connection between the demons and the pigs. In fact, this connection is as good as made in the Scriptures. Isa. 65:4 refers to “rebellious people” (those who spurn God’s law) “who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts ... who sit in

tombs” (sign of an abnormal and unbalanced mind as in the case of the demoniac), “... who eat swine's flesh” (cause of madness). In view of this, it is obviously significant that the Gadarene maniac lived among tombs in an area where pig farming was taking place, and could have been committing sin by eating swine's flesh.

If so, as he stood before Jesus, his conscience, quickened by the Holy Spirit, came under conviction of sin and directed his thoughts to the herd of swine nearby. His desire to have his problem transferred to the pigs suggests he associated it with the pigs. He wanted to send the problem back to its source, and was convinced that the “spirits” possessing him preferred this rather than being cast into the deep. He therefore spoke and acted accordingly.

MUCH GOOD ACCOMPLISHED

Jesus did more than send the sickness into the pigs; he sent the pigs over the cliff into the sea. By doing this, he executed divine judgement upon the sin of pig farming; he eliminated the pigs as a future source of sickness and disease, and he demonstrated to the demoniac and all onlookers, that the healing deliverance had really and truly happened.

It was a current belief at the time that evicted spirits could return, which is understandable in view of the fact that many exorcisms failed or had to keep on being repeated. But the effect of Jesus’ exorcism was very dramatic. Due to the herd of swine visibly drowning in the sea, the demoniac would be convinced that the demons sent into them will never possess him again. Some see this as a parabolic action of Mic. 7:19 which refers to “casting all his sins into the depth of the sea.” As we have already seen, the casting out of demons runs parallel with casting out sins in Scripture.

The effect on the onlookers would also have been very dramatic. They could not deny that an outstanding miracle had taken place. Nothing, therefore, could stand in the way of receiving the man back into society and treating him as a normal person. So much good was accomplished by this event. Sin was judged and condemned; God’s law was justified and vindicated; the madman was healed and restored; future source of disease was eliminated, and the name of Jesus was held in awe and glorified. Truly, he did all things well through the power and wisdom given by the Father.

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CHAPTER TWENTY THREE BEELZEBUB, SEVEN UNCLEAN SPIRITS AND SPIRIT OF DIVINATION

Brief mention has been made of Beelzebub in a previous chapter and the subject will now be considered in a little more detail. Beelzebub is mentioned in Matt. 12:22-37 and is referred to as “prince of the demons.” In this particular passage, the religious leaders who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, attributed his healings and miracles to Beelzebub. They couldn’t deny that Jesus was performing outstanding healings, but because he was opposed to their doctrines, they didn’t want to believe he was of God, and therefore couldn’t accept that it was God’s power doing the healing. Therefore, the healings had to be attributed to some other power - “Beelzebub, the prince of demons.”

Who, then, was Beelzebub? Because tradition believes demons are fallen angels, and Beelzebub is referred to as the prince of the demons, he is regarded as an archangel who led two thirds of the angels in rebellion against God. It is commonly believed that Beelzebub and Lucifer are interchangeable names, referring to the same person. Well, so much for what tradition says; what does the Bible say?

BEELZEBUB IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The first and most important thing to note is that Beelzebub in the New Testament has its origin and roots in the Old Testament. The name is referred to four times as “Baalzebub” in 2 Kng. 1. “Baal” means “Lord” and was the name of the sun god, the chief god of the heathen. “Zebub” means “fly” or “flies” and is translated as such in Ecc. 10:1 and Isa. 7:18. In the Greek New Testament it is actually spelled “Beelzebub” (see Matt. 12:24 marginal reference). The common view is that the Jews changed “Zebub” (fly) into “Zebul” (dung) to throw contempt on the pagan god, making him a god of dung. But as in Hebrew “Zebul” means habitation, “Beelzebub” may mean “lord of the habitation.” Whether this is so or not, there is no denying the fact that there is a connection between flies and filth in nature!

Basically, then, “Baalzebub” means “lord of the flies” or “lord of the dung heap.” And 2 Kng. 1 informs us that Baalzebub was the god of Ekron, which was one of the cities of the Philistines who were one of Israel’s pagan neighbours, living where the Gaza strip is today on the Mediterranean coast.

Baalzebub was therefore a pagan deity, one of the many imagined and mythical deities of the heathen, later known as “demons.” He stood in opposition to Israel’s God, who alone is the true God, being God of all creation, including flies, as He demonstrated by sending a plague of them upon Egypt prior to the Exodus (Ex. 8:21-).

2 Kng. 1 tells us that Ahaziah, the king of Israel, became sick as a result of a fall. Instead of seeking help from the God of Israel, he sent messengers to Ekron to consult Baalzebub, to see if he would recover. But God sent Elijah the prophet to intercept the messengers and tell them to go back and tell the king he was going to die because he sought help from a heathen god instead of the God of Gods, the God of Israel.

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

It is natural to wonder why the heathen called this god by a name which means lord of the flies or filth. No one is absolutely certain, but various ideas have been put forward. One of those is that if “Baal” were the sun, the name “Baalzebub” could be connected with the fact that the heat of the summer sun calls out the flies in such numbers, that in hot countries such as the Middle East, they become a plague. These busy flies which swarm everywhere, were probably regarded as Baal’s messengers, and they were thought to be the cause of contagious distempers. (We now know that they spread germs). So the pagans who did not wish to be troubled by them, worshipped Baalzebub. He alone, being the god of the flies, had the power to drive them away. The Roman writer Pliny (23-79 A.D.) refers to stopping a pestilence caused by flies by sacrificing to Beelzebul.

Another suggestion that has been given as to why the heathen called this god “Baalzebub” is that it related to the dung beetle, which eats decayed material. Because decayed material such as vegetation, makes the ground fertile, and was regarded as being presided over by the lord of the flies who gather around it, suggests he was a fertility god.

If anyone wonders how a pagan fertility god could become a demon, or prince of demons, and ultimately a rebel arch angel, just remember how a wild goat became the heathen god “Pan,” a mythical half man, half goat creature, regarded as a fertility deity, and then a fallen angel devil with horns, hooves, hairy legs, and tail, not to mention the pitch fork!

MONOTHEISTS OR POLYTHEISTS?

With these thoughts in mind we come back to the religious leaders of the Jews in Matt. 12 who attributed Christ's ability to cast out demons to Beelzebub. What did they mean by Beelzebub? Did they believe the same as the ancient Philistines, that Beelzebub was god of the sun and flies? No, not quite! They were strictly monotheistic and therefore only believed in one God, whose name was Yahweh. They were intolerant of rivals as can be seen by their response to Jesus when they thought he claimed to be the one and only supreme God.

However, as we have seen from the apocryphal writings and Josephus, the Jews were influenced by the pagans in other matters, and ended up subscribing to some of their false doctrines. For example the "satan" in the book of Job ceased to be a holy righteous angel used by God to inflict evil.

The Jews adopted the pagan belief that an evil being was responsible for all evil, and superimposed the concept of Ahrimanes, the Persian god of evil, upon the Old Testament satan, making him a rival power to God. And, although they adamantly denied that this was polytheism, and vehemently affirmed belief in one God, in actual fact it was polytheism in principle.

The Jews also ended up subscribing to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and all the other wrong notions that spring out of it. As we have seen, the Jewish concept of demons is based upon this doctrine, for it was believed that demons were departed spirits of the dead elevated to the rank of minor deities, in the service of, and subordinate to the major deities. Beelzebub, being "prince of the demons" was obviously regarded as one of those major deities. The minor deities, or demons, were therefore his "messengers."

Whatever the reason was for the Jews using the name Beelzebub for satan, prince of the demons, they didn't believe that he was a fictitious pagan myth. They believed he was a personal powerful force, because they believed it was through his power that Jesus was casting out demons and healing. So they clearly believed that Beelzebub had supernatural power, as did the pagan Philistines. No wonder Jesus said to the Jewish leaders who believed this, "In vain do you worship me, teaching for doctrine the traditions of men."

A HYPOTHETICAL STATEMENT

In view of the pagan background to the doctrine of Beelzebub, it is a foregone conclusion that Jesus would not subscribe to it. However, this did not stop him using the name. He said: “You say that I cast out demons through Beelzebub: if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out?”

It is important to note that Jesus’ reference here to Beelzebub is preceded by the word “If” - “If I by Beelzebub cast out demons.” It is clearly a hypothetical statement. It could be paraphrased like this: “If what you say is true about my success over demons being attributable to Beelzebub ...” Jesus’ statement is neither an affirmation of the existence of Beelzebub, nor an endorsement of the Pharisees’ concept of Beelzebub. It was merely for the sake of argument that Jesus used the name. It was simply an accommodation of the language of his opponents - a case of colloquialism, which no more endorsed false concepts behind it than did his use of the word “demon.”

DEMONS, FLIES AND BACTERIA

If it can be accepted that demons can be related to bacteria and viruses, a connection can also be made between them and flies and filth (not to mention mosquitoes). As we know, flies and mosquitoes are germ carriers, especially where unclean and unhygienic conditions exist. For this reason God laid down very strict sanitary and hygiene laws for Israel. Human excrement and dead bodies had to be buried out of sight where flies could not walk on them and carry harmful bacteria elsewhere. Failure to observe these laws was a violation of the divine law, which is sin, and such sins were often punished by the natural course of nature in the form of sickness and disease, without direct divine intervention being necessary.

Some of the sicknesses and diseases healed by Jesus could have come upon the people as a result of the sin of unclean living. Such people simply reaped according to how they had sown. The Gadarene maniac is a case in point if his diseased mind was caused by eating diseased pork. When sickness and disease overcame people for such sins, they were “bound by satan.” In the same way the sins of adultery, fornication and homosexuality can produce venereal diseases and the aids virus. Excess of alcohol can lead to heart complaints and liver disease.

NEGATIVE EMOTIONS AFFECT HEALTH

We can go a stage further: it is now known that fear, anxiety, depression, anger, envy and other negative emotions, can also have a detrimental effect on our health and well being, and cause various ills of both a physical and mental kind if they are intense and persistent. For this reason God instructs us in His word to “fear not,” “be not afraid,” “fret not,” “be not over anxious,” “put away all envy, anger and hatred,” “be glad in the Lord and rejoice,” “the joy of the Lord is your strength,” “a merry heart does good like medicine,” “love one another,” “be kind to one another,”

A positive approach to the positive commandments of God is one of the keys to a happy healthy life. Much sickness and disease in the world in the past and today, is due to neglect and abuse of the divine decrees.

ILLOGICAL REASONING

Coming back to the Pharisees’ accusation that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, Jesus replied by showing that even by human logic, the proposition was ridiculous. He said: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if satan cast out satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?”

If Jesus was one of Beelzebub’s agents, he would be engaged in promoting demon activity, putting demons into people and inflicting them with sickness, not casting demons out and healing. If Beelzebub was giving Jesus power to heal, he was reversing and negating his own efforts, and was therefore divided against himself, fighting a losing battle, and doomed to failure. In their desperation to discredit Jesus, the Pharisees didn’t stop to think through their argument properly and consider its implications. So they ended up with some very irrational, illogical and contradictory reasoning which was easily refuted.

The only logical conclusion that the facts demanded was that Jesus was in opposition to everything Beelzebub represented in the Pharisees’ mind, which formed part of the satan of their belief. Jesus obviously belonged to the opposite camp - the rival kingdom, which was the kingdom of God. The Spirit or power therefore, by which he healed, was the Spirit and power of God. In his own words, Jesus said: “If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.”

BREAKING INTO THE STRONG MAN'S HOUSE

Jesus then went on to say: “No one can break into a strong man’s house and take away his belongings unless he first ties up the strong man; then he can plunder his house.” It is important to note that, in characteristic fashion, Jesus is speaking parabolically here (See Mk. 3:23). By using the word “parable,” Jesus indicates that what he says is metaphorical, and is not to be taken literally. It is simply a story designed to reinforce his argument against the Pharisees.

In the parable, Jesus talks about a “strong man” occupying a “house.” In view of the fact that Jesus has been talking about healing illnesses, the “house” refers to the sick person’s body, and the “strong man” who occupies it, is the illness that has overtaken him, believed by the Pharisees to be “Beelzebub,” their “satan.” Obviously, in order to heal the person, the illness (strong man) has to be defeated and evicted. And this could only be done by someone who had the power and authority. The fact that Jesus was doing this proved he was stronger than the Pharisees’ satan or any other particular satan that anyone believes in.

Jesus concluded his discourse on Beelzebub with these words: “Anyone who is not for me, is against me; anyone who does not help me gather, is really scattering.” This was a rebuke and warning to the Pharisees. Jesus has clearly demonstrated that he is in opposition to, and the enemy of Beelzebub. Seeing there is no neutral side, the Pharisees who opposed Jesus must therefore be on satan’s side. And so Jesus, in characteristic fashion, bounced the ball of accusation and condemnation straight back into the accuser’s court. In so doing, he revealed that they, in fact, were guilty of the very thing of which they accused him, that is, being in league with Beelzebub. He then went on to say that attributing his miracles to the power of Beelzebub instead of the power of God’s Spirit, was an unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT TAKES SEVEN OTHERS

After presenting the parable of the strong man, Jesus gave another parable: “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, I will return to my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept and garnished. Then he goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than himself and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also to

this wicked generation” (Matt. 12:43-45).

It is important to note that the “house” occupied by the unclean spirit, does not represent a single individual as in the previous parable. It represents the house or nation of Israel - the Jewish community living contemporary with Christ. Jesus indicates this in his parable when he concludes with his own words of explanation, saying: “Even so shall it be also to this wicked generation.”

In the parable, the “unclean spirit” which possessed the nation represents an unsound, unwholesome, unspiritual, unholy mental disposition and attitude, resulting in becoming “unclean” before the Lord and in need of “washing” and “regeneration.” The unclean spirit is really a personification of sin. And if anyone finds it difficult to accept that sin could be referred to as going for a walk, it may be helpful to point out that Ps. 73:9 uses the same language in relation to speech, for it says the tongue of the wicked “walks through the earth” i.e. looking for someone to smear with slander. Remember also how sin is personified in Gen. 4:7 and is referred to as crouching at the door like a wild animal, ready to pounce.

A PROPHETIC PARABLE

The story in Jesus’ parable is both a description and a prophecy. As a result of his and John the Baptist’s preaching, a cleansing process had taken place among the Jews. The people repented, confessed their sins and were baptized. Multitudes followed Jesus and sang his praise, but time proved that their faith and commitment was shallow and superficial. At the end of his ministry they turned against him and rejected him, calling out: “crucify him.” Their choice of Barrabas, a criminal, instead of Christ, was totally irrational - insane, not to mention their rejection of Christ’s resurrection and the appeals of the apostles (Act. 13:44-50. 18:5-6).

After such displays of madness and stupidity, the Jewish nation became even more irrational by provoking and resisting Rome. A kind of frenzied fanaticism gripped or “demonized” the nation and swept it to its destruction. The Jews committed national suicide. And, as the parable indicates, the last stage of the nation was worse than the first.

The parable is fundamentally, psychologically true of human nature. It can be related to a man who has attempted with some success to exorcize an evil habit or attitude, but instead of developing and enthroning good habits and attitudes, he stops short at the first step. Nature will not

allow this. Unless a good habit or attitude is fully developed and its roots go down deep, the old “spirit” will assert itself with seven-fold power, and recovery will become seven times more difficult. (The number “seven” is often used in the Bible to symbolize fullness, completeness, consummation, and is not expected to be taken literally. For example, see Lev. 26:18. Job. 5:19. Pr. 24:16. Dan. 3:19. Matt. 18:21).

THE SAME APPLIES TO CHURCH HISTORY

The principle of the parable can also be applied to church history. The Reformation started cleansing Christendom of Roman Catholic ignorance and superstition, but it didn’t go deep enough. It stopped short of its goal and failed to go on to a full and complete unravelling of the truth from the tangled web weaved by the apostate church.

The gap between the Roman Catholics and Protestants didn’t become wide enough. The Protestants still clung to major fundamental errors such as the immortality of the soul, fallen angel devil and the Trinity, and various other doctrines that spring out of these, making reversal of the reformation and unity a possibility once an “ecumenical spirit” possessed them. And it is not surprising to see this happening today.

A SPIRIT OF DIVINATION

Before concluding the subject on demons, there is one more passage to which reference should be made, namely, Act. 16:16-18. The word “demon” does not actually occur here, but it does relate to the subject. It refers to “a spirit of divination” possessing a slave girl, and it is generally believed that the “spirit” was a demon.

The Greek word translated “divination” is “python”, and is the name given by the Greeks to the mythological serpent or dragon which lived at Pytho, beneath Mount Parnassus, where it had an oracle, famous for predicting future events. Apollo slew this serpent, as a result of which he was called Pythius, and became celebrated as the foreteller of future events. The name was then applied to anyone who either could, or pretended to predict future events. Such people were regarded as being possessed and influenced by the spirit of Apollo Pythius and this was the case with the slave girl in Act. 16.

She followed Paul many days, continually calling out to the people; “These men are the servants of the Most High God.” According to the historians, a kind of insane fury and excitement was manifested by those

who were supposed to be possessed by the spirit of Apollo. Their eyes sparkled, their hair stood on end, and a shivering ran all over their body. In this convulsive state, they spoke, often with loud howlings and cries, and foamed at the mouth. Reference is made in Greek writings to one particular woman who continued for some days in this violent, agonizing, convulsive state, calling out with loud howlings and cries, and in the end she dropped dead!

Such manifestations were regarded by the pagan Greeks as evidence of possession of a demon - the spirit of Apollo. Cicero, the Latin writer, made this comment about it: "What authority truly can that fury which you call divine have, when it happens that the things which a wise man cannot see, an insane man can see: and he who may have lost his human senses, has attained to divine?" In his view, these people were not inspired by the gods but were mad. Their utterances were not divine but delirious. The pagans regarded their utterances as divine oracles, but in reality it was teaching emanating from a deranged mind - "doctrines of demons!"

PAUL ADOPTED JESUS' APPROACH

Now, no Christian with any discernment would subscribe to such pagan superstition about the spirit of Apollo possessing people and inspiring them to predict things, least of all the apostle Paul who was so against Greek philosophy and mythology. Yet, we read in Act. 16:18 that he turned to the slave girl and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out the same hour."

The girl and those with her, as in the case of the Gadarene demoniac, who believed he was possessed by Legion, really believed she was possessed by Apollo. And, as in the case of Jesus, who didn't try to convince the demoniac that his "Legion" was just an hallucination or a figment of the imagination, Paul also made no attempt to waste breath trying to convince the slave girl that what she believed was a pagan myth. No! Following Jesus' example, Paul simply turned on the girl and spoke to her in terms that accommodated the situation as she understood it, and delivered her from her mental disorder by the power of God.

The slave girl's testimony that Paul and his companions were "servants of the Most High God, who show to us the way of salvation," was true, but was not inspired by the Holy Spirit. The record in Acts informs us that she had been following Paul around for some time and that her masters used her to make money for themselves by telling fortunes. It would not have been difficult to pick up from Paul's public preaching and

peoples' conversation that he claimed to be a servant of God with a message of salvation. The masters no doubt hoped that Paul would pay them well for a reinforcement and confirmation of his message by their slave girl who had a reputation for possessing prophetic powers.

CRUNCH TIME

But her continual loud, violent outbursts, and fanatical-type utterances over a period of many days, grieved Paul. He would be particularly disturbed due to the fact the utterances were coming from someone who was deceived by pagan mythology. Such identification with Paul and his message by one who was a well known pagan, claiming to speak under the influence of a pagan "spirit," could easily give the impression that paganism and Christianity were closely connected. Nothing could have been further from the truth! So the inevitable happened: Paul turned on the girl and delivered her of the "spirit."

When her masters realized that their chance of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the authorities in the public square. They were severely beaten and thrown into prison as a result. It was probably Paul's anticipation of this reaction and outcome that caused him to delay taking action. He no doubt hoped she would get tired of following him and go away, and therefore waited several days hoping and praying that she would. But, when there was no sign of her moving on, he took authority over the situation resulting in strife with the authorities.

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PART THREE
CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR
SPIRITUALISM

Spiritualism involves the belief that those who die live on as a disembodied “spirit,” and are able to communicate with the living concerning past, present and future events. However, such spirits do not communicate with just anyone and everyone, but mainly through those who are particularly susceptible and receptive to their influence. Such people are called a “medium” because they act as a middle person - a connecting link or bridge between the living and dead.

The majority of mediums tend to be women with strong psychic inclinations, highly sensitive to the atmosphere; that is, to vibes and influences beyond the five physical senses. They are usually super-sensitive to the thoughts and emotions, ambitions and desires of those who consult them. People with such psychic ability, can “psyche” others out very quickly. They can “pick their brain” so to speak and read their mind like a book.

In order for a medium to communicate with a “spirit,” she arranges a seance, which is a sitting or session with the person or persons who want contact to be made with a dead friend or relative. The medium goes into a deep trance-like state, during which she claims to make contact with the “spirit” and receive messages which she passes on to those present. Sometimes a medium claims the spirit possesses her and speaks through her.

Certain strange happenings that are sometimes associated with seances, are regarded by spiritualists as evidence that the spirits of the dead do exist and can make contact with the living. Among the phenomena that takes place when communication is made, are table-rappings, the moving of tables and other objects, messages through writing as well as speaking. The medium actually does the writing and speaking herself, but claims the “spirit” does it through her, using her hand and voice. Other phenomena are the appearance of lights and the materialization of bodily parts.

BASED ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Spiritualism, like the demonology of the pagans, is based on belief in the immortality of the soul. But the Bible does not teach that doctrine. It teaches that death is a punishment for sin and is a reality. Death is the

opposite to life. Death is cessation of life, so it is a contradiction to talk in terms of the dead still being alive. The Bible teaches that death is a time of unconsciousness, during which the deceased are “asleep,” and therefore cannot travel or communicate. See Ps. 6:5. 49:12-20. 88:11-12. 115:17. 146:1-4. Ecc. 9:4-10. Isa. 38. Dan. 12:2, 13. Jn. 11:11-14. Act. 13:36. Act. 2:29, 34. 1 Cor. 15:6, 18, 20, 51. 1 Thes. 4:13-15.

The only hope of life after death offered by the Bible is physical resurrection at the second coming of Christ. Without this there is no hope and all would perish. (See 1 Cor. 15). An immortal body, not a disembodied immortal has always been the divine purpose for man. Had Adam not sinned, his physical bodily existence would have continued. This was God’s original purpose and will ultimately be fulfilled by Christ at his second coming when he will change the mortal bodies of his followers into immortal bodies like his own.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is basically the serpent’s lie: “Thou shalt not surely (really) die.” This doctrine was the pagans’ answer to death by which they sought to take the sting out of death and make it less painful and sorrowful for themselves. But 1 Cor. 15:51-58 makes it clear that it is only resurrection that can take the sting out of death.

FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF GOSPEL NEUTRALIZED

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul neutralizes some fundamental aspects of the Gospel. For instance, it teaches that immortality is a present possession which everyone is born with whether they believe in Christ and repent or not. This means one does not need to be “born again” to qualify for eternal life, for everyone is born with it whether they want it or not. Eternal life therefore ceases to be a gift of God through faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

This means that the cross of Christ was not really necessary to open up the way to eternal life. Let’s face it: if we don’t really die, then the teaching of Scripture that “the wages of sin is death” is not true. If life continues on after death, then sin doesn’t really cause death at all, and ceases to be a barrier to fellowship with God. After all, if the immortal souls of all the believers like Abraham, Moses and David etc, who lived prior to the cross of Christ, had gone to be with God in heaven, the cross of Christ was clearly not necessary!

And if they all went to heaven without a body, why didn’t Jesus do the same? Why was it necessary for him, in order to live again after dying,

to be raised with a body? If people today can confidently believe and affirm that their dead friends live on and have gone to heaven without actually seeing them, why couldn't Christ's friends have done the same without having to see him in a body? According to 2 Tim. 1:10, Jesus brought immortality to light. Prior to his resurrection immortality had never been seen or experienced by any other man. Jesus was, as we read in 1 Cor. 15:20-23, the first man ("first fruits") in history to wake up from the death sleep and experience immortality, and none of his followers will experience it until his second coming. But according to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, many experienced immortality long before he did!

According to Jn. 3:13, Jesus is the first and only man to ascend to heaven since attaining immortality. Once again, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul negates this, for it believes that the immortal spirit of Abraham, Moses and David etc went to heaven at death, centuries before Jesus ascended there after his resurrection.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul also negates the second coming of Christ, resurrection and judgement, which are three major fundamental doctrines of the original New Testament church. Let's face it: if a person's "spirit" goes to celestial bliss in heaven at death, what is the point in Jesus coming back to raise the dead and judge them? If they are already in heaven, there is no need for Jesus to leave heaven and return to earth to raise them and give them life. And if they have already gone to their eternal reward in heaven at death, why judge them later? Rewarding someone first and then judging him later would be a very back-to-front procedure, and is certainly not according to divine justice.

The spiritualists' claim that the spirits of the dead sometimes manifest bodily parts is also a fundamental violation of the Bible doctrine on resurrection. Only God can recreate a body or bodily parts (1 Cor. 15:38), and will not do so till the day of resurrection when Jesus returns. To claim that the spirits of the dead can have bodies or parts of a body is both unscriptural and bizarre.

JESUS IS THE ONLY MEDIUM

One of the most serious errors of spiritualism is that Jesus ceases to be the only medium between the dead and the living. If the dead can communicate with the living through a spiritualist medium, then Jesus ceases to be the only bridge by which those who have died can return and communicate. Scripture is dogmatic and unequivocal on this: "There is one God and one mediator between man and God, the man Christ

Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). Being the resurrector of the dead, returning from death to life is entirely dependent upon him and his second coming. There is no other middle being or medium between the state of the dead and the living, and anyone who attempts to bridge the gap is a usurper of an exclusive position appointed only for the son of God. Spiritualism is therefore a very serious sin, intruding upon and interfering with the exclusive rights of Christ and robbing him of them in principle.

Spiritualists unwittingly attempt to make Christ’s second coming unnecessary, because one of the purposes of his coming is to enable people to meet and communicate with those who have died. But if spiritualists give the impression of bringing about that contact before Christ’s return, they steal a march on him and deny him the privilege and honour. This is high treason and incurs the wrath of God. In Old Testament times, spiritualism was a capital offence and incurred the death penalty.

From every angle spiritualism is viewed, it is in violation of major fundamental Bible teaching. It is impossible for a spiritualist to be a Christian and those who say they are have been deceived. It is a contradiction of terms for spiritualists to call themselves a Christian church, and it is offensive and insulting to those who understand the true Christian faith. True Christianity is based on the Bible. Spiritualist teaching is not. It is completely contrary to the Bible.

AN ABOMINATION TO GOD

From the very beginning, it is made clear in the Scriptures that spiritualism (witchcraft, necromancy, soothsaying, trafficking with the dead) which was a practise of the pagans, is an abomination to God. Ex. 22:18 is short and brief and to the point: “You shall not allow a witch to live.” (A “witch” is a female medium. A “wizard” is a male medium). Lev. 19:31 says: “Do not turn to mediums or wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.” It is implied here that mediums usurp God’s position, which, of course, they do by claiming to be able to communicate with the dead and forecast the future.

In Lev. 20:6 God says He will turn against anyone who goes to a medium for advice and will no longer consider such a person as one of His people. So serious was the sin of being a medium, God commanded that they should be stoned to death (Lev. 20:27).

Deu. 18 records God as telling Israel not to follow the same practises of the pagans, like consulting mediums to contact the dead for advice.

Instead, God promised to raise up a prophet like Moses who would teach and advise them. In this passage God claims to be the one and only source of knowledge concerning the future, and will only communicate it through prophets of His own appointment. This especially applies to His own son, to whom these words are applied in Act. 3:22.

Therefore, to seek knowledge of the future through mediums and astrologers was to dethrone God from His sovereign position and to reject the prophet of His appointment. Today, the words of God's prophets are recorded in the Bible, and to neglect or reject those words, and seek advice through a medium instead, is as insulting and displeasing to God as ignoring His prophets when they were alive. Seeking help and advice from a medium instead of God was no different from turning to other gods. To turn to a person for something that only God can give, is to make that person a substitute for God - a rival God, and being a jealous God, He will not of course tolerate that.

As has been pointed out in previous chapters, the pagans in Biblical times believed that the departed spirits of the dead become demons, and regarded them as minor deities or gods which acted as intermediaries between the supreme gods and mankind. It was therefore these demons that the mediums thought they were in contact with at their seances, and from whom they claimed to receive messages. Deu. 18 would therefore include this when it refers to false prophets "speaking in the name of other gods."

WITCHCRAFT IS REBELLION

To go against God's commandment and consult a medium or act as a medium is referred to as "rebellion" in 1 Sam. 15:23: "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." These words were addressed by Samuel to Saul because he rejected the word of the Lord and disobeyed. Saul proved to be a man of double standards. He purged out all the mediums from the land, but when he found himself in dire straits and could not get an answer from the Lord, he consulted a medium. The medium was a witch at a place called Endor, and Saul wanted her to consult Samuel, who had died, to seek his advice.

Both the medium and Saul got more than they bargained for, because God either raised Samuel from the dead, or created a vision of him risen from the dead (as in the case of the vision of Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration of Jesus). The medium got the fright of her life and was terrified. She had never seen anything like this before. She saw Samuel

coming up out of the ground (not from heaven!) in the physical form of an old man, not a disembodied spirit (1 Sam. 28)! God used Samuel to pronounce judgement on Saul, warning him that “tomorrow you and your sons will be with me,” i.e. dead and in the grave.

In spite of God’s clear warnings, witchcraft kept appearing during the period of the kings of Israel. One of the worst times was when Jezebel was queen, and she went to the dogs as a result (2 Kng. 9:22). Manasseh, the son of king Hezekiah allowed mediums to practise on a widespread scale (2 Kng. 21:6), but Josiah had a good clean up when he came on the scene (2 Kng. 23:24).

WHISPERING AND MUTTERING

Isaiah the prophet lived through some dark times of apostasy and had to contend with some wicked kings and prophets. In Isa. 8:19 we read that people told him not to depend on God for instruction. Instead, they said: “Ask for messages from fortune tellers and mediums, who peep and mutter. After all, people should ask for messages from the spirits and consult the dead on behalf of the living.” But the Lord told Isaiah to answer them with these words: “Listen to what the Lord is teaching you! Don’t listen to mediums; what they tell you will do you no good.”

According to Davis’ dictionary of the Bible, the reference to mediums who “peep and mutter” relates to the pretended ability of mediums to converse with the spirits of the dead. Davis says: “The wizard chirped and muttered in imitation of the voice of the spirit.” The Hebrew word for “peep” is translated “whisper” in Isa. 29:4, and Strong’s Concordance gives this as one of the meanings of the word. The word “mutter” means “murmur,” or “gibber.”

So then, Isa. 8:19 says that when mediums give a message which they claim is from the spirit of a dead person, they whisper and mutter. The question that will naturally be asked is: Why did they speak like this? Isa. 29:4 throws some light on it. The prophet speaks about Jerusalem being attacked by the enemy and being brought low into the dust. He goes on to say that in that day the city will no longer be loud and tumultuous, but voices will be like voices of a medium which sound as if they are coming out of the ground - soft, low and muffled, like a whisper.

We are told here that mediums spoke in such a way to make their voice sound as if it was coming out of the ground, in a soft, muffled mumble. Some modern mediums do a similar thing, causing their voice to come from under the table.

VENTRILOQUISM

Now, the king James translation refers to the mediums as those who “had a familiar spirit.” This expression occurs 15 times in the Old Testament and has been translated from the Hebrew word “owb,” pronounced “obe.” It is derived from a word that means “bellied” or “hollow.” Strong’s Concordance says “obe” means “a mumble, i.e. a water-skin (from its hollow sound); hence, a necromancer (ventriloquist, as from a jar).” For this reason “obe” is translated “bottles” in Job. 32:19.

Gesenius and Liddel and Scott point out in their Lexicon that the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), translates “obe” by the Greek word “eggastrimuthos,” which means a ventriloquist - one who speaks from the belly. Ventriloquists were so called because they spoke with their mouth shut, so as to seem to speak out of their belly.

This all suggests that the mediums imitated the voice of the dead by ventriloquism. By speaking in a low muffled voice they were able to make it sound like it was coming out of the ground, where, of course, the dead they were supposed to be consulting had been buried. In pagan mythology, the spirits of the dead were believed to exist in the underworld. In Babylonian legend, the spirits are compared to birds and spoke or chirped with faint birdlike voices. Such beliefs were widespread in various forms. So the mediums imitated these sounds, uttering their oracles in voices intended to represent the spirits which they contacted.

Coming back to Isa. 8:19, which condemns Israel for seeking help from mediums who whisper and mutter, it goes on to say they should seek the living God, not the dead. Then comes those famous words in verse 20: “To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this (God’s) word, it is because they have no light in them.” This is the divine verdict on spiritualism. It is not according to God’s word therefore there is “no light” in it.

WITCHCRAFT IS “OF THE FLESH”

Now, most who claim to be Christians, (including those who believe in the immortality of the soul), do not believe that the spirits of the dead can return to communicate with the living. But, because of certain phenomena that sometimes takes place at a seance, many have concluded that the fallen angel demons cause it. However, in view of the fact that there are no fallen angel demons, we have to search for another cause. And we don’t have to look very far. Scripture, as usual, provides the

answer.

Gal. 5:19-20 says this: “Now the works of the flesh are plain and clear, namely, witchcraft” “Witchcraft” involves sorcery of all kinds, including trafficking with the dead, as already seen in the case of the witch at Endor. “Spiritualism” is simply a more modern name for the very old pagan practise of witchcraft and tends to make it sound more sophisticated and spiritual. The apostle Paul clearly states in Gal. 5 that it is “of the flesh,” which means it is a flesh inspired activity. Whatever strange phenomena might be involved, it is generated by man and finds its source not in fallen angels but in fallen man whose heart is “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” This is Scripture’s verdict on spiritualism.

It is interesting to note, as pointed out in an earlier chapter, that the Greek word chosen by Scripture to relate to spiritualism, is “pharmakia,” from which the English word “pharmacy” has been derived. It relates to both medication and magic, and is elsewhere translated “sorcery.” Strong’s Concordance relates it to drugs and druggists.

Drugs of course, put the mind into an unreal world - a world of fantasy and fiction, and, like magic, create illusion and delusion. They create a world in which things that are seen and sensed are not in reality what they seem to be - things that do not really exist, but which the mind is deceived into imagining do exist. It is therefore a very appropriate word to use in relation to spiritualism, because the mediums have been deceived by the flesh, especially the sub-conscious region of the mind (the “spirit of the mind”), into imagining the dead are still alive and that communication can be made with them. The “spirit world” into which they enter is simply the spirit of their own mind - the same “spirit” which deceived all the false prophets into thinking that the visions they saw and the voices they heard were from God (Ezk. 13).

NINETY PERCENT FRAUDULENT

Webster’s dictionary, under the heading of “Physical Research”, says “Innumerable mediums have been proved fraudulent.” It has been openly admitted in spiritualist magazines that 90% of spiritualist phenomena fits into the category of fraud, and could be reproduced by a professional conjurer.

The modern spiritualist movement may be said to have begun in the town of Hydesville in New York state. Here, on March 31 1848, two young girls, Margaret and Kate Fox, claimed to have heard strange

rappings which no one could explain. Shortly afterwards, the girls claimed that a spirit was responsible, believed to be that of a murdered peddler. Much attention and publicity was given to the girls and their claims at the time, putting them into the limelight, and putting ideas into people's heads.

Later, they moved to Rochester, New York state, and began to exploit the situation under the management of an older sister. The two young girls were the first "mediums" who claimed contact with the spirits of the dead through these "rappings." But in 1851 it was ascertained that the rappings were produced by movements of the sisters' knee joints. There were no rappings when their knees were firmly held!

In 1888 the sisters confessed that the raps had been fraudulently produced, but then withdrew their confession. The house where they lived became a place of pilgrimage for spiritualists. The following is taken from the confession of Margaret Fox: "I have explored the unknown as far as human will can; I have gone to the dead so that I might get from them some little token. Nothing ever came of it, nothing, nothing." Such is the historical foundation of modern spiritualism!

A VAIN EXPERIMENT

In 1936, a member of Parliament, Colonel Harry Day, socialist member for Southwark Central, told the reporter for the Daily Mail that he and his friend Houdini, the famous escapologist, "had investigated together dozens of cases of so-called spiritualist manifestations, and in each instance we came to the conclusion that the phenomena could be explained by earthly agencies, either fraudulent or unconscious. Nevertheless, we remained unsatisfied, and finally agreed that whichever of us died first, would attempt, if possible, to appear to the other. We arranged certain signs between us, known today only by myself."

Houdini died first, and an attempt was made to get in touch with him. The Colonel sat alone in his house for three hours, from 2am to 5am, neither reading nor allowing his thoughts to wander on to any other topic. Occasionally a board creaked, but no sign or sound came from his friend.

Houdini's wife also arranged a seance to make contact with her husband. She sat at a long table with twelve people, a mixed group of spiritualists and scientists. Surrounding them was a host of spectators, including film cameramen, with a ton of equipment to "broadcast" any message. One of those sitting at the table cried out in frustration and desperation: "Harry, Harry, are you there? Give us a sign. We have waited

so long.” But there was no answer and he wept.

Now, it was obviously impossible for Houdini’s spirit to return and communicate, but if there is a fallen angel whose chief ambition is to deceive people by impersonating departed spirits of the dead, what a marvellous opportunity this occasion provided for him to do so! It was the perfect set-up to deceive millions of people, what with film cameramen and broadcasting equipment being present. But there was no answer and no signs. Nothing!

A HISTORY OF DECEPTION

An article in another newspaper, dated 1928, referred to a certain Mr. Thayer of Los Angeles, a professional ghost maker, who was prepared to make to order “spirit voices with messages beyond the grave, spirit hands, floating trumpets and moving furniture.” Among Mr Thayer’s clients were spiritualists, mediums, crystal gazers from all countries, stage illusionists, and those who need dancing furniture to get a living. It was from him that Houdini secured his apparatus in his exposure of spiritualism. The equipment was supposed to be for entertainment purposes only, but Houdini realized that professional mediums could also use it to hoodwink the public.

The “Pall Mall Budget” once wrote that “Spiritualism has received a great impetus by the exhibition of photographs of spirits since the Paris congress.” And, as a result of the photographs, credulous and gullible people started to have strange visions, based on the belief that, however tricky mediums might be, the photographs don’t lie. But it was all trick photography, using special lighting effects and double exposures.

Then there is the case of a certain professor Richet, who claimed to have taken a cast in paraffin wax of the hands of a spirit who appeared at a seance. It was claimed that these wax gloves dropped on the table as the spirit dematerialized. They were subjected to scientific analysis and it was discovered that both were wax moulds of the same left hand, on the back of which could be seen the impress of real skin, wrinkled and furrowed, and studded with hair follicles. It was evident where the wax gloves came from!

In view of what has already been said about ventriloquism, further comment hardly needs to be made about voices coming from under or above the seance table. The deception that can be caused by ventriloquism, not to mention technical and electronic methods of creating voices, is well known and documented. Countless examples of fraud and

trickery could be quoted. There is almost as much fraud, deception and misinterpretation of so-called “evidence” produced by spiritualists, as there is of the so-called “evidence” produced by evolutionists to prove that man evolved out of the sea.

In 1931, the “Literary Digest” had an illustrated article on the confessions of Pecararo, who was the man who tricked Conan Doyle and made his living as a “fake medium” for eleven years. The writer in the Literary Digest said, in conclusion: “Whether Pecararo’s confession will halt the sorrowful march to the darkened dens of the mediums is purely a matter of conjecture, but many agree that it is a staggering blow to the cult.”

MANY WANT TO BE FOOLED

Pecararo himself repeated an old opinion when he said “many people want to be fooled.” This is sad, but it is true. Perhaps facing uncertainties or experiencing unhappiness, people with a profound need for some assurance in facing trials and problems, are particularly vulnerable and will grasp at straws and believe anything that offers help and hope. And a clever person who has no scruples about playing tricks, will not find it hard to take in completely a much more intelligent man, who, for deep personal reasons, wants to believe.

I read of a case of an intelligent man who normally would be opposed to spiritualism. But his young wife, whom he loved very much, died suddenly and unexpectedly, plunging him into the depths of despair, emotionally traumatising him and causing profound loneliness. A spiritualist told him his wife could be contacted through a medium, and he wanted so desperately to believe it, that he went to one and sat in at a seance, and was vulnerable to all the deception it involves.

Reference has also been made in a previous chapter to the power of faith, even if it is misguided. If a person believes intensely enough in something, he can end up seeing it even though it may not exist. The example has been given of soldiers, convinced that the enemy is sneaking up on them at night and imagine they can see them and shoot at them when nobody in reality is there. There is also the case of a person claiming to have seen an idol blink its eyes and move its hands and even walk. Many references are made in the Bible to false prophets who believed so intensely in false things, and became so focussed on them, they ended up dreaming about them and seeing them in “visions.” They were called “false seers,” because the things they claimed to “see” were

false. God's message to them was: "Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing" (Ezk. 13:3).

The human spirit is, of course, particularly receptive to deception under hypnotism and mesmerism. Once in this state, whatever is spoken the person will believe. The subject can be made to see, hear, feel, taste and smell things that are not there at the time. This state is normally induced by an operator, but can also be self-induced, unwittingly, and can happen at a seance.

A seance provides the ideal conditions for self-induced hypnosis and mind trickery, for it is usually conducted in subdued light or darkness, with quiet music playing in the background. In this restful and relaxed atmosphere the sitter is told to concentrate on the deceased person in order to make contact with their spirit. In this concentration it is not difficult for some people, to unwittingly reach a state that could be regarded as self-hypnosis passivity, during which they see or hear the things they came wanting and hoping to see and hear. It is made even easier, when the medium herself claims to be seeing and hearing them.

MENTAL TELEPATHY

Now, it cannot be denied that some mediums have the ability to receive accurate information concerning a dead person she has never met before, and therefore information not previously known. So how can this be explained? Parapsychologists and others who have studied and examined this phenomenon, attribute it to mental telepathy or extra sensory perception (ESP). A medium, through highly sensitive telepathic powers, is able to penetrate the thoughts and read the mind of her client, and obtain a mental picture and facts about the deceased. The medium can then relay information about the dead person, much to the amazement of the client.

Thoughts are electrical impulses in the brain, and, like messages transmitted through the air by a broadcasting station which can be picked up by a receiver (radio) which is tuned in to the right frequency, so a medium with the ability to tune in to the right "frequency" can receive messages transmitted by the human brain. This is one of the latent powers of the soul due to being made in the image of God, and demonstrates the truth declared in Ps. 139:14 that humans are "awesomely and wonderfully made." God has always been able to read human thoughts, and, being made in His image, humans have tremendous potential which will not be realized to the full until the age to come in the realm of immortality when

equal with the angels. In that age, all thoughts will be pure and holy and there will be no wicked and sinful thoughts to hide. Minds will be open for all to read without any fear or embarrassment, and communication will be able to take place through unspoken thoughts as well as words.

From time to time we are given glimpses of the profound potential of the human mind or “spirit” in people who manifest abnormal abilities, like making incredibly complex calculations off the top of their head faster than an electronic calculator. Incredible memory feats that just boggle the average mind have also been achieved. The same applies to some who are able to use the power of the mind to move objects and defy the law of gravity by levitating their body. Unfortunately, in most cases, these abilities are not used for God’s glory, but they nevertheless give us a glimpse of the potential of the human mind.

The same applies to mental telepathy. Once upon a time the idea of receiving thoughts from peoples’ minds would have been regarded as science fiction. So also would the suggestion that radio and television stations would send out invisible electrical impulses into the air and be received in millions of homes at the same time in the form of words and colour pictures!

EVIDENCE OF MENTAL TELEPATHY

Many examples could be given to prove that mental telepathy is not science fiction but a fact. For example, a Mr Wadsworth tricked a medium by putting her to the test. He suspected that she just picked up information from his mind, so he asked her to contact his dead father, and during the seance he concentrated on his father wearing certain clothes and a hat which were at home in his drawer.

Before long, the medium claimed to be in contact with his father and described him with those clothes, and said he was present in the room wearing them. Mr Wadsworth said: “Do you mean to say his clothes have materialized as well?” She said “Yes.” He replied: “Well, how is it possible for me to have those same clothes at home in a drawer, which I have kept since my father’s death?”

Another example is that of an examiner in the New York patent’s office who visited a medium. As he concentrated on his office and furniture and the drawings he was working on, she picked it up and correctly described it to him. He was also engaged in writing a book, which she also picked up from his thoughts. She claimed a great spirit was really behind the writing of the book. The man asked who this great spirit

was, but the medium said she would not give the answer that day, but the next if he would come back.

So he went back, and prior to the seance, he mentioned in an aside to others who were part of the circle, that he thought he knew who the spirit was, and he put two names into their minds. One of them was a living friend in a distant town, and the other was his own name, which no one present knew, but which he said was the name of his dead brother, who, in reality did not exist, for he had no brother, dead or alive!

Now, this medium was a slate-writing medium. She was able to write down on a slate any information received, and even write the signature of the supposed "spirit" it came from. Well, this medium wrote out a communication, signed by the supposed spirit of his brother. Even though the man knew that the name she signed was his own, he was naturally amazed at her telepathic ability. But even more amazing still, was the fact that the signature was an almost exact reproduction of his own. It was an impressive demonstration of mental telepathy, but quite a devastating blow to spiritualist theories of messages from the dead!

TELEPATHIC POWERS CAN REPRODUCE VOICES

Highly developed telepathic powers can not only pick up and reproduce a person's signature, but even their voice, and this has also been demonstrated. And to those who lack scientific knowledge of this phenomenon, it can be as mind boggling as playing a tape recording of a dead chief's voice to a backward or primitive tribe, not to mention showing them a video of him in person.

Some will be familiar with the picture on old gramophone records entitled: "His Master's Voice." A little dog sits in front of a phonograph with his head on one side and ears attentive. He is in a quandary because he can hear his master's voice but cannot understand how. If he were capable of understanding, it could be explained to him that it is only the impression of the voice, preserved by machinery, that he can hear, and not his master at all.

Spiritualism makes the same mistake as that little dog. It picks up impressions from the minds of living men and women, made by those who are dead, and imagines that these impressions prove the existence of the spirits of the dead.

Spiritualism is simply telepathy from living persons exclusively. The messages of a medium have their origin in her subjective mind, fed by material made available either by her client's mind, or by facts concerning

the deceased provided by some other external means such as a funeral eulogy, newspaper obituary, discussion with a friend or private investigation.

The precise mode of operation of mental telepathy may not be fully understood, but it is a real phenomenon, believed and accepted in the scientific world. Unfortunately, those who don't realize this, are easily deceived by it. For this reason, God commanded Israel to keep away from it and put to death anyone who meddled with it.

SOME AMAZING STORIES

Some amazing stories have been told in relation to mental telepathy. For example, in 1930 a medium picked up a distress call from the captain of airship R101, which crashed. Although the medium knew nothing about airships, her account was full of technical expressions relating to it. The message ended abruptly when the airship crashed. But if the Captain's spirit survived, why didn't his thoughts continue to come through? The reason is because he was dead. And, as the Bible plainly teaches, the dead do not know anything, for their thoughts have ceased to function.

The medium just referred to was Mrs Eileen Garrett, and interestingly enough, she gave up her work as a professional medium, not only because she could not accept the spiritualists' theory of messages from the dead, but because she regarded it as a positive hindrance to scientific research into the nature of psychic powers.

An article appeared in a magazine stating that: "Highly placed Soviet scientists took parapsychology seriously, not snickeringly It was hoped that suggestion at a distance could induce individuals, without their being aware of it, to adopt the officially desired political and social attitudes." This sounds like brainwashing at a distance through telepathy. It was also reported that at one stage, the Soviets were attempting to train clairvoyants for spy purposes. Nothing may have come of it, but it does at least show that they recognized the potential for mental telepathy in the human spirit.

One argument that spiritualists give against what has been said, is that sometimes the information they come up with had been forgotten by their client. But one can only "forget" something they once knew, and although the conscious mind may not remember it, it is recorded and stored away in the subconscious mind, to which those with telepathic powers have access.

CONCLUSION

In closing, it should be said that we should not regard telepathic ability as being something bad in itself. After all, God created us with the potential for it, and it can be used for good and God's glory, especially when quickened by the Holy Spirit as in the ministry of Jesus and his apostles, not to mention Old Testament prophets like Elisha who knew the thoughts of the enemy and was able to make provision for Israel's safety and security as a result (2 Kng. 6:8-12). Abuse of a God-given ability by spiritualists doesn't invalidate use. Telepathic powers are regarded by Pentecostal groups as being bad and of the devil, but they are part of being in the image of God, and are a glimpse of greater abilities to come in the age to come, when communication will not depend only on verbalization, and when those who rule the world with Christ will not need lie detectors to solve crimes. In that day, there will be no unsolved crimes, and the promise of God that the whole earth shall be filled with His glory, shall be fulfilled.

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