

PART TWELVE:

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

(Gen. 3:1-8)

1. *The Generations of the Heavens and of the Earth.* We need to recall here briefly the significance of this phrase. The term "generations" (*toledoth*) in the various passages in which it occurs in Genesis (cf. Gen. 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27, 25:12, 25:19, 36:1, 37:2), *refers indisputably*, not to that which precedes it, but to that which follows it, in the text. In a word, it is not recapitulative, but introductory. Hence, there is no reason to assume that the phrase, as used in Gen. 2:4, is any exception to this rule. As Green writes (UBG, 11,12): "Accordingly this title . . . must announce as the subject of the section which it introduces, not an account of the way in which the heaven and the earth were themselves brought into being, but an account of the offspring of heaven and earth; in other words, of man who is the child of both worlds, his body formed of the dust of the earth, his soul of heavenly origin, inbreathed by God Himself. And so the sections proceed regularly." (That is, first, Gen. 1:1, then 2:4, then 5:1, 6:9, etc., each referring uniformly to what follows and not to what goes before.)

2. *The Drama of the Genesis of Sin and Suffering.* (Sin is *moral* evil; suffering is *physical* or "natural" evil.) We have now learned (Part XI) that, according to Biblical teaching, the first sin occurred, not in Paradise, but in Heaven itself, in the insurrection of Satan and his rebel angels against the Sovereignty of God. In the third chapter of Genesis we have the account of the beginning of evil on the earth. From this account we learn the following: (1) that the actors in this supreme Tragedy of Humanity were four, namely, the Man, the Woman, the Serpent, and the Devil; (2) that the Man and the Woman were originally innocent (*i.e.*, prior to the birth of conscience in them), and that in this original state they were surrounded

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

with all things necessary to their growth in holiness and the good life; (3) that they fell from this state of innocence—how long after their creation (attainment of reason?) we are not informed; (4) that they were led to disobey God by the seductive appeals of a creature designated the serpent; (5) that the Woman was the first to take the plunge into sin and its consequences, and that the Man, partially through affection for his fallen bride, deliberately followed her into the transgression (Gen. 3:6, cf. 1 Tim. 2:14). (Let us keep in mind always what is probably the most fundamental rule of Biblical interpretation, namely, that this account, like any other segment of Scripture, can be understood fully only in the light of the *whole* of Biblical teaching.) Undoubtedly the most significant truth for us that is embodied in this narrative is the fact that in the story of Adam and Eve and their encounter with the forces of evil—and the tragic consequences stemming therefrom—we have the prototype of what happens in the life of every human being on attaining the age of responsibility (“accountability,” “discretion”). (Cf. Rom. 3:9, 23; also John 1:29—note the import of the singular form, “sin,” as used here.)

We surely have here a dramatization of what had to be a historical event, that is, an event that *had to take place in our space-time world*, in the appearance (emergence?) of the first *homo sapiens*. That is to say, there had to be an *awareness of wrong*, originating in practical reason and manifesting itself in the chiding of conscience, somewhere, at some time, in a human pair—male and female; otherwise, man would never have gotten out of the jungle. No evolution theory obviates this truth. Moreover, it seems obvious that some kind of correlation must exist between the awakening of conscience in man and his attainment of holiness, even though the nature and design of this correlation is, and probably always will be, inscrutable.

3. *Human Nature*. It should be noted that we use the

GENESIS

word "Man" here generically, that is, as referring to every individual (both male and female) of the species ("kind") known as *mankind* or *humankind*. (Note the word "kind" as used in Gen. 1:12, 21, 24). What is man? As Alexander Pope has written—

Know then thyself; presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man.

And the Psalmist exclaims: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Psa. 8:4). *What is man? What is human nature?* I read today, in some texts on scientific problems, that *human nature is changing*. Obviously, if human nature changes, it will no longer be *human* nature. What, then, is human nature *per se*? The clearest answer to this question that I have ever come upon is in the great Old Testament commentary of the distinguished Jewish writer, Moses Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon, who lived A.D. 1135-1204). Maimonides writes, concerning Gen. 1:26, "Let us make man in our image" (*tselem*), as follows (GP, 14): "The term signifies 'the specific form' of man, viz., his intellectual perception, and does not refer to his 'figure' or 'shape.' . . . As man's distinction consists in a property which no other creature on earth possesses, viz., intellectual perception, in the exercise of which he does not employ his senses, nor move his hand or his foot, this perception has been compared—though only apparently, not in truth—to the Divine perception, which requires no corporeal organ. On this account, *i.e.*, on account of the Divine intellect with which man has been endowed, he is said to have been made in the form and likeness of the Almighty, but far from it be the notion that the Supreme Being is corporeal, having a material form." As we have noted heretofore, in our study of Genesis 2:7, man is a body-mind or body-spirit unity, that is, in scientific terms, a psychosomatic unity, a "living soul." This is precisely what we mean by *human nature* throughout this text. (See

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

our presentation of the Christian doctrine of immortality, in Volume One of our Textbook on Genesis.) As Maimonides explains so clearly, however, it is only in his interior life, based on his intellection, that man can be said truly to be the "image" and "likeness" of his Creator.

4. *Aspects of Human Nature.* These may be described as follows: (1) *Racial.* The Bible teaches that the entire human race has descended from a single pair (Gen. 1:27, 2:7, 2:22, 3:20, 9:19; Acts 17:26; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21-22). This teaching is corroborated by evidence: (a) from *history*, i.e., that the history of the race, of all ethnic groups in both hemispheres, points to a common origin ("cradle") in southwestern Asia; (b) from *philology*, which points up a common origin of all the more important languages of both the past and the present; (c) from *physiology*, namely, the essential identity of all races in cranial, osteological, and dental characteristics; the fertility of unions among individuals of the most diverse human types, and the continued fertility of the offspring of such unions; (d) from *psychology*, that is, the existence of common mental, social, and moral characteristics in all peoples. Graves (HCD, 58): "Men are homogeneous, a genetic bond binds the race, the law of heredity everywhere prevails." Goldenweiser (*Anth.*, 32): "What the anthropologist finds is man to whom nothing human is foreign: *all the fundamental traits of the psychic make-up of man anywhere are present everywhere.*" (Evolutionists are generally agreed, I think, that insofar as it can be determined at present in the development of their theory, there has been only one biological "progression" culminating in *homo sapiens*.) To this I should like to add, some evolutionists to the contrary notwithstanding, that as things now stand there is no available body of evidence at hand sufficient to justify the view that if mankind were to disappear from the face of the earth, there is any process of change now in operation by which another *homo sapiens*

GENESIS

might be "evolved," however long the animal kingdom might continue to exist. In our day, evolutionists are prone to avoid this issue by taking the position that biological evolution has given way to what they call "psychological" evolution as a result of the obtrusion of man's mental powers into the ongoing of the process. (The Scriptures know nothing, of course, of hypothetical "pre-Adamic" families or tribes, nor for that matter do the scientists.)

(2) *Bipartite*. Man's nature is a fusion of the two forms of being known to us, the spiritual and the material. He consists of "body" and "spirit," and the union of the two elements makes of him a "living soul" (Gen. 2:7; Job 27:3, 32:8, 33:4; Eccl. 12:7; Zech. 12:1). Schleiermacher (CG, 2:487): "We think of the spirit as soul, only when in the body, so that we cannot speak of an immortality of the soul, in the proper sense, without bodily life." Godet (BS): "From the point of view of Holy Scripture, man is a composite being made up of two elements of opposite nature and origin. He is, as to his body, formed out of the dust of the earth; but in his body there exists a breath of life due to the inspiration of God Himself. 'God,' says the ancient book, Genesis, 'formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.' The nature of the being which resulted from the combination of these two elements is described by the expression, 'a living soul'; and thus, continues Genesis, 'man became a living soul'—words which were reproduced by Paul almost literally (1 Cor. 15:45). We see that this expression, 'living soul,' is not applied to the breath of God considered in itself and separate from the body, but that it describes man in his entirety, as the result of the union of the two contrasted elements." Someone has said: "Through my body I am put in relation with nature below me; through my soul, with men, my equals, around me; through my spirit, with God above me." A. A. Hodge

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

(PL, 221): "By soul we mean only one thing, *i.e.*, an incarnate spirit, a spirit with a body. Thus we never speak of the souls of angels. They are pure spirits, having no bodies." (I must reject this last statement. God alone is pure Spirit [John 4:24]. I find no intimation in Scripture that any creatures, either angels or men, are pure spirits. Angels are represented Biblically as presenting themselves to men as ministering spirits [with reference to their function, Heb. 1:14], but in some such attenuated form of energy-matter as makes them sense-perceptible to those to whom they manifest themselves.) Thus it is that when Scripture writers wish to describe the complete constitution of the human being, they place side by side the three terms—body, soul, and spirit; *e.g.*, 1 Thess. 5:23, Heb. 4:12—notwithstanding the essential duality of man's nature.

(3) *Personal*. Man was created "in the image" of God, Gen. 1:26-27. In what sense? (a) In some sort of *physical* or *metaphysical* sense? Surely not, because God is Spirit (John 4:24). It is hardly legitimate to bring in anthropomorphic expressions, as *e.g.*, Gen. 3:8, 6:6, 11:7, 18:1, and Exo. 33:20-23, to prove that God is in some sense corporeal. One of the great problems of revelation has ever been that of clothing divine thought in terms intelligible to man; hence, throughout Scripture, God is represented oftentimes as possessing certain physical features of a man, or of thinking and acting as man would think or act under similar circumstances. These are forms of communication adapted to man's ability to receive and to understand. (b) In a *moral* sense, as indicating *holiness*? Obviously not. Holiness is a state achieved by the exercise of the human will in obedience to God's law (*cf.* Matt. 3:15). God is infinitely holy in the sense that He never deviates from His own Will; being in Himself the Source of all truth, He conforms thereto precisely under all circumstances. Holiness is literally *completeness*, *perfection*.

GENESIS

In his primitive state, man was *innocent* rather than holy, that is, He existed without any actual awareness of the possibility of illicit knowledge and no actual knowledge of sin as a matter of personal experience. Innocence is largely a state of passivity, of untried childhood, we might well say; but holiness is active, not passive; it is the exercise of the human will as God would have it done, in obedience to His will. (c) In a *personal* sense, obviously. When God is said to have created man "in his own image," I understand this to mean that he endowed the creature with the essential properties of personality, viz., *self-consciousness* and *self-determination*. He endowed the corporeal form which was constituted of "the dust of the ground" (energy-matter) with the "breath of life," i.e., the powers, privileges, and responsibilities that attach to a person *solely because he is a person*. That part of the human being which is "dust" (matter) is simply the outer shell, "the earthly house of our tabernacle" (2 Cor. 5:1). The real man, however, the creature who thinks and feels and wills—the inner man (Eph. 3:16, 2 Cor. 4:16), not just the life principle, but the rational as well, hence *rational life*—was inbreathed by the Divine Spirit from His very own essence; hence, as Aristotle has said, reason is the spark of the Divine in man. Through the endowments of personality *man is qualified and divinely ordained to be the lord tenant of the earth* (Gen. 1:28-30, Psa. 8). (Thinking of God in the likeness of our inner selves is not prohibited in Scripture; thinking of God in terms of external things is prohibited (Exo. 20:4-6). Again, the test of the morality and of the nobility of a culture is *how it treats that which is created in the image of God, that is, the person as such.*)

(4) *Social*. Man was intended for society (Gen. 2:18). By ability, inclination, affection, interdependence and actual need, man is a social being; or, as Aristotle put it, "Man is by nature a political animal," that is, a dweller in a *polis* (the name by which the ancient Greek city-state

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

was known). Realizing this inherent characteristic of man's nature, soon after creating the Man, God created the Woman and brought her unto the Man as a helper meet for his needs (Gen. 2:21-25). Thus the conjugal union became, and continues to be, the basis of both domestic and civil society. (5) *Moral*, that is, having the power of choice and hence subject to the Divine law and accountable for every voluntary act that is not in harmony with that law and its ordaining Will. This power of choice is, at the same time, the source of his potentiality of attaining holiness. (6) *In general*, man's nature is clearly indicated by his outreaches as manifested throughout his history. These are the *intellectual* (quest for truth), the *esthetic* (quest for beauty), the *social* (quest for order), and the *religious* (quest for wholeness or holiness). The *moral* outreach is, of course, intrinsic to all these facets of human interest and activity. As Cassirer has written (EOM, 68), man is to be defined specifically, not by any inherent principle which constitutes his metaphysical essence, nor by any empirically discerned set of biological instincts, but by his *works*, that is, the products of his specific impulsion to think and to live in terms of symbols. This specific propensity to *symbolify*, unknown to the lower orders, is the source of his language, art, myth, and ritual, the facets of his culture. Hence, says Cassirer, man is not to be defined precisely as an *animal rationale*, but as an *animal symbolicum* (p. 26).

5. *The Serpent.*

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made" (Gen. 3:1a).

(1) Is the serpent mentioned here to be thought of as a creature of myth, allegory, fable, or folklore (of "supra-history," to use the "neo-orthodox" term)? Or was this a literal serpent as we now see and know serpentkind? The etymology of the original Hebrew term (*nachash*) has

GENESIS

been the subject of a great deal of tortuous speculation. The word has been variously translated as signifying such ideas as "hiss," "creep," "pierce," "shine" (with reference probably to its glossy appearance), etc. (Note in Isa. 27:1 the distinction of the "swift" or "fleeing" serpent from the "crooked" or "winding" serpent. Note also that in Eccl. 10:11 the term certainly suggests "babbling.")

(2) Writers of the modern critical school take the position, of course, that this was not an actual serpent at all. One theory is that it was the personification of "the instinct that impels man to emerge from the condition of childhood." Another view is that it symbolizes "the animal principle" in man (cf. the Id of Freudian psychology). Adam Clarke (CG, 44 ff.) pursues the etymology of the word through a maze of possible connotations, finally arriving at the ingenious notion that the creature was a member of the primitive family, possibly an ape or orang-outang. Or, again, was this creature a symbol of sex (again, cf. the Freudian libido)? Not so, says Cornfeld (AtD, 16), because "primitive man did not sublimate his instinct with such symbols." (For various uses of *nachash*, see Exo. 4:3, 7:15; Num. 21:6, 7, 9; Deut. 8:15; 2 Ki. 18:4; Job 26:13; Psa. 58:4, 140:3; Prov. 23:32, 30:19; Eccl. 10:8, 11; Isa. 14:29, 27:1, 65:25; Jer. 8:17, 46:22; Amos 5:19, 9:3; Mic. 7:17). Aldo J. Tos (Roman Catholic) writes (ABOT, 59, 60): "Symbolism and anthropomorphism are the media by which the author teaches the theology of the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve in Gn 3, 1-13." Again: "The 'serpent' is used as a symbol of man's ancient foe. Hebrew writers will later call him Satan, 'the adversary.' Christian belief is that he is a fallen angel: 'And he laid hold on the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan . . .'" (Apocalypse 20, 2). The presentation shows him as a cunning being who exercises his rational powers with a considerable amount of craft. The use of the 'serpent' was probably the author's attempt at

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

attacking the many forms of worship current among the Canaanites in which the image of the serpent appeared as a fertility symbol." (Indeed archaeology has proved in recent years that the Cult of Fertility was widespread throughout the Mediterranean world in ancient times, and that the bull and the snake, because of their reputation for fecundity, were the prevailing symbols of this Cult.) On this problem of the character of the Temptation-and-Fall narrative, Archer remarks (SOTI, 190) that many prefer to regard the story as one "in which the moral downfall of man is described by a fictitious episode designed to illustrate it," and that those who hold this view would generally agree that "insofar as man is a fallen creature, a moral agent with an innate sense of guilt, the 'myth' reflects a sublime truth, even though no such isolated episode actually took place." Archer himself concludes: "No decisive objections, however, have ever been raised against the historicity of Adam and Eve either on historical, scientific or philosophical grounds. The protest has been based essentially upon subjective concepts of probability."

(3) Are we to think, then, of the story of the Woman and the Serpent as a literary form comparable to the New Testament parables? Some have so held. However, not one of these stories in the first few chapters of Genesis has either of the characteristics common to the parable, namely, (a) as teaching one—and only one—specific spiritual lesson in its content, and (b) as following the parabolic introductory formula of pointing up a specific likeness of some kind (analogy). Jesus characteristically introduced His parables with the statement, "The kingdom of God is *like*," etc. Always in the parable some profound spiritual truth is being emphasized by an illustration from the natural world designed to make the point stand out clearly. In these Genesis stories, however, we find no such framework. Again quoting Archer (SOTI, 192): "Nowhere is it stated that the beginning of the world or of mankind was *like*

GENESIS

anything analogous. A parable is never to be explained in terms of itself; it always involves an analogy drawn from something else. Just as it would never have been said, 'The kingdom of God is like the kingdom of God,' so it could never have been intended to imply, 'The beginning of the human race was like the beginning of the human race,' or, 'The universal Flood was like the universal Flood.' The parabolic element is completely lacking here." Moreover, it should be noted that there is not just one fundamental truth, but many such truths, implied in these various narratives of the Book of the Beginnings. This fact we shall note as we proceed with our study.

(4) It is to be granted, of course, that the mention of a talking serpent might suggest a myth. To the contrary, Kaufmann emphasises the vast difference between Biblical references to angels and devils and those of the pagan mythologies. He writes as follows (RI, 66): "What is fundamental and peculiar to Jewish demonology is that its spirits and devils derive, not from a primordial evil root, but from sin. Its Satanic symbol is the land serpent, the tempter of Eden, not the sea serpent (the dragon, or Rahab), the primeval rebel against God . . . Judaism's demons are the offspring of sin *creatures*; their power is only to entice man into sin and thereby bring divine judgment upon him. The same is true of the 'princes of the nations' (cf. Dan. 10:13, 20). . . . They have no mythological features, nor are they sexually differentiated. . . . This absence in the Bible of the pagan conception of the demonic is intrinsically linked with the absence of theogony. It is of the essence of theogony that a given god is but one embodiment of the powers residing in the primordial womb of all being. . . . Biblical religion, having concentrated divinity in one transcendent being, at once did away with theogony and theomachy. Since there was no 'womb' out of which YHWH sprang, he could have no 'brothers' divine or demonic. No antagonist could, there-

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

fore, be on a par with him." Again (RI, 68, 69): "Biblical cosmology lacks also the basic pagan idea of a natural bond between the deity and the universe. Creation is not depicted as a sexual process, nor does it proceed from the seed of the god, his blood, spittle, tears, or the like. The idea of a material emanation from the creator is foreign to the Bible. . . . Whatever celestial beings there are belong to the suite of the one God; only YHWH is active as creator. The monotheism of these stories is, thus, not the outcome of artificial adaptation of pagan materials. It permeates their every aspect and finds expression even in passages of artless naivete."

(5) Perhaps it should be noted at this point again that many persons who put great emphasis on the significance of "folklore" apparently overlook—or ignore—the fact that tradition is often inspired by, and often embodies, profound truth (truth which, of course, usually has become corrupted by diffusion in the course of time). With respect to the Temptation-and-Fall Narrative, it is obvious that we have in it a disclosure of universal truth, that is to say, of what happens in the life of every human being (Rom. 3:23), from the first *homo sapiens* (and even from the evolutionist point of view, the line must have been crossed at some time, somewhere, from the subhuman to the human) to every twentieth-century individual of the same genus. As Murphy, although himself holding fast to the traditional view that it was real creature of serpentkind that acted as the instrumentality of temptation in this Narrative, writes (CG, 112): "The whole is so deeply designed, that the origin and progress of evil in the breast is as nearly as possible such as it might have been had there been no prompter." The pedigree of evil, as stated by James (1:13-15)—Satan, lust, sin, death—is certainly presented clearly in this Narrative. Of course, the Christian is under no obligation to stretch unduly any part of the Biblical text, or to ferret out questionable hidden meanings

GENESIS

therein, in order to bring it into correspondence with contemporary science. One who is familiar with the content of the Bible as a whole knows well that it carries on its pages the positive evidence of its own Divine origin as the Book of the Spirit. However, in all instances in which harmony can be seen to exist without doing violence to Scripture teaching, surely this harmony—or at least the possibility of it—should be pointed up clearly, in order that persons, and especially young men and women, of this and succeeding generations may be strengthened in the most holy faith. To deliberately assume disharmony in cases in which the possibility of harmony is present is *a vicious methodology*.

(6) The Critical (Analytical) Theory of the Temptation-and-Fall Narrative is stated clearly by Skinner (ICCG, 71-73). The serpent, he writes, is simply a creature of Yahweh distinguished from the rest by its superior subtlety. "The serpent, therefore, belongs to the category of 'beasts of the field' . . . at the same time it is a being possessing supernatural knowledge, with the power of speech, and animated by hostility towards God. It is this last feature which causes some perplexity." Again: "All this belongs to the background of heathen mythology from which the materials of the narrative were drawn; and it is the incomplete elimination of the mythological element, under the influence of a monotheistic and ethical religion, which makes the function of the serpent in Gn 3 so difficult to understand. In later Jewish theology the difficulty was solved, as is well known, by the doctrine that the serpent of Eden was the mouthpiece or impersonation of the devil . . . The Jewish and Christian doctrine is a natural and legitimate extension of the teaching of Gn 3, when the problem of evil came to be apprehended in its real magnitude; but it is foreign to the thought of the writer, although it cannot be denied that it may have some affinity with the mythological background of his narrative."

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

The "perplexity" admitted in one of the foregoing statements is due to one fact, and one alone, namely, the fact that the adherents of this school assume that Biblical religion was an invention ("progressively developed") of the human mind; hence, not a revelation by the agency of the Spirit of God. The devotees of the Critical Theory either ignore—or repudiate outright—any and every claim of special inspiration which the Bible makes for itself. They seem to have assumed *arbitrarily* the attitude *mistakenly* held by those "certain disciples" whom Paul found at Ephesus, who, upon interrogation, admitted that they did not so much as know that there is a Holy Spirit or at least that the Holy Spirit "was given" (Acts 19:1-7). Of course, to refuse to accept the Bible as the Book of the Spirit is to refuse to accept the fact of its internal unity—a unity which can reasonably be ascribed only to Divine inspiration. The Critical "analysts" simply brush aside any possibility of Divine inspiration and supervision and proceed to apply the "evolution yardstick" to the development of Biblical teaching. Such an arbitrary *a priori* (purely subjective) assumption (or presumption?) is a notable example of the distortion which occurs from the refusal to follow one of the most important norms of interpretation (one which I have repeatedly emphasized in the present text), namely, that the content of any segment of Scripture can be properly understood only in the light of Bible teaching *as a whole*. As we shall see *infra*, the nature and design of the activity of the serpent of Eden becomes crystal clear when studied in connection with all other Scriptures that bear upon the general subject of man's Temptation and Fall. Finally, if the Bible is not the Book of the Spirit of God (as it claims to be; cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12, 2 Pet. 1:21; Acts 1:1-8, 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 2:6-16; Gal. 1:12; 1 Thess. 2:13, etc.), then it is simply and completely a humanly produced book, and one which can no more claim the authority that attaches to Truth than can

GENESIS

a work of Homer, Milton, Dante, Shakespeare, or any other human writer (cf. John 8:31-32, 16:12-14, 17:17).

6. *The Serpent a Real Creature.* That the serpent of Eden was a real creature of the serpent kind seems the most plausible view to take of it. This view is supported, moreover, by the tenor of Biblical teaching as a whole. Note the following matters of fact: (1) It is explicitly stated that this serpent was a "beast of the field," that is, neither a domesticated animal nor a member of some inferior species. (Note that it is not described as a creature *like* unto a beast of the field.) (2) It is described by a power (craftiness) that belongs, or is popularly thought to belong, to real serpents (cf. Matt. 10:16). In antiquity, we are told, the craftiness of serpentkind was proverbial. "The serpent was more *subtle* than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made." That is, *crafty*: as Whitelaw comments (PCG, 56), the word "can only be used either (1) *metaphorically* for the devil, whose instrument it was; or (2) *proleptically*, with reference to the results of the temptation; for in itself, as one of God's creatures, it must have been originally good." (3) It seems only reasonable that Satan should have used an apparently harmless agent to bring about the seduction of the Woman, thus achieving the added objection of concealing the identity of the real tempter. One of Satan's favorite devices has ever been that of presenting himself to men in the guise of an "angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). (4) On any other view, the serpent itself was Eve's superior. But this is not consistent with the dominion God gave to man (Gen. 1:28). (5) The curse pronounced upon the serpent (Gen. 3:14) would be meaningless if the recipient of it had been only an apparition or an unreal creature. Surely this curse pronounced upon serpentkind in general nullifies all attempts to explain the serpent of Eden in terms of symbol, allegory, or poetic imagery.

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

7. *The First Liar and Murderer.* Did the serpent act alone in the transaction, or did it act merely as the agent of a superior intelligence? The language of the New Testament in referring to man's temptation and fall implies its literalness. E.g., cf. 2 Cor. 11:3—surely we are justified from this mention of the Fall in concluding that the Apostle was speaking of it as an actual occurrence. White-law (PCG, 57): "Equally with the theory that the devil was the only agent in man's temptation, and that the serpent is purely the allegorical dress in which the historian clothes him (Eusebius, Cajetan, Quarry, Alford), must the notion be rejected that there was nothing but a serpent (Aben Ezra, Kalisch, Knobel)." It is evident that the serpent was but the *instrument* through which a far more cunning and diabolical agent spoke and acted, for several reasons, as follows: (1) because the power of speech is not a natural endowment of the serpent. Hence, it must have used articulate language, on this occasion, as the mouth-piece of a superhuman intelligence. K-D (BCOTP, 92): "When the serpent, therefore, is introduced as speaking, and that just as if it had been entrusted with the thoughts of God Himself, the speaking must have emanated, not from the serpent, but from a superior spirit, which had taken possession of the serpent for the sake of seducing man." Shook (GB, 61): "We are not to suppose from the account that a literal serpent became the devil. The serpent was simply the agent through which the devil operated in the deception. It seems probable from the account that originally the beast walked upright, and that as a result of the curse (Gen. 3:14) his species crawl upon the ground." Balaam's ass, by a divine impulsion, spoke in articulate words (Num. 22:21-35, 2 Pet. 2:16); so the serpent in tempting Eve must have spoken by diabolical impulse. (2) Because there is no other ground on which we can explain the serpent's diabolical cunning and its murderous intention. "Is it presumable that God could

GENESIS

have endowed the serpent or any other creature with such diabolical and hellish propensities?" (Milligan).

(3) *Because there is no other ground on which we can explain the words of Jesus in John 8:44. Here Jesus tells us that the Devil was the first liar and the first murderer, and we know that the first lie emanated from the mouth of the serpent and that the whole human race was murdered by its seduction of the Woman.* Note the many instances in which our Lord is said to have recognized the real existence of Satan and his rebellious angelic host (Matt. 25:41; Luke 10:17-20, 11:17-26; Matt. 4:10, 12:26, 13:28, 16:23; Mark 3:23, etc.). That these were not just cases of His accommodation of His language to popular "superstitions" is evident (a) from the positive unequivocal character of his statements (no such phrases ever fell from His lips as, e.g., "as you think this to be" or "as in our tradition we hold this to be," etc., etc.); (b) from the instances in which demonic possession is clearly distinguished from disease or insanity (Matt. 4:24, 8:16-17, 10:8; Mark 1:32, 16:17-18; Luke 10:17-20; John 10:19-20); (c) from passages in which Jesus addressed these demons as persons and they answered as such, confessing Him to be the Son of God and their ultimate Judge (Matt. 8:28-33; Mark 1:21-28, 1:32-34, 3:9-12, 5:1-20, 7:24-30, 9:17-29; Luke 4:33-36; cf. also Jas. 2:19; Acts 16:16-18, 19:11-18). Note that these demons were explicitly recognized by Jesus as agents of Satan (Matt. 12:22-32, Luke 10:17-20, 11:15-22), and that they showed superhuman knowledge of Jesus and His Spirit-filled Apostles (Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:24, 34; Acts 16:17, 19:15). Had they not been present with Jesus and known Him as the eternal Logos, prior to their rebellion against the Divine government? (Cf. Luke 10:18). The positive identification, by Jesus, of Satan as the first liar and the first murderer, certainly can leave us in no doubt as to the identity of the real Tempter who lurked behind the scene in the

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

primeval Garden. (Review the account of Satan and his pre-mundane rebellion, his subsequent career and inevitable doom, as outlined in Part Eleven *supra*.)

(4) Because there is no other ground on which we can explain the Scriptures which refer to Satan as the Old Serpent, *e.g.*, Rev. 12:9, 20:2; cf. Rom. 16:20, Num. 21:6-9, Isa. 14:29. (5) Because there is no basis on which we can explain the twofold implication of Gen. 3:14-15, which implies not only literal warfare between all mankind and the serpentkind, but also spiritual warfare between the Seed of the Woman and the Old Serpent, the Devil (Eph. 6:12, 1 Pet. 5:8). (6) Because this view unquestionably is confirmed by the account of the temptation of our Lord (Matt. 4:1-11). K-D (BCOTP, 93): "The temptation of Christ is the counterpart of that of Adam. Christ was tempted by the devil, not only like Adam, but because Adam had been tempted and overcome, in order that by overcoming the tempter He might wrest from the devil that dominion over the whole race which he had secured by his victory over the first human pair. The tempter approached the Savior openly; to the first man he came in disguise. The serpent is not a merely symbolical term applied to Satan; nor was it only the form which Satan assumed; but it was a real serpent, perverted by Satan to be the instrument of his temptation (vers. 1 and 14)." No doubt Satan approached Christ openly because he knew that the latter could penetrate every disguise and uncover every deception. Milligan (SR, 43-44): "On the hypothesis that there was in this first temptation a twofold agency; that Satan spoke through a literal serpent, just as demons, in the time of Christ, spoke through real men and women: on this hypothesis, I say, all is plain, simple, and natural. It is, then, easy to account for all the facts in this eventful case, and especially to see how it was that the woman, being at length *deceived* and overcome by the hellish malice and diabolical cunning and artifice of the

GENESIS

Serpent, stretched forth her hand, and plucked and ate

'Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe.'"

New York Presbyter (RO, 426): "We see no reason to regard this story as a myth or allegory devised by someone to explain how sin first entered the world. The incident described is just such as may have taken place during the primitive life of Eden. It is not to be supposed, however, that the serpent spake as represented, but only that it appeared to do so. The voice was that of the Tempter, whom the woman did not distinguish from the animal of which he had taken possession. Indeed the whole narrative assumes what may be styled a temporary identity of Satan with the serpent. The nature of the event indicates that a crafty, evil spirit, seeking to alienate man from God, chose the serpent as a means of engaging Eve's attention, and then addressed her in well-chosen, deceitful words." The epithet *subtle* seems to be used here in a twofold sense: first, *literally*, as descriptive of certain physical powers which, though good in themselves, were capable of being perverted to an unnatural use through the power and craft of a superior being (cf. Matt. 10:16), and second, *metaphorically*, as descriptive of the cunning and deceitfulness of the Devil, manifested by and through the brute creature in whom he operated. Joseph Parker (PBG): "The serpent itself is the best comment on the text. Look at it: glittering, lithe, cunning, cold, smooth, poisonous—truly it looks as if it *might* have done it! I don't think the lion could, or the elephant, the eagle, or the ox, but the serpent brings with it a high probability of baseness and mischief." "Now of all the beasts of the field the serpent had the most of those qualities which are typical of a tempter—no lion's roar, no horrid dragon's form, but often beautiful in coloring and graceful in motion" (Peloubet). Marcus Dods (EBG, 20): "Temptation comes like a serpent; like the

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

most subtle beast of the field; like that one creature which is said to exert a fascinating influence on its victims, fastening them with its glittering eye, stealing upon them by its noiseless, low and unseen approach, perplexing them by its wide circling folds, seeming to come upon them from all sides at once, and armed not like the other beasts with weapon of offence—horn, or hoof, or teeth—but capable of crushing its victim with every part of its sinuous length. It lies apparently dead for months together, but when roused it can, as the naturalist tells us, ‘outclimb the monkey, outswim the fish, outleap the zebra, outwrestle the athlete, and crush the tiger.’ How naturally in describing temptation do we borrow language from the aspects and movements of this creature.” Matthew Henry (CWB, 8): “It is certain that it was the devil that beguiled Eve. The devil and Satan is the Old Serpent (Rev. 12:9), a malignant spirit, by creation an angel of light and an immediate attendant upon God’s throne, but by sin become an apostate from his first state and a rebel against God’s crown and dignity. He knew he could not destroy man but by debauching him. The game therefore which Satan had to play was to draw our first parents to sin, and so to separate between them and their God. The whole race of mankind had here, as it were, but one neck and at that Satan struck. It was the devil in the likeness of a serpent. (1) Many a dangerous temptation comes to us in gay fine colors that are but skin-deep, and seems to come from above; for Satan can seem an angel of light. And (2) Because it is a subtle creature. Many instances are given of the subtlety of the serpent, both to do mischief and to secure himself in it when it is done. We are directed to be wise as serpents. But this serpent, as actuated by the devil, was no doubt more subtle than any other; for the devil, though he has lost the sanctity, retains the sagacity of an angel, and is wise to do evil. . . . It is remarkable that the Gentile idolaters did many of them worship the devil in the

GENESIS

shape and form of a serpent, thereby avowing their adherence to that apostate spirit, and wearing his colors." Errett (EwB, 24): "To a child, there are few things more attractive than a glittering serpent, with its curving motions, its brilliant colors, and the magnetic charm of its eye, It is a fit symbol of the devil in his sly, insidious approaches, his cunning, and the power to charm that precedes his power to destroy."

The Devil has real personal existence. Modern theological myth-makers would like to have us think the Devil to be a figment of the human imagination and so deny his personality altogether. This view, however, cannot be made to harmonize with Scripture teaching, and opens up greater difficulties than the acceptance of Satan's real existence. We must not forget that personality exists in other entities than the human. Man's body does not make his personality—the person, rather, dwells in the body. We must distinguish between *personality* and *individuality*. It is a well-known empirical fact that more than one personality may occupy the same physical tabernacle. (See *The Dissociation of a Personality*, by Dr. Morton Prince, for the famous case of Sally Beauchamp.) If it is possible for personality to exist clothed in a human form, why not in other forms? Satan is not a *man*; Satan is a fallen *angel*. "We may well say 'personal' devil, for there is no devil but personality." Dummelow (CHB, 636): "The allusions to Satan and his angels are too frequent and emphatic, to make it easy to suppose that our Lord did not believe in their personality; and, moreover, belief in an impersonal devil presents greater difficulties to faith than belief in a personal one. That evil should exist at all, in a world created and governed by a good and all-powerful Being, is a serious moral and intellectual difficulty. But that difficulty is reduced to a minimum if we suppose that it is due to the activity of a hostile personality. Opposition to God's will on the part of a personal, self-determining

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

agent, though mysterious, is conceivable. Opposition to it on the part of any impersonal evil influence or physical force is (to most modern minds) inconceivable." Strong (ST, 447): "We cannot deny the personality of Satan except upon principles which would compel us to deny the existence of good angels, the personality of the Holy Spirit, and the personality of God the Father—we may add, even the personality of the human soul. . . . One of the most ingenious devices of Satan is that of persuading men that he has no real existence. Next to this is the device of substituting for belief in a personal devil the belief in a merely impersonal spirit of evil." New York Presbyter (RO, 440): "There is no ground to believe that Satan does not exist in this twentieth century. It may be through his influence that error, even absurd error, gains adherents among mankind so easily; that false religions maintain their hold on heathen lands; that perversions of moral principle lead to methodical selfishness and inhumanity; that civil governments are often organized for robbery and oppression, and for forcible conquest, and that nations who would live at peace are forced into bloody war. . . . We believe that Christians of today, no less than those of old time, should be 'sober and vigilant because their adversary the Devil goeth about seeking whom he may devour.'" Satan has real existence. When he was before God accusing Job, the Almighty asked "Whence comest thou?" Satan replied, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." He was with Jesus in person on the mount of temptation and in the Garden of Gethsemane. There are times in the life of everyone who is trying to live the life of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:17) when Satan is present with him in person, tempting him to backslide and thus to "crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:6). He has attended every Gospel meeting ever held on this earth and whispered into the ears of

GENESIS

anxious sinners, "You have only one life to live," "Time enough yet," etc. Be not deceived by Satan about Satan!

8. *The Temptation.*

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yet, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden? 2 And the woman said unto the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; 5 for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:1-5).

Some hold that, because the Devil is superhuman, though not infinite, in knowledge and in power, he endowed the serpent with the gift of speech for the time being, much as Yahweh once put articulate language in the mouth of Balaam's ass (Num. 22:28-30). Whether this be true, or whether the serpent itself only *appeared* to be speaking, the "Voice" (the communication) was that of the Tempter, the Adversary of souls (1 Pet. 5:8), the Old Serpent, the Devil (Rev. 12:9, 20:2).

1. *Note the Tempter's subtlety in his selection of the woman as the object of his approach:* (1) Because she was the weaker vessel, *i.e.*, possessing a more dependent character. Errett (EwB): "Woman has more generally been injured and ruined through an abuse of that affectionate trust, which is really one of her main characteristics, than by any other means." (2) because he knew that through her the man could be more easily reached and persuaded to commit sin. That this proved to be the case is made clear in 2 Cor. 11:3 and 1 Tim. 2:12-15.

2. *Note the diabolical malice of the Tempter.* Who but

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

the totally depraved Satan—the inveterate enemy of God and all good—could have molested that happy pair who had been created in God's image, and thus have brought wholesale ruin on the whole human race?

3. *Note his diabolical cunning:* (1) in attacking the woman, the weaker of the two human creatures; (2) in attacking her when apparently she was alone and so unsupported by her husband; (3) in selecting such a favorable place for the temptation, namely, near the forbidden tree itself: the context seems to indicate that she was near the tree, when Satan approached her, and was probably gazing upon its fruit, the very existence of which must have whetted her curiosity; (4) in choosing a method of approach that was designed first of all to weaken her faith in God. (Even if a literal serpent, a literal tree, and literal fruit, were not involved here, the essential truth remains unaffected, namely, that the woman was prompted to the doing of some kind of act, with reference to some end, the contemplation of which had power to induce *lust* in her—an act which she knew to be one that God had expressly told her she *must not* do. The manner in which she disobeyed God is not of as much concern to us as is the act itself: the *fact* of her disobedience is the matter of first importance in this narrative. Call the account symbolical or allegorical or sheer "folklore," if you will, still and all the integrity of the Scripture revelation is not impugned, because the facts still remain (a) that somewhere, at some time, on this earth, reason and conscience came into play in the first *homo sapiens*, and (b) that we have in this narrative a clear description of what has happened, and continues to happen, in the life of every human being on attaining the age of accountability. Rom. 3:23—"all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.")

4. *Note that the woman apparently exhibited no fear on bearing articulate speech from the serpent's mouth.* Why was this? Because she was not yet familiar with the in-

GENESIS

instincts and powers of all the lower animals? (But, had not Adam already become acquainted with the various species of birds and beasts, and their characteristics, as indicated by his naming of them? Cf. Gen. 2:18-20). It seems that Mother Eve was not affrighted by the serpent's speech primarily because *fear had not yet entered Eden*. Errett (EwB): "They had, as yet, no reason to dread any of the creatures over which they had been constituted sovereigns. Nor is there any reason to believe that the *speaking* of a serpent would, in their experience, have been any more wonderful than a thousand other things. As yet, everything was wonderful." *Fear entered the scene, along with suffering, sorrow and death, as a consequence of sin* (1 John 4:18, Jas. 1:13-15, Heb. 2:14-15).

5. *Note the first recorded words of the Tempter*: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" "Yea," that is, Is it really true that God has forbidden you to eat of *any* tree? The question was voiced either in *irony*, as if to insinuate that if God had really issued such a prohibition, it was a very foolish thing to do; or *flip-pantly*, as if to say, "I have heard a bit of news. Pray tell me if it is true. Has God commanded you saying, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" Or, perhaps *sarcastically*, as if to say, by innuendo, What kind of God is this who would restrict your personal liberty by such a foolish injunction? It seems obvious that the Tempter's voice in this instance was fairly dripping with insinuations designed to impugn Yahweh's wisdom and goodness. C.H.M. (NBG, 34): "The devil did not openly present himself and say, I am the devil, the enemy of God, and I am come to traduce Him and ruin you. This would not be serpent-like and yet he really did all this *by raising questions* in the mind of the creature." In man's dealings with God, trouble invariably arises for him when an IF comes into the picture. C.H.M. (NBG, 34): "To admit the question, 'Hath God said?' when I know that God

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

hath spoken, is positive infidelity; and the very fact of my admitting it, proves my total incapacity to meet it. Hence, in Eve's case, the form of her reply evidenced the fact that she had admitted to her heart the serpent's crafty inquiry. Instead of adhering strictly to the exact words of God, she, in her reply, actually adds thereto." M. Henry (CWB, 8): "Satan teaches men first to doubt, and then to deny; he makes them sceptics first, and so by degrees makes them atheists."

6. *Why did Satan approach the woman through the instrumentality of an animal?* KD (BCOTP, 93-94): "Notwithstanding his self-willed opposition to God, Satan is still a creature of God, and was created a good spirit; although, in proud self-exaltation, he abused the freedom essential to the nature of a superior spirit to purposes of rebellion against his Maker. He cannot therefore entirely shake off his dependence upon God. And this dependence may possibly explain the reason, why he did not come 'disguised as an angel of light' to tempt our first parents to disobedience, but was obliged to seek the instrument of his wickedness among the beasts of the field. The trial of our first progenitors was ordained by God, because probation was essential to their spiritual development and self-determination. But as He did not desire that they should be tempted to their fall, He would not suffer Satan to tempt them in a way which would surpass their human capacity. The tempted might therefore have resisted the tempter. If instead of approaching them in the form of a celestial being, in the likeness of God, he came in that of a creature, not only far inferior to God, but far below themselves, they could have no excuse for allowing a mere animal to persuade them to break the commandment of God. For they had been made to have dominion over the beasts, and not to take their own law from them. Moreover, the fact that an evil spirit was approaching them in the serpent, could hardly be concealed from them. Its

GENESIS

speaking alone must have suggested that: for Adam had already become acquainted with the nature of the beasts, and had not found one among them resembling himself—not one, therefore, endowed with reason and speech. The substance of the address, too, was enough to prove that it was no good spirit which spake through the serpent, but one at enmity with God. Hence, when they paid attention to what he said, they were altogether without excuse.”

7. *Note that Satan used the name Elohim and not the name Yahweh.* Lange holds that the Tempter could not utter the name Yahweh (Jehovah), and knew that he could not, as his assault was directed against the paradisaical covenant of God with man. Others have held that Satan wished to avoid profaning the name of Yahweh, a view difficult to accept in the light of Satan’s vicious and total depravity. Whitelaw (PCG, 58): “By using the name Elohim instead of Jehovah the covenant relationship of God towards man was obscured, and man’s position in the garden represented as that of a subject rather than a son.”

8. *Note that the Tempter deliberately altered the Divine injunction, quoting it fallaciously as if it were a prohibition not only of the one tree but of all.* Truly, when the occasion demands it, even the Devil can cite Scripture for his own purposes (cf. Matt. 4:5-6). *Misquoting the word of God, adding to it, subtracting from it, or substituting for it—these have ever been among his favorite tactics. And by prompting the professional theologians to employ precisely the same tactics, he has used them throughout Christian history to corrupt Biblical nomenclature and to multiply divisions in Christendom.* Cf. for example our present-day pseudo-theological clowns with their God-is-dead blasphemies and their “demythologizing” stupidities.

9. *Note the skillful innuendo with which the Devil invited conversation and masked his ultimate design.* His question was purposely insinuating. It implied, “God is

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

very good, to be sure, but has He not laid some useless and trying restrictions upon you? Surely this must be a mistake. If He loved you, could He shut you away from the delicious fruit on yonder tree? Are you to live in paradise and not be able to enjoy it?" (Peloubet). Or, Is not this one prohibition a devious and arbitrarily imposed limitation on your personal liberty? Skinner (ICCG, 73): "*Ye shall not eat of any tree*: the range of the prohibition is purposely exaggerated in order to provoke inquiry and criticism." His first effort was, of course, to create doubt in the woman's mind: cf. the "If" used by Satan, in the temptation of Jesus, to introduce his appeals. (Matt. 4:1-11).

10. *Note that the Tempter persistently pointed to the one restriction, but never even mentioned the wide range of privileges which the Woman enjoyed.* Millions of trees, no doubt, and countless varieties of fruit were free to her, yet Satan kept her attention centered on the one act that had been forbidden. M. Henry (CWB, 8): "We are often, in Scripture, told of our danger by the temptations of Satan, his *devices* (2 Cor. 2:11), his *depths* (Rev. 2:24), and his *wiles* (Eph. 6:11). The greatest instances we have of them are in his tempting of the two Adams, here, and in Matt. iv. In this he prevailed, but in that he was baffled. When he spoke *to* them, on whom he had no hold by any corruption in them, he speaks *in* us by our own deceitful hearts and their carnal reasonings; this makes his assaults on us less discernible, but not less dangerous. That which the devil aimed at was to persuade Eve to eat the forbidden fruit; and, to do this, he took the same method that he does still. He questioned whether it was a sin or no, v. 1. He denied there was any danger in it, v. 4. He suggested much advantage by it, v. 5. And these are his common topics."

11. *Note in some detail the woman's response to Satan's approach.* (1) *She made her fatal mistake in temporizing*

GENESIS

with the Devil. Though not afraid of the serpent, since as yet there was no enmity between any of God's creatures, nor astonished at what seemed to be its voice, probably because she was not as yet familiar with all the powers and instincts of the lower animals, still and all, the very words which the Old Serpent addressed to her were of such a character as to have put her on guard. She might have perceived by his innuendo that he had no good end in view, and should have answered, Get thee behind me, etc. (cf. Matt. 16:23). But she temporized regarding the point at issue, and this was all the Devil wanted: he knew that ultimate victory was in his grasp. (2) In replying to the Tempter, *she took notice at first of the liberality of God's gifts.* In substance, she said, "Yes, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; we enjoy both variety and plenty." But she did not expressly associate the name of God with this liberality, though she did recall it in reciting His one restraint. "Eve replies that, We may eat of all, except one, laying emphasis on the liberality of God's gifts and on the danger of disobeying. But, at the same time, she left out three emphatic expressions in her quotation of God's permission—*every tree, freely eat, and surely die*—which shows that the temptation was beginning to take effect. Whoever parleys with temptation is already on the verge of danger" (Peloubet). (3) *She added to the prohibitory enactment* the clause, "neither shall ye touch it." Surely this was indicative of the initial effect on the woman of the Tempter's insinuations. These had given rise to a sense of personal injury, to justify which she converted what was at most only an implication of the original charge into an express prohibition. *Sin is always present in additions to, subtractions from, or substitutions for, the word of God.* (4) *She used the same name for the Deity that Satan had used; Elohim.* Both referred to God by the name Elohim only. It would seem that in this more general and indefinite name, the per-

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

sonality of the living God is obscured. (5) *She altered the word of God.* She not only added the clause, "neither shall ye touch it," but she omitted the word *surely* which had been explicit in the Divine prohibition. Was this an attempt to represent the penalty in a somewhat softened form, thus indicating she had begun to think it unjust? Surely in modifying God's explicit warning, "Thou shalt die" (2:18) to a less emphatic, "lest ye die," she showed her willingness to trifle with the Divine command. Departure from the "pattern of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13, 2:2, 3:16-17; John 6:63; 1 Cor. 2:10-16), from calling Bible things by Bible names—the substitution of theological lingo for the language of the Spirit—inevitably leads to confusion, schism, heresy and apostasy. Christians must never forget the Lord's positive declaration: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). How significant that Jesus resisted Satan's appeals by resorting to the Divine word (Matt. 4:1-11). C.H.M. (NBG, pp. 34-37); "The Lord Jesus, in His conflict with Satan, accurately applied the Word, because He lived upon it, and esteemed it more than His necessary food. He could not misquote or misapply the Word, neither could He be indifferent about it. Not so Eve, She added to what God had said. . . . Obedience is due from us to God's Word, simply because it is His Word. To raise a question, when God has spoken, is blasphemy. We are in the place of a creature. He is the Creator; He may, therefore, justly claim obedience from us. The infidel may call this 'blind obedience,' but the Christian calls it intelligent obedience, inasmuch as it is based upon the knowledge that it is God's Word to which he is obedient. If a man had not God's Word, he might well be said to be in blindness and darkness, for there is not so much as a single ray of divine light within or around us but what emanates from God's pure and eternal Word. All that we want to know is that God has spoken, and

GENESIS

then obedience becomes the very highest order of intelligent acting. When the soul gets up to God, it has reached the very highest source of authority. . . . Eve suffered God to be contradicted by a creature, simply because His Word had lost its proper authority over her heart, her conscience and her understanding."

12. *Note the significance of the location of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.* It is said to have been "in the midst of the garden." We have here *the story of the beginning of liberty under the law. This tree was in the midst of the garden.* No restrictions were placed upon our first parents with reference to the fruit of the many other trees of the garden: the one restriction that was placed upon them was with respect to the fruit of this particular tree which was *in the midst of all the others. Whether in heaven or on earth, Law must always be at the very heart and center of all liberty, angelic or human. That is to say, liberty is never enjoyed outside the circumference of the law. This universal truth is true of both the moral and the civil law.* "Why," sneeringly ask the atheists and agnostics, "suspend the destiny of the world on so trivial circumstance as the eating of an apple?" (Of course, as pointed out heretofore, there is no mention of an apple in the Genesis account.) Pfeiffer (BG, 21): "Man was created an upright being with the capacity for obedience. Man was also created a moral being, and as such, he was subjected to a test. The place of man's temptation was the finest imaginable. In the beautiful Garden of Eden, God had placed everything that man could wish for his well-being. Nothing was lacking in man's environment. As a test, however, man was subject to one prohibition. He might 'freely eat' of all the trees of the garden save one, the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil.'"

Milligan (SR, 38-40): "Observe, 1. That it is a matter of very great importance to know ourselves, and especially

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

to know whether our hearts are strictly loyal to God or not. 2. That it is exceedingly difficult to do this. Millions of the human race are still ignorant of themselves, notwithstanding all that God has done to reveal the secrets of the human heart. 3. That no better test of man's loyalty could have been given than that which, according to Moses, God ordained and appointed for this purpose. For, (1) It was easily understood by all. No rational and accountable being could possibly mistake what was required by this command. (2) Any violation of this precept must, therefore, proceed from a spirit of pure disloyalty. Like every other *positive* ordinance, its binding obligation depended wholly and solely on the command and authority of the Lawgiver. . . . (4) But the *spirit* of disloyalty cherished in the heart will as certainly lead to a man's condemnation and final ruin as will the open and overt transgression of any law, whether it be moral or positive. See Matt. 5:22, 28. (5) And hence it follows that this positive precept, originally given to man as a test of his loyalty, was in no sense the *cause* of his disloyalty. It was simply the occasion and proof of it. It was the means of clearly and unmistakably revealing to Adam and Eve their true and proper character, and standing before God, after they had mentally yielded to the temptation. To know this is always a blessing to any man who is still within the limits of God's pardoning mercy. And hence we conclude that the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, as well as the Tree of Life, was given to man for his good, and in the true spirit of Divine benevolence."

13. *Note the diabolical cunning of Satan as explicit in the suggestions by which he pressed his seduction of the woman.* Observe (1) *How bold he became*, when he sensed that his victim was weakening under his attack. He first questioned whether or not there was any sin involved in eating of the forbidden fruit; then he began to insinuate that there really was no danger in it; and finally, he came

GENESIS

out boldly and declared there was actual advantage to be gained from it. (2) *How he challenged the word of God.* In spite of the fact that God had said, "Thou shalt surely die," the Old Serpent boldly declared, "Ye shall not surely die." (Note that whereas Eve had omitted the word "surely" the Devil did not do so.) Thus the word of the Tempter was pitted directly against the Word of God, and the woman was compelled to make a choice. This is the choice which all accountable human beings must make in passing through this world—none can avoid it (Rom. 3:23). (3) *How he played on the word, "die."* Joseph Parker: "It is used by the serpent in the sense of dropping down dead, or violently departing out of this world; whereas the meaning, as we all know by bitter experience, is infinitely deeper." C.H.M. (NG, 39): "I cannot know God and not have life. The loss of the knowledge of God was death; but the knowledge of God is life." (John 17:3). Peloubet: "This was the most deadly of lies, for it was a half-truth, by far the smallest half. The death did not come at once like a lightning stroke, and the most deadly death was that of the spirit, not of the body. Satan is never so devilish as when he is disguised as an angel of light." (2 Cor. 11:14). As Tennyson has written:

"That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest
of lies,

That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought
with outright,

But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter
to fight."

This is the first lie that is recorded in Scripture, and in John 8:44, Jesus refers it to the Devil as the father of liars. M. Henry (CWB, 8) "It is the subtlety of Satan to blemish the reputation of the divine law as uncertain or unreasonable and so draw people to sin." (4) *How Satan thus openly challenged the veracity of God:* "Ye

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

shall not surely die; for God knoweth that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened," etc. His statement was a downright lie, because it was not only contrary to God's Word, but to his own knowledge as well: he had broken the law of Heaven and had experienced something of the misery of rebellion; and, in encouraging others to disobedience, he said what he knew by woeful experience to be absolutely false. (1 John 2:21, 27). Moreover, his lie was such as to give the lie to God Himself: it was a bold assertion that God was not truthful in His dealings with His creatures. (5) *How he openly challenged God's motives.* His first assertion was that God was not truthful; his next, that God was selfish and envious. "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." Note that He accused God of *envy* (as if to say, Rest assured it is not because of any fear that you will die from eating the fruit of that particular tree that God has declared it "off limits" to you; rather, it is because He knows that your eating of it will make you His rivals); and of *falsehood* (in His affirming to be true, "ye shall surely die," what He knew to be false, and in pretending to be concerned about your welfare, when as a matter of fact He is only jealous of His own sovereignty). Note Satan's growing aggressiveness toward the woman and his sheer audacity toward God: in abject depravity he has now reached the point of viciously impugning the Divine goodness. (6) *How ambiguous He became in his bold assertions.* "Your eyes shall be opened": suggesting to the woman the attainment of higher wisdom, but literally pointing forward to what the Devil knew would occur, namely, their discovery of their own nakedness (finitude?). "And ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil," another admixture of truth and falsehood. Adam and Eve (the human race) did learn to know evil, not as God knows it, *i.e.*, as something

GENESIS

to be hated and summarily rejected, but, as Satan knows it, as a matter of bitter experience. We might ask, Just how does God "know" evil? Certainly not as a matter of His own experience, for He is infinitely *good*; but only as Infinite Holiness can know it, in its utter heinousness, as an inherent anathema of His own Will. This means that God knows evil in a sense that man can never know it, just as the God side of Jesus could abhor sin and could suffer such excruciating agony, both in the Garden and on the Cross (Luke 22:44, Matt. 27:46), as no human being could suffer and go on living. This is a great mystery, to be sure, the mystery designated by Miguel de Unamuno, "The Agony of Christianity," the mystery with depths so profound that no human intellect could ever hope—or even *want*—to plumb its depths. Hence, *such knowledge, were it possible to man, would be illicit knowledge* (cf. Job 11:7, also chs. 38-41; Isa. 40:28, 46:8-11). Throughout all these considerations, the fundamental truth of the Devil's arrogant and ambiguous charges remains unshaken, namely, the results which Satan promised did ensue, but how different were they from what the woman anticipated! The lesson for us, and for all humanity, is crystal clear: Satan constantly deceives us in this manner—by promising so much yet giving so little; and even the little turns to ashes in our human experience.

(7) "*The knowledge of good and evil*"—let us re-examine this phrase here. As stated heretofore, the phrase is viewed by many commentators as conveying the idea of omniscience. Others see in it a possible sexual connotation, on the view that God might have forbidden temporarily the exercise of their sexual powers. This writer is inclined to the former view, for the simple reason that in the final analysis *the good and the true and the beautiful are essentially one and the same*: hence, whatever role may be assigned to sex, that remains but a part of the whole human experiential picture. On this subject, therefore, I

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

commend the following Maimonidean exposition (GP, 14-15): "As man's distinction consists in a property which no other creature on earth possesses, viz., intellectual perception, in the exercise of which he does not employ his senses, nor move his hand or his foot, this perception has been compared—though only apparently, not in truth—to the Divine perception, which requires no corporeal organ." Maimonides then sets forth a criticism which is heard frequently, as follows: "It would at first sight appear from Scripture that man was originally intended to be perfectly equal to the rest of the animal creation, which is not endowed with intellect, reason, or power of distinguishing between good and evil: but that Adam's disobedience to the command of God procured him that great perfection which is the peculiarity of man, viz., the power of distinguishing between good and evil—the noblest of the faculties of our nature, the essential characteristic of the human race. It thus appears strange that the punishment for rebelliousness should be the means of elevating man to a pinnacle of perfection to which he had not attained previously. This is equivalent to saying that a certain man was rebellious and extremely wicked, wherefore his nature was changed for the better, and he was made to shine as a star in the heavens." To this objection (or objector), Maimonides replies as follows: "You appear to have studied the matter superficially, and nevertheless you imagine that you can understand a book which has been the guide of past and present generations, when you for a moment withdraw from your lusts and appetites, and glance over its contents as if you were reading a historical work or some poetical composition. Collect your thoughts and examine the matter carefully, for it is not to be understood as you at first sight think, but as you will find after due deliberation; namely, the intellect which was granted to man was the highest endowment, was bestowed on him before his disobedience. With reference to this gift the

GENESIS

Bible states that 'man was created in the form and likeness of God.' On account of this gift of intellect man was addressed by God, and received His commandments, as it is said, 'And the Lord God commanded Adam' (Gen. 2:16)—for no commandments are given to the brute creation or to those who are devoid of understanding. Through the intellect man distinguishes between the true and the false. This faculty Adam possessed perfectly and completely. The right and wrong are terms employed in the science of apparent truths (morals), not in that of necessary truths, as, *e.g.*, it is not correct to say, in reference to the proposition 'the heavens are spherical,' it is 'good' or to declare the assertion that 'the earth is flat' to be 'bad'; but we say of the one it is true and of the other it is false. . . . Thus it is the function of the intellect to discriminate between the true and the false—a distinction which is applicable to all objects of intellectual perception." Obviously the distinguished Jewish commentator is impressing upon our minds the fact that the true, the beautiful, and the good are *one*; hence, that the phrase, "the knowledge of good and evil," as used in Gen. 2:17 and 3:5, meant with respect to man, the possibility of the acquirement of all knowledge, including even illicit knowledge. This, of course, would mean the potentiality of omniscience. We reason, therefore, as follows: In the case of our first parents, did they "fall" "downward," or did they actually "fall" upward? Was this a case in which God "overruled" the evil to bring about a greater good? On the view that man was originally in a state of untried innocence, it would seem that holiness, which is to be acquired only by active obedience to God, would be much to be preferred above an original innocence. This, no doubt, is true. But what was to prevent Adam and Eve from acquiring holiness by living in unbroken obedience to God, without their having to make the pilgrimage through a world of sin and death? Obviously, nothing—

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

that is, *nothing but their own wills*. The choice, therefore, of the "hard way" *was their choice*, for which they alone were to be held accountable. The remedy provided by God's grace for this adverse tragic choice is the Divine Plan of Redemption.

Moreover, whatever may be the significance of this phrase, there is nothing in it that is intrinsically repugnant to a literal interpretation of the story of this particular tree and its fruit. As stated heretofore, God has certainly provided many trees, plants, herbs, etc., to serve as food for man to maintain his physical vigor; certainly, in this special case, He could have raised up an actual tree bearing a fruit designed to preserve his youth. If the metaphorical interpretation presents itself to us as the most obvious—indeed it is difficult to see any relationship existing between a real tree and knowledge—then the "tree of knowledge" could be only knowledge itself under the symbol of a tree and its fruit.

(8) *How Satan created a false sense of security in the woman's heart.* God had said she would die if she ate of the forbidden fruit. This unequivocal Divine declaration Satan boldly challenged: "Ye shall surely not die." M. Henry (CWB, 8): "Hope of impunity is a great support to all iniquity." (As in our day, perhaps the strongest support that evil has in the world is the widespread notion that there is no hell, no future punishment for unforgiven sin.) Eve's tragic mistake had occurred in her temporizing with the Devil at the outset. M. Henry (CWB, 8): "It is a dangerous thing to treat with a temptation which ought at first to be rejected with disdain and abhorrence. The garrison that sounds a parley is not far from being surrendered."

(9) *How double-dealing the Devil became in his accusations.* It was a most dangerous snare which he set for our first parents, seeking to alienate their affections from God and thus to draw them from their allegiance to Him.

GENESIS

Thus has he always acted not merely content with accusing the saints of unfaithfulness before God (Job 1:6-12, 2:1-6; Rev. 12:10), but also suggesting to them harsh thoughts of Him. (How many persons blame God for their troubles?)

(10) *How artfully he led up to his final and successful appeal.* Skinner (ICCG, 75): "The spiritual part of the temptation is now accomplished, and the serpent is silent, leaving the fascination of sense to do the rest. The woman looks on the tree with new eyes; she observes how attractive to taste and sight its fruit seems, and how desirable *for obtaining insight* (so most) or *to contemplate*." "And ye shall be as God"—this was the fatal appeal. Errett (EB, I, 26): "They will be independent of God—gods to themselves, free from all restraints, and having all the materials of happiness within themselves. It was an appeal to selfhood against Godhood; and the eating of the forbidden fruit was, on the part of Eve and Adam, an attempt to erect selfhood into Godhood. It was a renunciation of Jehovah's sovereignty, the lifting up of a standard of rebellion against their Maker, who had been to them the fountain of life and blessedness." *Was there ever a sin committed that was not, at its root, the choice of self and self's way of doing things (righteousness) above God and God's way of doing things (righteousness)?* (Cf. Rom. 10:6-13). Back of the woman's choice, of course, was the final motivating urge that tipped the scales in the Tempter's favor, namely, the urge for *illicit knowledge* (cf. Deut. 29:29).

9. *The Surrender*

"6 *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.*"

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

1. *Note the threefold appeal.*

(1) "*And when the woman saw*": what did she "see"?—and *how*, or in what sense, did she "see"? Did she see by ordinary physical vision "the eternal loveliness" of a real tree, which made it "a delight to the eyes"? Or, as Milligan suggests (SR, 43): "What could she see but the Serpent eating that same fruit?" According to this view, in order to give weight to his infidel insinuations, the Tempter actually ate some of the fruit himself, and thus presented his own superior knowledge as proof of its marvelous effects. But, the original word used here (*raah*) means not only to "look," "behold," etc., but also to "consider," *i.e.*, to *contemplate*, to *obtain insight*, and in a few instances, to "enjoy" (Eccl. 2:1, 3:13, 5:18). Perhaps the meaning that is intended for us here is that the woman indulged the contemplation of some specific act of disobedience to God, an act necessarily consummated in some visible (overt) manner. Certainly what is being described here is the lustful look: "an impure look, infected with the poison of concupiscence" (Calvin): a look made false by germinating doubt, or perhaps by the enchantment of curiosity. The contemplation, whatever the object may have been, caused the woman to lose sight altogether of the many blessings which she enjoyed in her Edenic environment, and to be consumed with curiosity with regard to just this one restriction. But is not this propensity characteristic of all of us at times? Is it not an essentially human reaction—to chafe at the slightest restriction upon our personal liberty, no matter how lavish the privileges showered upon us? It should be noted too that the charm, the lure, whatever its character, now begins to have its *sensual* side ("good for food") and its *sensuous* side ("delight to the eyes").

(2) "*That the tree was good for food.*" The first attraction or appeal was the *physical*, that is, to the *fleshly* appetites. This is perhaps the most elementary of tempta-

GENESIS

tions. (Note the parallel in Satan's temptation of Jesus, Matt. 4:3—"command that these stones become bread"). Sin has the strange power of investing the object of desire for the time being, whatever its true character, with unrealistic, almost irresistible, attraction. Note the many examples from human history and biography of men who were enslaved to their physical appetites and passions, *e.g.*, Alexander of Macedon (who at the age of 33, killed himself by dissipation), Lord Byron, Shelley, Poe, Oscar Wilde, and many others, all brilliant men, but unable to resist the demands of fleshly appetities. "Take the Cash, and let the Credit go"—the "philosophy" of Omar Khayyam. As someone has parodied one of the most common of clichés: "Eat, drink, and be merry, and tomorrow ye die of locomotor ataxia, cirrhosis of the liver, and delirium tremens." In ancient times, Aristippus of Cyrene was the protagonist of the doctrines of libertinism, *i.e.*, absolute hedonism, living for the satisfaction of the pleasures of the body.

(3) "*And that it was a delight to the eyes,*" *i.e.*, the *aesthetic* appeal. Note that the first attractions were to the senses of *taste* and *sight*, that is, to sense-perception. The charm had first its *sensual* and *sensuous* aspects. The aesthetic (artistic) appeal often accompanies the physical; and, though apparently more refined, it is subtle and powerful. It is the weakness that commonly haunts geniuses, musicians, poets, artists, and eccentrics generally, *e.g.*, the advocates of the "simple life," of the "philosophy" of the "noble savage," etc. Especially do individuals with artistic talents seem to think of themselves as a breed superior to the common herd and hence not to be inhibited by the conventions and laws to which ordinary folk subscribe and to which they must subscribe if they would maintain social order and prevent the race from destroying itself. (Cf. the Brook Farm experiment; Robert Owen's communistic colony at New Harmony, Indiana; Thoreau's

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

doctrine of "civil disobedience," and other "crackpot" illusions of the post-Civil-War era and later). Our present-day offbeat generation seems to be especially prolific of beatles, beatniks, "buggers" and bearded bums and buffoons (all rigid conformists to specific mannerisms and kinds of "dress," etc.). It is a known fact, of course, that certain kinds of "music" and certain forms of the dance tend toward flagrant immorality. Even the old pagan Plato recognized this fact, teaching (*Republic*, III, 398-403) that those strains which arouse the passions, and "relaxed strains" as well ("soft or drinking harmonies"), should be prohibited (censored); the flute, said he, should be banished, for the lyre and the harp. And in the *Bacchae* of Euripides (Bacchus was the Latin name for the Greek Dionysos, the god of wine), that great writer of tragedy exhibited clearly the intimacy between orgiastic frenzies in the name of "religion," and gross forms of sex perversion (notably, homosexuality): Euripides "outFreuded" Freud twenty-four hundred years ago. Incidentally, this same association is well presented in the novel, *Elmer Gantry*, by Sinclair Lewis: indeed this is the only aspect of this novel that is not sheer exaggeration; as a portrayal of true Christian revivalism, the whole thing is a travesty.

(4) "*And that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,*" that is, the *intellectual* appeal. (a) This was the ultimate and most potent attraction presented to the woman by the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. It was the lure of the possibility of *illicit* knowledge, *i.e.*, to be as God, and to know fully the true and the false, the good and the evil, etc. And what is "illicit" knowledge? It is not insight or wisdom beyond the adequacy of human language to communicate and beyond the ability of the human intellect to understand (knowledge of the "ineffable")? (Cf. Isa. 45:18, 46:9-11, 55:8; Heb. 4:12; Deut. 29:29; 1 Cor. 2:11; Rom. 8:26-27). (b) Note the penetrating psychological process by which the Tempter seduced

GENESIS

the woman. (No doubt he was using the power of suggestion potently). (Should we not realize that he uses the same power on human beings today, and especially on those who seek to achieve the Mind of Christ and to do the Will of Christ? Is it not significant that the Temptation followed immediately the Baptism of Jesus?) First, he caused doubt to be formed in her mind; then he brought in the appeal to physical sense (the means to the raw material of human knowledge); naturally, intellectual thirst, craving for apprehension of the "more beyond," followed. Murphy (MG, 112): "No startling proposal of disobedience was made, no advice, no persuasion to partake of the fruit is employed. The suggestion or assertion of the false only is plainly offered; and the bewildered mind is left to draw its own false inferences, and pursue its misguided course." (c) Again quoting M. Henry: "Satan teaches men first to doubt, then to deny; he makes them skeptics first, and so by degrees makes them atheists." This craving for illicit knowledge has led multitudes to destruction in all ages of man's life on earth. Theologians have found it a most effective weapon for keeping Christians divided into a multiplicity of sects, and unChristian teachers have used it extensively for pushing impressionable young souls over the precipice of agnosticism. (Chesterton (EM, 22) writes pointedly of the "sterile disputations of the too subtle theologians." Cf. the atheistic, agnostic, "existentialist" quasi-theological clowns of our own time, with their "demythologizing" mythology and their "God is dead" fulminations, also the materialistic scientists who consider it a mark of intelligence to eliminate the word "God" from human speech, *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseam*.) "Scholarship" has become in our day a relative much-overworked, and ambiguous term. In most cases the sheer "intellectualist" who prostrates himself in adoration before the human intelligence (usually his own, in preference to all others) is a rather pitiful creature. "Publishing" has

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

become a fetish to college professors. The fact is, however, that if two-thirds of their publications (books, essays, reviews, etc.) were piled high and burned, they would make more literal light in their conflagration than they give spiritual light in their content. In this writer's opinion there is no form of snobbery as obnoxious as intellectual snobbery: the kind of snobbery that is characteristic of our half-baked pseudo-"intellectuals." I recall here a superb example of the case in point, namely, that of the late Gertrude Stein (the "poet"?) whose claim to notoriety rests largely on her well-known insipid line, "A rose is a rose is a rose." In a recently published book, entitled *Gertude Stein: Her Life and Work*, Elizabeth Sprigge, the author, who is not at all an unfriendly critic, portrays Miss Stein as a person fond of calling herself a genius, and quotes some of the statements the "poet" made about herself, as follows: "I know I am the most important writer writing today." "I know I am doing more important things than any of my contemporaries." "I am the only person who has ever known what poetry is." "Einstein was the creative philosophic mind of the century and I have been the creative literary mind of the century." These bold assertions could hardly be cited as examples of modesty, much less of humility. (d) The excess of unbridled intellect often leads to the complete distortion of what is called "academic freedom." The fact remains, however, that no one has any right to substitute vice for virtue, injustice for justice, lying for truth, in a word, license for liberty. Liberty is to be enjoyed only within the circumference of the moral law; when we abandon moral law, we have nothing to guide us but our individual desires. As Jim Casey put it, in Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, "There aint no sin, there aint no virtue; there's just stuff people do." I have no right to stand before a class and teach that two plus two is equal to five, for the simple reason that the statement is not true. As Professor Hocking writes: "The

GENESIS

right to error in the pursuit of truth does not include a moral right to be deliberately in error." We are reminded here of Plato's famous doctrine of "the lie that is in the soul," that is to say, the error that is perpetrated through ignorance. This, said Plato, is the most deceptive and dangerous of all forms of untruth. Truth, moreover, is never to be determined by a vote: physical truth is written into the structure of the universe and moral truth into the structure of human relationships. (e) When curiosity becomes whetted by desire, the product is *lust*. So it was with Eve—she had reached the stage of actually *lusting for divinity*, that is, to be "as God." But lust "when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death." Such is the pedigree of Satan: Satan, lust, sin, death (Jas. 1:12-17). (f) Note again the three appeals—the physical, the aesthetic, and the intellectual. Cf. 1 John 2:16—"the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life." Note Jas. 1:15 for the decisive act of sin. All too often, the Bible tells us, the human heart follows the eyes rather than the reason (cf. Job 31:7, Eccl. 11:9). Note also Satan's appeals to Christ: to physical appetite (Matt. 4:1-4); to the human desire for note or notoriety (by spectacularism, Matt. 4:5-8); and finally to the human thirst for power (Matt. 4:8-11); then again, in the Garden and on the Cross, to the elemental human dread of sheer loneliness and inevitable excruciating suffering and death (Luke 22:44, Matt. 27:46).

(5) "*She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.*" (a) "With the eye of soul as well as of body, she found a new charm she had not realized before, as a tree in the setting sun. There follows the cumulative force of the temptation—through bodily pleasure, mental delight, intellectual hunger for wisdom. Her faith in God, unseen and almost unknown, was weakened, and the chief barrier to sin was weakened" (Peloubet). A. Maclaren (EHS, *in loco*):

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

"The confluence of all these streams made such a current as swept the feeble will clean away; and blinded, dazed, and deafened by the rush of the stream, Eve was carried over the falls as a man might be over Niagara." (b) God had said she *would* die, if she ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge; Satan said she *would not* die, etc. The choice was the woman's. Had God interfered and kept her from making the wrong choice, consistency would require that He do the same in all such cases, but this would be His burglarizing of the human will and ruling the moral world by coercion. Such Divine overpowering of the human will would simply mean the elimination of all human responsibility; as a result there could be no morality, no righteousness, no holiness, no real democracy, not even any science as free inquiry. Trueblood (PR, 251): "Evil is the price we pay for moral freedom. . . . the presence of evil is due, *not to the nature of things, but to the nature of goodness*. We can take a step further . . . by showing that the limitation is inherent in *the nature of personality*." The sin of Eden was the consequence of a free human decision to disobey God, to become a rebel against His sovereignty, just as the sin of the angel Lucifer had been the consequence of his own free choice to rebel against the Divine government in Heaven. As Gilson puts it (SMP, 113): "It was not the body that made the spirit sin," that is, in Eve's case; rather, "it was the spirit that brought death to the body." We must remember, of course, that Satan and his rebel host sinned by their own free choice and act, uninfluenced from without, and so became totally depraved; our first parents, however, sinned as a result of the seductive appeals of the Devil; hence it was possible for Divine Justice to extend mercy to fallen man and to provide for him a remedy both for the guilt and for the consequences of sin; and so we have the immediate oracular pronouncement which contained implicitly the promise of the gift of human redemption (Gen.

GENESIS

troubles.) It has been rightly said that apparent goods give only the "alcoholic illusion" of well-being. It takes a large measure of moral discernment to "put first things first" (Matt. 6:33). Confusion occasioned by ignorance, by distorted thinking (rationalization, projection, identification, compensation, fantasy, etc.), by undisciplined emotion, by a perverted will, or all of these, has beset all of Eve's posterity (Rom. 3:23).

(d) Did a fall, then, actually take place in Eden? If so, was it a fall downward or upward? Murphy answers this question clearly (MG, 117): "Man has now come to the second step in morals—the practice. Thereby he has 3:15). Again quoting Trueblood (PR, 250): "Here we have the abiding Christian paradox of sin. We are to blame for it, but *we* cannot heal it. God did not cause it, but He can forgive and overcome it."

(c) What essentially happened to the woman in Eden when she ate of the forbidden fruit? I should answer that *her perspicacity became vitiated*: whereas prior to her act of disobedience she had the thought only of the real goods of life (the supreme values, of which God is Himself the Highest Good), now her understanding became darkened by her mental confusion of *apparent* goods with *real* goods. (*Apparent* goods are those which benefit only some human power of appetite *per se*, that is, in isolation, such as desire for narcotic drugs, for intoxicating liquor, indeed for all forms of physical over-indulgence. *Real* goods, however, are those which benefit the whole man, such as vision, health, knowledge, faith, love, etc. Confusion regarding these distinctions is the source of almost all of man's come to the knowledge of good and evil, not merely as an ideal, but as an actual thing. But he has attained this end, not by standing in, but by falling from, his integrity. If he had stood the test of this temptation, as he might have done, he would have come by the knowledge of good and evil equally well, but with a far different result. As he

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

bore the image of God in his higher nature, he would have resembled Him, not only in knowledge thus honorably acquired by resisting temptation, but also in moral good, thus realized in his own act and will. As it is, he has gained some knowledge in an unlawful and disastrous way; but he has also taken in that moral evil which is the image, not of God, but of the tempter, to whom he has yielded." Yes, our first parents did "fall," and they did "fall downward," in the sense that their perspicacity became vitiated, their sense of values distorted, and their moral integrity depreciated. We might add here that no matter how man may have first appeared on the scene, the first man in whom reason flowered (*homo sapiens*) faced this same choice—that of valuing and developing, or that of depreciating and so losing, his potentiality of unbroken moral integrity. What is pictured in the story of Adam and Eve is that which occurs in the life of every human being of accountable age. As Chesterton puts it in his inimitable way (CDD, 89): "Man is an exception, whatever else he is. If he is not the image of God, then he is a disease of the dust. If it is not true that a divine being fell, then we can only say that one of the animals went entirely off its head."

(e) W. R. Bowie (IBG, 503): "The truth of the wonderful old drama of Eden is not that we are accounted evil because somebody before us did evil. The truth dramatized here is this: Human nature, made to go God's way, has an inveterate tendency to listen to the temptation to go its own way, and this rebellious way must have an evil end—evil not only for the individual who has sinned but, in that solidarity of human nature and human destiny which Paul perceived, evil that may involve many generations in its long entail. For there are laws as old as creation which we are meant to obey; and as sure as creation, if we disobey them, we shall be in trouble. No circumstances outside us can outweigh that inner fact. No blessings of environment

GENESIS

or material opportunity can guarantee a happy life, not even though they should be as complete as those of the Garden of Eden. The disobedience of Adam and Eve is the symbol of a fatal truth: We human beings are continually disobeying and rejecting the law of life; only when our wills are kept in accord with the higher will of God can life be blessed."

(f) Maimonides (GP, 15-16): "When Adam was yet in a state of innocence and was guided solely by reflection and reason (Psa. 8:6) . . . he was not at all able to follow or to understand the principles of apparent truths; the most manifest impropriety, viz., to appear in a state of nudity, was nothing unbecoming according to his idea: he could not even comprehend why it should be so. After man's disobedience, however, when he began to give way to desires which had their source in his imagination and to the gratification of his bodily appetites . . . he was punished by the loss of part of that intellectual faculty which he had previously possessed. He therefore transgressed a command with which he had been charged on the score of his reason; and having obtained a knowledge of the apparent truths, he was wholly absorbed in the study of what is proper and what improper. Then he fully understood the magnitude of the loss he had sustained, what he had forfeited, and in what situation he was thereby placed."

(g) Unamuno (AC, 21-23): "People speak of 'the struggle for life': but the struggle for life is life itself, and, in sum, life is struggle. Here is something to reflect upon: this is what the Biblical legend in Genesis means when it relates how death came into the world through the sin of our first parents for that they wished to be like gods, that is, immortal through absorption of the knowledge of good and evil, of the knowledge which vouchsafes immortality. And afterward . . . the first death was a violent one, that of Abel by the hand of his brother Cain. And a fratricide too . . . Life is a struggle; solidarity to

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

produce life is a struggle and manifests itself by means of a struggle. . . . And if this be true of physical or corporeal life, psychical or spiritual life in its turn consists of a struggle against eternal oblivion."

(h) Whitelaw summarizes as follows (PCG, 61): "(1) The assault was commenced before use and practice had confirmed the first pair in obedience. (2) Satan began with the woman who was the weaker of the two. (3) He attacked her when alone—the best time for temptation. Beware of solitude! (4) He selected the best ground for delivering his first blow—when the woman was in full sight of the tree. (5) He was extremely cautious so to moderate his onset as not to excite alarm—beginning with a casual inquiry. (6) He advanced by degrees as he obtained a footing in the woman's heart. (7) He never revealed the proper scope and drift of his observations, but always couched them in obscure and ambiguous language. (8) He never seemed to lead, but always to be following the woman's thoughts. (9) In all he said and did he pretended to be seeking the victim's good. (10) He chose the best of all possible baits to captivate the woman's fancy and excite her cupidity—the hope of gaining knowledge." To read this summary is to realize that the Devil has never changed his tactics. Most of us know from personal experience that he still employs the same suavity, the same cunning, the same deceit, ever promising so much but giving so little. *The best that Satan has to offer men for serving him is the complete loss of God, an endless hell.* (Matt. 25:41-46; John 5:28-29; Rom. 2:4-11; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 20:11-15, 22:10-15).

(6) "*And she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.*" (a) Note that the Woman, instead of turning her eyes away, *saw*; that she then *took* (the devil did not put the fruit into her mouth by force—she took it herself; M. Henry (CWB, 9): "Satan may tempt, but he cannot force; may persuade us to cast ourselves down, but he

GENESIS

cannot cast us down"); then she *did eat* ("the way of sin is down-hill; a man cannot stop himself when he will"; it is always best to "nip mischief in the bud"). But her seeing, taking, and eating did not end the matter,—*she gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat*. Sin's ramifications never terminate with the individual who commits the sin; rather, its influences reach out in all directions, and its consequences follow even into eternity, up to the very throne of God for judgment. (b) "Her husband with her." What does the prepositional phrase, "with her," signify? (-i-) That the man had been present throughout the entire temptation scene? Not likely—else why did he not, as the head of the creation, and surely as the stronger of the two, restrain the woman? It is hardly conceivable that he should have stood by mutely and permitted his companion to sell them both out to sin. (-ii-) That Adam arrived on the scene toward the end of the temptation colloquy, and hence was without knowledge of the real import of what was taking place? This, of course, is conjecture, but this is what could have happened. (-iii-) That it is the idea of conjugal oneness that is emphasized here? (-iv-) Or, as Lange suggests, that we have here an abridgment of language: "after she had eaten, she gave to her husband to eat thereof after her, or to eat with her" (CDHCG, 230). It could be that Adam's participation in the sin occurred after he had time to note that the woman had not actually died and was himself somewhat torn with doubt. (-v-) Or that Adam partook of the forbidden fruit only when finally "overcome by his wife's importunity." This phrase is from M. Henry's commentary: apparently Henry would have us think of Eve as a first edition of Cleopatra or of Theda Bara. He writes (CWB, 9): "She gave it to him, persuading him with the same arguments that the serpent had used with her, adding this to all the rest, that she herself had eaten of it, and found it so far from being deadly that it was

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

extremely pleasant and grateful." Obviously, however, nothing is reported in the account to indicate that the Woman's power of persuasion was exercised unduly upon her husband. All these views are conjectural. Then why not accept what has been commonly believed by Jews and Christians in all ages, namely, that Adam sinned with his eyes wide open and out of affection and sympathy for his bride. As a matter of fact, no other view can be harmonized with Paul's language in 1 Tim. 2:13-15 and in 1 Cor. 11:8-9. (Note again here, one of our first principles of interpretation—that to get the truth of any Scripture text, it must be in harmony with the teaching of the Bible as a whole.) (-vi-) It seems obvious that Adam preferred to part company with God rather than with his wife. In all ages multitudes have chosen Hell with their relatives above Heaven with God and His saints. Adam had the opportunity of parting company with his wife and so remaining obedient to God. Sapphira had the same opportunity, but she, like Adam, preferred her spouse to the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 5:1-11). Men refuse to believe that true religion, salvation, worship, obedience, etc., are individual matters: but there is no such thing as salvation by proxy (Rom. 14:10, 2 Cor. 5:10, Rev. 20:13). Lot seems to be the only Bible personage who exercised good judgment in this respect: when the Divine command came to him and his family to flee from Sodom, and not to look back under any circumstances, Lot obeyed; he did not even look back to see whether his wife was coming—he was too busy working out *his own* salvation (Gen. 19:12-29). Christ's own teaching on this point is clear and explicit (Matt. 10:34-39, Luke 14:26). (-vii-) Apparently the Apostle's language in Rom. 5:12 and in 1 Cor. 15:21-22 refers to Adam in a generic sense, that is, as the head of the physical creation. After all, does not Adam become particularly blameworthy in view of his headship of the race, a fact which surely must be regarded

GENESIS

as enhancing his responsibility no matter what may have been the circumstances attending his first sinful act?

10. *The Birth of Conscience*

"7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons."

(1) Their eyes were opened, that is, not a regaining of the physical sense of sight (there is no evidence that this had even been impaired), but the stirring of an inner awareness by which they found things wrong which previously they had not looked upon as wrong. A conflict had set in between the appeal of apparent goods and that of real goods: their moral discernment was beclouded.

(2) Skinner (ICCG, 76): "A connexion between sexual shame and sin is not suggested by the passage, and is besides not true to experience. But to infer from this single effect that the forbidden fruit had aphrodisiac properties is a still greater perversion of the author's meaning."

(3) It is a fact of human experience—one might well say, a law of human character—that when you do another man an injury you become, to some extent, his enemy. He may not feel any animosity toward you, but you certainly will experience the stirring of a sense of hostility toward him; you will discover that somehow, *in you* a feeling of separation, a schism, has arisen. This sense of hostility so engendered thus becomes a kind of compensation for the guilt feeling which your own act has produced in you. This is a perfectly normal human reaction psychologically. So it was with respect to the attitude of our first parents toward God when they had sinned against Him. Whatever the new knowledge was that came about as a consequence of their disobedience, it included an awareness of the fact that they were now separated from their Creator, and this brought with it a sense of guilt and shame, as realized disobedience to God must always bring. This is precisely

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

what we mean by the birth of conscience in Adam and Eve. And it brought forth the attempted concealment, the rationalizations and projections (to use Freudian terms), and the braggadocio which they manifested when confronted with the fact of their sin.

(4) *They knew that they were naked.* Cornfeld (AtD, 16): "This is an answer to the question of why human beings, unlike animals, were ashamed of nudity! obviously, because of man's new knowledge of decency, about which animals and primitive man, in blissful ignorance, knew nothing." (Are not tendencies in dress toward nudity in our time, and the actual practice [and defense of the practice] of nudity, further indications of modern man's desperate attempt to reduce himself to the level of the brute?) C.H.M. (NBG, 43, 44): "The Lord God had so ordered it, that in and by the fall, man should get what previously he had not, and that was, *a conscience*, a knowledge of both good and evil. This, man evidently could not have had before. He could not have known aught about evil, inasmuch as evil was not there to be known. He was in a state of innocence, which is a state of ignorance of evil. Man got a conscience in and by the fall, and we find that the very first effect of that conscience was to make him a coward. Satan had utterly deceived the woman. He had said, 'your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil'; but he had left out a material part of the truth, namely, that they should know good without the power to do it, and that they should know evil without the power to avoid it. Their very attempt to elevate themselves in the scale of moral existence involved the loss of true elevation. They became degraded, powerless, Satan-enslaved, conscience-smitten, terrified creatures. 'The eyes of them both were opened,' no doubt; but alas! to what a sight!—it was only to discover their own nakedness. They opened their eyes upon their own condition, which was 'wretched and miserable

GENESIS

and poor and blind and naked' [Rev. 3:17]. . . . Now, it is well to understand this; well, too, to know how conscience works—to see that it can only make cowards of us, as being the consciousness of what we are. Many are astray as to this; they think that conscience will bring us to God. Did it operate thus in the case of Adam and Eve? Assuredly not. Nor will it in the case of any sinner. How could it? How could the sense of what *I am* ever bring me to God, if not accompanied by the faith of what *God is*? Impossible. It will produce shame, self-reproach, remorse, anguish. It may also give birth to certain efforts on my part to remedy the condition which it discloses; but these very efforts, so far from drawing us to God, rather act as a blind to hide Him from our view."

(5) *Fig-leaves as aprons.* (a) Literally, *girdles*, or perhaps what the anthropologist would call *loincloths*. The common fig-tree abounded, of course, in Western Asia. (b) Granting that nudity indicates here an awakening of the *libido* as a phase of the new knowledge now attained by Adam and Eve, it could be true, as one commentator puts it: "The representation that the awakening of sex consciousness was accomplished by a consciousness of guilt thus contains a recognition of the fact that all human relationships are disordered. Alienation from God has brought with it alienation from man. Loneliness is the specter which haunts unredeemed humanity" (Simpson, IBG, 506). Someone else has written: "Having lost the light of purity which had previously enswathed their bodies, Adam and Eve began to realize that they were no longer innocent. The brilliantly-lighted torch had become a flickering taper!" (c) However, C.H.M. (NBG, 44-46), bares the real moral (religious or spiritual) significance of their act of resorting to an artificial covering, as follows: "Thus, in the case of Adam and Eve, the discovery of their nakedness was followed by an effort of their own to cover it—they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

aprons.' This is the first record we have of man's attempt to remedy, by his own device, his condition, and the attentive consideration thereof will afford us not a little instruction as to the real character of human religiousness in all ages. In the first place, we see, not only in Adam's case, but in every case that man's effort to remedy his condition is based upon the sense of his nakedness. He is confessedly naked, and all his works are the result of his being so. This can never avail. I must know that I am clothed, before I can do anything acceptable in the sight of God. And this, be it observed, is the difference between true Christianity and human religiousness. The former is founded upon the fact of a man's being clothed; the latter, upon the fact of his being naked. The former has for its starting-post what the later has for its goal. All that a true Christian does, is because he is clothed—perfectly clothed; all that a mere religionist does, is in order that he may be clothed. This makes a vast difference. The more we examine the genius of man's religion, in all its phases, the more we shall see its thorough insufficiency to remedy his state, or even to meet his own sense thereof. It may do very well for a time, it may avail so long as death, judgment, and the wrath of God are looked at from a distance, if looked at at all; but when a man comes to look these terrible realities straight in the face, he will find, in good truth, that his religion is a bed too short for him to stretch himself upon, and a covering too narrow for him to wrap himself in." This story teaches us that in the final reckoning, multitudes will awaken to a realization of the fact—but only when it is everlastingly too late—that their religiosity has not been true religion, their piety has not been piety, their "morality" has not been the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-25), their respectability has never even approximated righteousness. Sinful man will discover—when it is everlastingly too late—that the greatest crime which he has perpetrated upon himself is the fallacy that

GENESIS

he can lift himself up to fellowship with God simply by tugging at his own bootstraps. He will discover—when it is too late to remedy his condition—that like Adam and Eve, he has sold himself to the devil for nothing but a mess of pottage (Rev. 6:16-17; Matt. 8:12, 25:30; Luke 13:28). If the Bible makes anything clear at all, it certainly makes it crystal clear that to attain ultimate union with God one must live the Spiritual Life (Gal. 5:22-25, Rom. 8:1-11), and to live the Spiritual Life the believer must be baptized into Christ and so *put on* Christ (Gal. 3:27), to be clothed upon with Christ, to be wrapped about with the mind and will of Christ (Phil. 2:5; John 14:15; Matt. 7:24-27; Heb. 5:9), to live the life that is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3, 1:27), to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18), and so to be changed from glory unto glory (2 Cor. 3:18) until Beatitude is achieved in the putting on of immortality, the redemption of spirit and soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23), the Life Everlasting (cf. John 14:6, 5:28-29; Rom. 2:5-7; Rom. 8:18-25; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; 1 Cor. 15:35-58; Rev. 6:16-17, 20:11-15, 21:1-8, 22:1-5, etc.).

(d) Leupold (EG, 154-155): "That the sense of shame should concentrate itself around that portion of the body which is marked by the organs of generation, no doubt has its deeper reason in this, that man instinctively feels that the very fountain and source of human life is contaminated by sin. The very act of generation is tainted by sin. If this scripturally portrayed origin of the sense of shame be accepted as true, then all contentions of anthropologists that shame is rather the outgrowth of inhibitions and custom fall away as secondary and incidental. The scriptural account goes to the root of the matter. The only gleam of light in the verse is the fact that where shame is felt, the evildoer's case is not hopeless. He is at least not past feeling in the matter of doing wrong. God's prevenient grace allows this feeling to arise." (Why is it

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

that the "sex" joke, whether "sophisticated" or downright vulgar, always brings the raucous laugh? Dr. Will Durant has rightly said that "the inhibition of sex is the first principle of civilization," that is, in more familiar terms, the first step out of the barnyard.)

(e) Certainly the fact of conscience in man is conclusive proof of his power of freedom of choice (free will). Illingworth states the case clearly as follows (PHD, 33-35): "Freedom of the will does not mean the ability to act without a motive, as some of its opponents still stupidly seem to suppose. But it does mean the ability to create or co-operate in creating our own motives, or to choose our motive, or to transform a weaker motive into a stronger by adding weights to the scale of our own accord, and thus to determine our conduct by our reason; whence it is now usually called the power of self-determination—a phrase to which St. Thomas very nearly approaches when he says, 'Man is determined by a combination of reason and appetite, that is, by a desire whose object is consciously apprehended by the reason as an end to be attained, and he is therefore self-moved.' For instance, I am hungry, and that is simply an animal appetite; but I am immediately aware of an ability to choose between gratifying my hunger with an unwholesome food because it is pleasant, or with an unpleasant food because it is wholesome, or abstain from its gratification altogether for self-discipline or because the food before me is not my own. That is to say, I can present to my mind, on the occasion of appetite, pleasure, utility, goodness, as objects to be attained, and I can choose between them; nor is to the point to say that I am determined by my character, for my character is only the momentum which I have gained by a number of past acts of choice, that is, by my own past use of my freedom; and even so I am conscious that at the moment I can counteract my character, though morally certain that I have no intention so to do. This is briefly what we mean by free-

GENESIS

will; and it is a fact of immediate and universal consciousness, that is, of my own consciousness, corroborated by the like experience of all other men. . . . For the sense of freedom is an immediate part of my consciousness. I cannot be conscious without it. I cannot tear it out. It lies at the very root of myself, and claims, with self-evidence, to be something *sui generis*, something unique. So obvious is this, that most even of those who regard it as a delusion are obligated to admit that it is a delusion from which there is no escape. Further, upon this sense of freedom all law and all morality depend. To deny this is to play with words. And law and morality abundantly verify the legitimacy of their basis by the progressive development in which they result. For you cannot gather figs of thistles, or a rational order of society from an irrational disease of mind. And, finally, the sense of freedom has maintained itself, from the dawn of history, against a spirit far more powerful than any which philosophy can raise—the spirit of remorse. What would humanity, age after age, have given to be free from remorse? Yet remorse still stares us in the face, overshadowing our hearts with sadness and driving its countless victims into madness, suicide, despair, and awful forebodings of the after-world. Men would have exorcised it if they could; but they cannot. And remorse is only a darker name for man's conviction of his own free-will." Remorse is, of course, the inevitable concomitant of guilt and shame, such as that experienced by Adam and Eve following their disobedience to God.

11. *The Heavenly Father*

"8 And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God amongst the trees of the garden."

In this exquisitely beautiful and touching—and tragic—"human interest" story, we have the first appearance in

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

Scripture of the Heavenly Father of the Drama of Redemption. (Cf. Matt. 6:26, John 17:11. See also what is commonly called the Narrative of the Prodigal Son: a comparison of Luke 15:3-7 with verses 18-24 of the same chapter is sufficient to show that this is designedly the Narrative of the Forgiving Father. Cf. also Psa. 103:13-18; 1 Cor. 10:13; John 3:16-17; Rev. 21:1-7, 22:1-5.)

(1) Note the *fatherly* motif which runs throughout this phase of the narrative: vividly *anthropomorphic* as it is, at the same time it is, in every detail, accurately descriptive of personal human experience. Note: "in the cool of the day," that is, toward evening, when cooling breezes usually sprang up: in these Eastern lands the "heat of the day" was so intense that only toward evening could the master come out of his tent and walk about in comfort. Lange (231): "To this we may add: and when also there comes to a man a more quiet and contemplative frame of soul." Moreover, the language here clearly intimates this to have been a daily custom in which the Heavenly Father was accustomed to meet His children and they in turn were wont to look forward with pleasant anticipation to these moments of sweet fellowship. Again, Lange (231): "We must regard the question here as unanswered, in what respect the theophanies (which were mediated in all cases through vision-seeing states of soul) are to be distinguished from real outward appearances in human form."

(2) Not so any longer—this once pleasant anticipation on the part of our first parents of sweet communion with God. No—the guilty pair sought to avoid personal contact with Him; sin had separated them from Him; as the Apostle put it many, many centuries later, they were now alienated from God by their own evil works (Col. 1:21; Eph. 2:1-3, 4:18). As the voice of the Creator became a call—a summons to the inevitable reckoning—they hid themselves somewhere in the densest and darkest recesses of the garden. Note the realistic psychological process

GENESIS

exhibited here: from *sin* to *guilt*, from *guilt* to *shame*, from *shame* to *fear*, and from *fear* to *flight*. The perfect love which casts out fear (1 John 4:18) had, in Adam and Eve, become vitiated.

(3) (a) The basic truth of this narrative is that *the moral problem of Eden is the moral problem of every human life, its law my law, its temptation my temptation, its sin my sin, its Savior my Savior*. This moral issue obtrudes itself on every son and daughter of the human race as the age of discernment or accountability is reached. And the tragedy is that all have followed in the footsteps of Mother Eve (Rom. 3:23). (b) The choice made by our first parents was the choice of self and self's way of doing things above God and God's way of doing things. It was the choice between the tree of life and the tree of death. The tree was central, as the commandment was central—the choice was between self and God. Taking the one was rejecting the other: and this is what sin is essentially. (c) This is the choice which every human being must make. Everyone who has come in contact with the Gospel message is thus brought face to face with this choice—he cannot avoid it. It is the choice between Christ and Satan. It is indeed a *forced option*: he who is not for Christ is against Him (Matt. 6:24, 12:30). Just as the man who says he has decided not to worry about the weeds in his garden has already decided for the weeds (and so is simply fooling himself), so the accountable person who chooses to remain indifferent to the claims of Christ has in truth rejected Him altogether. *There is no middle ground here*. (d) Man's experience in Eden is a true picture of Everyman's experience with sin. This, of course, is the truly significant aspect of the story: all other aspects—historical, allegorical, psychological, or what not—are secondary to this. The lesson is clear: at first Satan's suggestions are subtle and their true import double talk; but once entertained, they develop into crime and vice and sin.

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

Just as the disease germ enters the body, and on finding conditions favorable, germinates disease and death, so the germ of sin entering the interior life of man and finding conditions receptive, will sooner or later breed the lust that flowers in the overt act of sin. We should avoid exposing ourselves to needless temptations, because no human character is strong enough to resist under all circumstances. We should keep our spirits so strong by feeding on the Bread of Life that the germs of sin cannot find a breeding-place in them (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; John 6:35-59). Bible study, meditation, prayer, service, the ordinances, the worshiping assembly—all these are means whereby the Christian draws spiritual strength to resist the wiles of the Evil One (2 Tim. 2:22; Jas. 4:7; Eph. 6:10-16; 1 Pet. 5:6; 2 Tim. 2:15, 3:14-17; Matt. 6:13; 1 Thess. 5:17; Acts 2:42; Phil. 4:8; Matt. 25:31-40; Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16, 11:23-30; Acts 2:43-47, 4:32-35; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7; Rom. 12:1-2, etc.).

12. *Pagan Traditions.*

Pagan traditions of the Golden Age of mankind, the role of the woman in the Fall, the human lust for omniscience, the lost chance of immortality, etc., were widespread throughout the Fertile Crescent. Traditions of erect serpents, flying serpents, serpent dragons, and dragons in general, also abounded throughout the ancient world.

(1) The eighth-century B.C. Greek poet, Hesiod, gives us a vivid picture of *the Golden Age* of man on earth, in his poem *Works and Days*, (lines 109-140). (See Loeb Classical Library edition, *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homeric*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.)

(2) *Pandora's Box*. (Note *pan*, "all," and *dora*, "gifts"). As the story goes, when Prometheus ("Forethought") stole fire from heaven, Zeus in revenge ordained Hephaestus to make a woman out of earth who by her beauty should bring misery on the human race. Hermes took her to Epimetheus ("Afterthought") who made her his wife,

GENESIS

forgetting the advice of his brother Prometheus not to accept any gifts from the gods. Pandora brought with her from heaven a box containing all possible human ills; overpowered by her own curiosity, Pandora opened the box and the ills escaped and spread abroad over the whole earth. (See Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 50-105, and Milton, *Paradise Lost*, iv, 714 ff.) (3) *The Golden Apples of the Hesperides*. The Hesperides were nymphs who guarded the Golden Apples which Ge (Earth) gave to Hera at the latter's wedding to Zeus. They were closely watched by a terrible dragon named Ladon. But, in fulfillment of an ancient oracle, Heracles entered the garden by stealth and slew this monster. The garden was supposed to be in the extreme West on the river Oceanus. (4) *Apollo and the Python*. The Python was said to be a serpent bred of the slime after Deucalion's deluge. It was supposed to be living in the caves of Mt. Parnassus. But Apollo, as the bright god of heaven who detested all impurity, physical and spiritual, four days after his birth (according to the legend) slew the serpent with his arrows.

(5) Cf. also the Assyrian-Babylonian great she-dragon, Tiamat, allegedly slain by Marduk, the city-god of Babylon (or by Ashur, the city-god of Nineveh); the Persian Ahriman (also represented as a serpent in some accounts) who is said to have deceived the first human pair and drawn them away from the good god Ormuzd (or the Persian good god Ahura Mazda who was said to exercise a certain restraint upon the bad god, Angro Mainyu); the triumph of the Hindu Krishna over the great serpent Kali Naga achieved by tramping on the serpent's head; the Ugaritic flying serpent, Yam; the horrible Egyptian Set, brother and enemy of Osiris; the equally horrible Siva of Hindu mythology; the Biblical Leviathan (Isa. 27:1); the Canaanite sea-dragon Rahab ("arrogance," cf. Job. 26:12, 9:13); the Teutonic Odin (or Woden) and the Midgard serpent; and in more modern times the story of Beowulf

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

and the Fire-dragon, that of St. George and the dragon, or that of St. Patrick and his snakes, etc., probably all later and more corrupt editions of the original.

(6) For versions of the human quest for illicit knowledge (omniscience), we have the theft of fire from heaven by the archrebel Prometheus, also the Biblical account of the attempt of early man to build a tower to heaven—the Tower of Babel (Gen., ch. 11). etc. (7) For traditions of man's "squandered opportunity for gaining immortality," see the Babylonian epics of Adapa and Gilgamesh, especially.

(8) What shall we say, then, of these "traditions," "legends," "myths," or whatever they may be called? Cornfeld (AtD, 17), with reference to the flying serpents, erect serpents, dragons, etc., writes: "There may be, however, a pure coincidence of symbolism with elements in Gen. 3." Were these stories "infiltrations" into surrounding traditions "of religious ideas properly belonging to the Hebrews," as Rawlinson has suggested? Or could they not have been "infiltrations" from a strain of general Semitic culture extending far back beyond the origin of the ethnic group who came to be known as the Hebrews? To my way of thinking, Kitto's explanation is the most satisfactory of all (DBI, 67): "What shall we say, then, to these things? This—that the nations embodied in these traditions their remembrance of paradise, of the fall, and of the promised salvation." *Every counterfeit presupposes a genuine.* Hence, we may reasonably conclude, it seems to me, that the universality of these stories of a Golden Age, of man's fall into evil ways and his consequent loss of the direct attainment of immortality, of the activities of serpents and dragons as instrumentalities of evil, including also the universality of accounts of the Flood and that of the practice of animal sacrifice, all points to an actual common origin in the cradle of the race—the common origin of which we have the facts presented in the opening

GENESIS

chapters of Genesis and *in which the spiritual motif is the essential aspect of each account*—the originals having become corrupted, and greatly debased, by oral transmission, as the human race became diffused over the earth.

13. *Satan's Rebellion in Classic Poetry*

The poetic versions of Satan's pre-mundane rebellion are to be found, of course, in two of the greatest poems of all time, namely, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Dante makes the creation of the angels simultaneous with that of the universe, whereas Milton puts their creation long ages prior to that of man. Milton has often been criticized for surrounding the Adversary with such awesome associations that our abhorrence of him is diminished; indeed Satan has been called the hero of *Paradise Lost*. Dante's portrayal of the Devil, on the other hand, is fairly true to Scripture teaching. In Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, it is man's thirst for illicit knowledge that is emphasized. Faustus is a "grand figure" in Marlowe's play, "filled with a divine lust for what is more than human and chafing at the boundaries set to man's attainments. . . . a rebel against the Ultimate Authority, willing to pay for knowledge with his soul, but moved by heart-rending misgivings when he reconsiders the dreadful pact" (*The Literature of England*, Vol. I, 501, Woods, Watt, et al, 4th Edition). Goethe, in his great work, *Faust*, recounts Faust's bargain with the Devil, who agrees to claim his (Faust's) soul at the moment he (the Devil) gives Faust something "worth living for." Goethe pictures Mephistopheles as saying to Faust:

"I to thy service here agree to bind me,
To run and never rest at call of thee;
When over yonder thou shalt find me,
Thou shalt do as much for me."

Faust, however, disillusioned in turn by knowledge, power, and sensual pleasure, finds that he is truly happy only when

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

he becomes engaged in useful labor—labor that benefits his fellows—and so it is that God takes his soul at the very moment the Devil is on the verge of claiming it.

A word of caution here: while Satan's personality and his existence are matters of fact, we must not go to the extreme of giving ludicrous designations to him as did theologians of the Middle Ages. In medieval times it was thought actually possible for a man to sell his soul to the Devil and that such compacts were written in blood. As Strong writes (ST, 444): "The cathedrals cultivated and perpetuated this superstition, by the figures of malignant demons which grinned from the gargoyles of their roofs and the capitals of their columns, and popular preaching exalted Satan to the rank of a rival god—a god more feared than was the true and living God. Satan was pictured as having horns and hoofs—an image of the sensual and bestial—which led Cuvier to remark that the adversary could not devour, because horns and hoofs indicated not a carnivorous but a ruminant quadruped." Such misrepresentations of the actual nature and character of the Devil led to gross superstitions and in this manner became as prolific of skepticism about his actual existence as the much-vaunted ultra-intellectualism of our day has been. Satan has existence, *real personal existence*, but, paradoxically, the most effective weapon that he uses to bring human souls into subjection to his will, is the device of deceiving them into thinking that he does not really exist. Never forget—Satan is the implacable enemy of God, of the Son of God, of the Holy Spirit, of all the saints of God, of the Spiritual Life, of all that is good and true and beautiful in the totality of being.

* * * * *

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

Spiritual Blindness

Text: 2 Cor. 4:4. Spiritual blindness seems to have

GENESIS

dominated by far the greater part of the human race from its beginning. (Cf. Luke 8:4-15, Isa. 6:9-10, Matt. 13:14-16, Acts 28:25-28). Men continue to be, in our time, oblivious to the fact of sin and hence utterly indifferent with respect to their personal salvation. These facts raise certain questions, as follows:

1. *Who or what is it that blinds men to the fact of their lost condition* (John 3:16-21, 5:40; Matt. 23:37). (1) Not our Heavenly Father, of course: He would have all men "to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). (2) Not the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, because He is the Lamb of God who sacrificed Himself "to take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 3:16; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 2:21-25, 3:18; Rev. 13:8). (3) Not the Spirit of God, because He has revealed to us the Plan of Redemption in which "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" are made so clear that "wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err therein" (2 Pet. 1:3; Isa. 35:8-10; John 16:7-15; Acts 1:8, 2:1-4, 2:38, 8:26-40; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 1:21). (4) Our text reveals the fact that man alone is not responsible for this state of things (cf. Eph. 6:10-16, 1 Thess. 5:4-8, 1 Tim. 2:13-15, 1 John 3:7-8). (5) It reveals the fact that man is blinded by the seductive influence of another person, designated "the god of this world" (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8; John 8:44, 12:31; 1 John 3:8; Eph. 6:10-12; Rev. 9:11, 20:10, 12:10-12).

2. *To what facts does Satan cause men to be blind?* (1) To the fact that the world is under Divine condemnation (John 3:17-21; Rom. 3:23, 5:12-21). (2) To the fact of their lost condition in the sight of God (Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30). Sinful man actually *resists* believing that he is under Divine condemnation and in danger of perishing in hell with the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:11-15, 21:8). (3) To the fact of God's immeasurable love as manifested in providing the Atonement for sin (John 3:16, 1 John 3:1). (4) To the fact of Christ's

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

willingness to suffer and die for man's redemption (John 15:13; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 9:27-28, 12:1-2). (5) To the commands of the Gospel (Acts 2:38, 16:31; John 3:5; Matt. 10:32-33; Luke 13:3; Rom. 10:9-10; Gal. 3:27). Think how they ridicule the Lord's ordinances, Christian baptism above all others! (6) To the consequences of their own sins (Gal. 6:7-8, Rom. 6:23).

3. *How does Satan go about his diabolical activity of blinding men to their lost state?* (1) Through the allurements of the flesh (Matt. 26:41; John 6:63; Rom. 7:14-25; Rom. 8:1-10; Gal. 5:16-24; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 2:1-10; 2 Pet. 2:18-20). "The lustful thought, the disrelish for heaven, the positive dislike for goodness, the deep despondency, are, with a thousand other infirmities and sins, traceable to the connection of the spirit with the body; and in proportion as that body is subjugated by discipline, the power of these sins will be weakened, and when the spirit will be freed from the present corruptible body, it will be wholly liberated" (Exell). (We must, however, note the distinction made in apostolic teaching, especially in the Pauline Epistles, between the body (*soma*) and the "flesh" (*sarx*), as we shall see (*infra*.) (2) Through mental suggestion. Strong (ST, 435-454): "Recent psychical researches disclose almost unlimited possibilities of influencing other minds by suggestion; slight physical phenomena, as the odor of a violet or the sight in a book of a crumpled roseleaf, may start trains of thought which change the course of a whole life. A word or look may have great power over us. . . . If other men can so powerfully influence us, it is quite possible that spirits which are not subject to limitations of the flesh may influence us yet more." Men seem to be incapable of realizing the full measure of the power of suggestion to which they are constantly being subjected, especially of *subliminal* suggestion, as by the press, radio, television, and all media of mass communication. (3) Through our outward circum-

GENESIS

stances, such as Eve's alluring fascination for her husband, such as Rebekah's deception of Isaac, motivated by her undue preference for Jacob above Esau. Multitudes put allegiance to earthly relatives above allegiance to Christ (Matt. 19:29, Luke 14:25-27). (4) Through sudden and unexpected calamities, through disillusionments, long illnesses, or adversities of many different kinds. How many a mother on losing a baby, will exclaim, "Why did God do this to me?" She overlooks the fact that death is no respecter of persons. The fever, the pestilence, may fall on the best ordered house and the most abstemious body. The Bible is realistic: it never deceives us; it tells us explicitly that in this world we must expect tribulation, that God's rains fall on the just and the unjust alike, that the wheat and the tares must grow up together until the judgment (John 16:33; Matt. 5:45, 13:24-30). We hear professing Christians say, "Why did God take this loved one from me?" *God is not a murderer*, but Satan is—he was the first murderer (John 8:44). Satan, not God, is the one ultimately responsible for death, for all the sin, sickness, suffering, and death in our world (Jas. 1:12-15). (Cf. Heb. 2:14-15, 1 Cor. 16:25-26). Death, the limit of Satan's power, is, however, only the beginning, so to speak, of God's power. Death is Satan's last and most terrible weapon (Job 1:12); however, the resurrection of Christ has disarmed even death of its sting (1 Cor. 15:25, 26; 15:54-56). God, while permitting these things to be, evidently in order that Satan's true character may be made manifest to both angels and men, has "with the temptation made also the way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13): that Way, of course, is Christ (John 14:6).

4. *What are the weapons that Satan uses in blinding men?*
(1) *Wealth* (Acts 8:20, 1 Tim. 6:10): Money—wealth in general—is of no value in itself, but is of value only for what it will buy; hence, it can never be an end, but is always a means. Nor can we afford to overlook the fact

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

that one of the things money can buy is power, prestige, etc. (2) *Fame*. For world honor, the satisfaction of personal ambition, Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Hitler, each turned our earth into a shambles. Fame, however, does not exist in a person, but only in the opinions of others about him. (3) *Worldly wisdom*. Francis Bacon: "A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." Or, as Alexander Pope writes:

"A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring;
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again."

(Cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25, 2:6-16; Acts 17:16-23; Rom. 1:22; 1 Cor. 3:20; 2 Tim. 3:16). (4) *Personal opinions*—idols of the market place, clichés bandied about by the thoughtless in all ages; also the fulminations of the half-baked academicians. (5) *Substitutes*. The Devil whispers into our ears that there are many institutions as good as the church. Those who substitute the club or the lodge for the church, social service for the preaching of the Gospel, respectability for regeneration, good citizenship for the obedience of faith, are bound to be tragically disillusioned on the final day of accounting (Acts 17:30-31). (6) *Prejudice*. This is one of Satan's most effective weapons; by means of it he bolts church doors, closes the ears of sinners and steels their hearts against the love of God. (7) *Traditionalism*, that is, allegiance to cults, customs, systems, etc., whether or not they are defensible. This is one of the chief factors in maintaining denominationalism. "My daddy was a Democrat, my granddaddy was a Democrat, and I'm a Democrat too." (8) *Self-righteousness*. The man who stays out of the church because "there are hypocrites in it" is like the man who refuses to let the sun shine on him because it has some spots on it. As one of

GENESIS

our oldtime evangelists put it: "You can't hide behind a hypocrite unless you are smaller than he is." The moralist is our modern Pharisee who stands afar off and thanks God he is not like other poor mortals. The self-righteous man is more unlike Jesus Christ than any other man on earth—he stands below the drunkard who wallows in the gutter, who, though too weak to resist temptation, is willing to acknowledge himself a sinner.

"The moral man came to the judgment,
But his self-righteous rags would not do;
The men who had crucified Jesus
Had passed off as moral men, too."

Conclusion: The Christian cannot afford to fondle Satan. One cannot control a rattlesnake with a cream puff. To flirt with temptation is to play with fire: this was Eve's first mistake. The Bible warning is clear: flee temptation, avoid the very appearance of evil (1 Tim. 6:3-11, 2 Tim. 2:22, 1 Thess. 5:22, Jas. 4:7).

The Fall and Restoration of Man

1. There were three distinct developments involved in man's fall, namely, (1) a change of heart, brought about by giving heed to Satan's specious lies; (2) a change of disposition or will, a repentance unto death (2 Cor. 7:10); and finally (3) a change of relationship. The change of relationship did not take place, however, until the overt act of disobedience was performed. Not until they had actually eaten the forbidden fruit did the guilty pair feel their guilt and shame, realizing that the glory of the Lord had departed from them.

2. God, in His infinite wisdom, has ordained that man shall return to fellowship with Him over precisely the same road that he traveled in breaking that fellowship originally. Every conversion to Christ involves three distinct changes, as follows: (1) a change of heart, actualized by *faith* (Heb. 11:6; Acts 16:31; John 20:30-31; Rom. 10:17, 10:9-10;

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

Matt. 10:32-33, etc.); (2) a change of disposition or will, actualized in *repentance* (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38, 17:30, 26:18), which is repentance unto life (2 Cor. 7:9-10); and (3) a change of *relationship*, actualized in *baptism* (Matt. 28:18-20). The eating of the forbidden fruit in Eden was a violation of *positive* law, the kind of law that is designed to prove or to disprove (to test) one's faith; the kind of law that rests solely on Divine authority, that requires an act to be done *because God commands it*. Hence the penitent believer must actualize his reconciliation with God (2 Cor. 5:18-20, Gal. 3:27) in the *positive* ordinance of Christian baptism (Acts 22:16, 2:38, 8:38; Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 2:12; John 3:5; Heb. 10:22).

We give our hearts to God in *faith* (mental assent to the Christian creedal formula, Matt. 16:16), plus *commitment* to Christ and His word (Rom. 10:9-10, 12:1-2); our lives in *repentance*; our entire being, including our bodies, in *baptism* (Heb. 10:22). We are baptized out of the kingdom of this world, under the rule of the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), into the authority (sovereignty) of the Absolute Monarch of the Kingdom of Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Acts 2:36, 1 Tim. 1:17, 1 Cor. 15:20-28). Penitent believers are baptized in the *name* of—that is, by the *authority* of—Jesus Christ according to the prescribed formula, “into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38, Matt. 28:18-20) and so are translated “out of the power of darkness” “into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Col. 1:13). Baptism in water is the transitional act (1 Pet. 3:18-22).

A. Campbell (CS, 263): “Views of baptism as a mere external and bodily act, exert a very injurious influence on the understanding and practice of men. Hence many ascribe to it so little importance in the Christian economy. ‘Bodily exercise,’ says Paul, ‘profits little.’ We have been taught to regard immersion in water, into the name of the

GENESIS

Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as an act of the whole man—body, soul, and spirit. The soul of the intelligent subject is as fully immersed *into the Lord Jesus*, as his body is immersed *in the water*. His soul rises with the Lord Jesus, as his body rises out of the water; and into one Spirit with all the family of God he is immersed. It is not like circumcising a Hebrew infant or proselyting to Moses a Gentile adult. The candidate, believing in the person, mission, and character of the Son of God, and willing to submit to him, immediately, upon recognizing him, hastens to be buried with the Lord, and to rise with him, not corporeally, but spiritually, with his whole soul. . . . There is no such thing as outward bodily acts in the Christian institution; and less than is all others, is the act of immersion. Then it is that the spirit, soul, and body of man become one with the Lord. Then it is that the power of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit comes upon us. Then it is that we are enrolled among the children of God, and enter the ark, which will, if we abide in it, transport us to the Mount of God.”

Sin and Its Cure

1 John 1:7. Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). The essential principle of sin is *selfishness*. There never was a sin committed that was not the choice of self above God. Various remedies for sin have been proposed by cultists and reformers: *e.g.*, education, mental healing, psychoanalysis, “salvation by character,” Comte’s “religion of humanity,” “social regeneration,” etc., Mrs. Eddy’s followers presume to solve the problem of sin by pronouncing it “illusion of mortal mind”—an explanation that explains nothing. Obviously, an illusion must be an illusion of *something*.

The fact remains that *there is only one remedy for sin—the blood of Christ* by which Divine Atonement was provided for the sin of the world (John 1:29). and there is

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

only one method of presenting and applying this remedy, viz., the preaching of the Gospel for the obedience of faith (1 Cor. 1:21).

1. *Faith* takes away the *love* of sin, by focusing the soul, its affections and aspirations, upon the One Altogether Lovely (John 14:1; Song of Sol. 5:16; Acts 16:31, 15:9, 26:18; Heb. 11:6; Gal. 2:20, 3:2).

2. *Repentance* does away with the practice of sin (Luke 13:3, 15:18-19; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10).

3. *Baptism* transfers the believing penitent out of a state of alienation into a *saved state*, or a state of reconciliation with God (2 Cor. 5:18-20). This formal transfer is implicit in the baptismal formula, "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19, Acts 2:38). Baptism is essentially a positive ordinance; it does, however, exemplify the moral virtue of *the obedience of faith* (Rom. 6:17, Jas. 2:26).

"Spiritually, baptism is into Christ (Rom. 6:3), just as the physical act is into the water, Thus we become immersed, submerged, or hidden in Him, and put on Him (Rom. 6:3). While we wear Him, the world looking at us will see, not us, but Christ. The thinner our garment the greater will be the prominence of our sinful selves. Spiritually, too, baptism is a death (Rom. 6:8), not of the body, nor of the mind or faculties, *but of a life of sin*. Following this death is a burial (Rom. 6:8), closing the chapter of our past carnal life just as the burial of the body closes the chapter of our mortal life. In Christ, the fruitful, is a planting (Rom. 6:5), of the seed of a new life (Rom. 6:4), which is ours after having been born again (John 3:5), begotten of the Spirit of God. Whereas we were children of wrath, we are now sons of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, having risen with Him (Col. 2:12) through the faith of the operation of God. Baptism physically is a washing of the body, but spiritually it is a com-

GENESIS

plete cleansing from sin (Tit. 3:5).” (Cecil J. Snow, *The Australian Christian*).

4. *Pardon* removes the *guilt* of sin. A pardon is always issued at the seat of authority. Divine pardon is not something done *in us*, but something done *in heaven for us*. In its legal sense, it is called *justification* (Rom. 5:1; Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 4:25, 5:18). Pardon takes place *in the mind of God*, and the act of pardon is explicitly associated with the transitional act of baptism (1 Pet. 3:19-22; John 19:34; 1 John 5:5-9; Gal. 3:27; Acts 2:38).

5. *Resurrection*, followed by glorification, will eradicate the *consequences* of sin, the chief of which is death (Rom. 8:11, 1 Cor. 15:20-23, Phil. 3:20-21).

Conclusion. Redemption will not be complete until God’s saints are clothed in glory and honor and incorruption (Rom. 2:5-7); redeemed in spirit and soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, 2 Cor. 5:1-8). Then, and not until then, will sin be eradicated both in its guilt and in its consequences (Rev. 21:1-4).

“In the land of fadeless day,
Lies the ‘city four-square.’
It shall never pass away,
And there is ‘no night there.’
God shall ‘wipe away all tears,’
There’s no death, no pain, nor fears;
And they count not time by years,
For there is ‘no night there.’”

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART TWELVE

1. Explain the *contextual* reference of the word *toledoth*, as used in Genesis.
2. Define the two kinds of evil.
3. Who were the four actors in the Tragedy of the Fall?
4. Why do we say that a fall necessarily occurred in the birth of a conscience in man?

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

5. What is *human nature*, according to Gen. 2:7?
6. Explain the racial, bipartite, personal, social, and moral aspects of human nature.
7. What is the essential difference between innocence and holiness?
8. Name and define the two essential properties of personality.
9. What are the four general outreaches which man has manifested throughout his entire history as man?
10. What does Cassirer mean in designating homo sapiens an *animal symbolicum*?
11. State the various symbolic interpretations that have been given to the "serpent" of Gen. 3.
12. What correlation does exist between the account of the serpent in Genesis and the Cult of Fertility that was widespread in the ancient pagan world?
13. Why must we reject the view that the Narrative of the Woman and the Serpent is a parable?
14. What does the phrase "a living soul" (Gen. 2:7) teach us about the nature of a human being?
15. What, according to Kaufmann, are the differences between the pagan concept of the demonic and that of Biblical teaching?
16. How, according to the same writer, does Biblical cosmology, creationism, and monotheism differ from those of the pagan mythologies?
17. Why and how does what is called "folklore" often reveal profound truth?
18. What, according to the Epistle of James, is the pedigree of evil?
19. What is the basic assumption of the critical (analytical) theorists? Explain how this arbitrary assumption creates "perplexity" (as Skinner would have it) with respect to the story of the serpent.

GENESIS

20. State the reasons why we regard the serpent as a real creature.
21. State the reasons why we hold that a superior intelligence was operating through the instrumentality of the serpent?
22. Who was this superior being? How does Jesus describe him (John 8:44)?
23. Explain Luke 10:18 in this connection.
24. Recall the Scriptures in which Jesus recognized the existence of Satan and his rebel host.
25. Who was Satan originally?
26. What is suggested by the word "subtle" in Gen. 3:1?
27. On what grounds do we hold that the Devil has real personal existence?
28. Are there any valid reasons for rejecting the idea of Satan's existence in our day?
29. What details of the Narrative of the Fall demonstrate the Tempter's subtlety?
30. What details demonstrate his diabolical malice?
31. What details demonstrate his diabolical cunning?
32. Why was the Woman not frightened on hearing articulate speech from the serpent's mouth?
33. State probable reasons why Satan chose to approach the Woman through the instrumentality of a brute.
34. What correlation is suggested here with the primitive belief in the kinship of all living things?
35. What probable significance is there in the fact that Satan used the name Elohim instead of the name Yahweh for Deity.
36. What was the element of suggestiveness in the first words of the Tempter?
37. How did Eve reply?
38. What was her first and *fatal* mistake?

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

39. What did she do with the Word of God in her reply?
40. What did Christ do with God's Word in defeating Satan?
41. What should this teach us about faithfulness to the Word?
42. What clause did the Woman add to the prohibitory enactment?
43. What word did she omit in repeating it?
44. What did this omission indicate?
45. What significance is there in the fact that Satan ignored the many privileges of the Edenic environment and pointed up only the one limitation? What weakness in human character does this illustrate?
46. Explain the significance of the location of the forbidden tree "in the midst of the garden." What fundamental truth does this phrase probably symbolize?
47. Explain what we mean in classifying the prohibitory injunction regarding the Tree of Knowledge in the category of *positive* law.
48. Can we rightly hold that this positive precept was the *cause* of the disloyalty of Adam and Eve? What, then, did it elicit?
49. Explain Satan's cunning (1) in his increasing boldness, (2) in his bold challenge of the integrity of God's Word, (3) in his brazen challenge of God's motives, (4) in the ambiguity of his assertions.
50. Show how he played on the meaning of the word "die."
51. Explain how double-dealing he became in his accusations.
52. Explain how artfully he led up to his final and successful appeal.

GENESIS

53. Explain how he created a false sense of security in the woman's heart and the lesson this has for us.
54. Explain the probable full significance of the phrase, "the knowledge of good and evil."
55. What was the basic issue in this whole affair of the Woman and the Old Serpent?
56. What is probably implied in the verb "saw" in Gen. 3:6?
57. What was the first appeal (temptation)?
58. What was the second appeal?
59. What was the third appeal?
60. What special import is there in the fact that it was the intellectual appeal which turned the tide in Satan's favor?
61. Explain fully the implications of the phrase, "the excess of unbridled intellect."
62. Explain the statement: "Evil is the price we pay for moral freedom."
63. Explain: "The presence of evil is due, not to the nature of things, but to the nature of goodness."
64. In what final act was the disobedience of our first parents consummated?
65. What does Gen. 3:6 imply with respect to Adam's part in this transaction?
66. What is the teaching of the New Testament with respect to Adam's part in the affair?
67. Explain: In Eve's case, "it was not the body that made the spirit sin," rather, "it was the spirit that brought death to the body."
68. Did a fall actually take place in Eden, and was it a fall "downward" or "upward"?
69. Explain how the distinction between *apparent* goods and *real* goods has so much to do with human morality.

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

70. Why do we say that the choice faced by Adam and Eve was the choice that the first *homo sapiens* had to face? What is the relation of this fact to the birth of conscience?
71. What universal truths—truths with respect to all mankind—are embodied in this story of the Fall?
72. Re-state Unamuno's view of "the struggle for life."
73. What is the "best" that Satan has to offer men for serving him?
74. What is the probable significance of the clause in v. 7, "the eyes of them both were opened"?
75. What did this new "knowledge" probably include?
76. What is it that invariably separates man from God?
77. What generally follows this sense of separation psychologically?
78. What correlation was there between the new "knowledge" which came to our first parents after their disobedience and their own first realization of their nakedness?
79. What conclusions are justified as to the relation between the role of sex and this new "knowledge"?
80. In what ways did all human relationships become disordered after the Fall?
81. Explain what is probably meant by "aprons" in v. 7.
82. Re-state C.H.M.'s forceful distinction between the "clothing" of the true Christian and that of the mere moralist or "religionist." Does this mean that it is utterly impossible for any man to lift himself up to reconciliation with God simply by tugging at his own bootstraps?
83. Summarize the details which point up the fact of the birth of conscience in our first parents.
84. What psychological relation must exist between human free will and human conscience?

GENESIS

85. Summarize Illingworth's presentation of the fact of freedom of will in man.
86. By what one circumstance is human free will limited?
87. Explain what is meant by the *fatherly motif* in vv. 8-13.
88. Why do we speak of this phase of the narrative as anthropomorphic in character? Does this fact in any sense lessen its spiritual integrity and significance?
89. Explain: "The moral problem of Eden is the moral problem of every human life."
90. Explain what is meant by a "forced option."
91. What lessons especially should we derive from the story of Eden with respect to (1) fleeing from temptation and (2) keeping ourselves spiritually strong?
92. What means are at our disposal for maintaining and increasing our spiritual strength?
93. Recall pagan traditions of the Golden Age of man, the Woman's introduction of sin into our world, and human lust for illicit knowledge.
94. Recall the pagan traditions of man's warfare with serpents, dragons, etc.
95. What is the most reasonable view of the relation of these pagan versions to the Biblical narrative of these matters?
96. In what two great poems do we have the literary versions of Satan's apostasy?
97. What is the common criticism of Milton's presentation of Satan's career?
98. Compare Marlowe's version of Dr. Faustus with that of Goethe.
99. What medieval superstitions flourished with respect to the Devil and demons in general? How were these expressed in medieval architecture?

THE BEGINNING OF MORAL EVIL ON EARTH

100. Who blinds men to the fact of their lost condition?
101. To what facts does he cause them to be blind?
102. How does he go about the diabolical business of blinding men to the facts of their lost state?
103. What are the weapons that he uses in creating and fostering this spiritual blindness?
104. In what respect is worldly wisdom one of the most potent of these weapons?
105. Who is said in Scripture to exercise the power of death (Heb. 2:14)? What do we learn about this from the first two chapters of Job?
106. Correlate the steps in the fall of man with those of his restoration (salvation).
107. What is sin, according to Scripture? What are the various factors (changes, motives, acts) in the remedy for sin and in the application of this remedy to the cleansing of the soul?
108. Is there any possible remedy for sin for Satan and his rebel host?
109. What special aspect of the sin of our first parents makes it possible for God to be just in providing for them the Plan of Salvation?