



## The “Fall”

IF THE UNIVERSE AND THIS WORLD were created by a good and loving God, why have there been persistent natural disasters, epidemic diseases and life extinctions? Why has there been universal death? Why have there been outbreaks of criminality, violence and war? For millennia mankind has struggled to answer these fundamental questions.

### Legends of the “Fall”

The result has been the emergence of legends in every age and from every race, culture and creed. These legends attempt to explain the primeval “fall” of Creation and humanity. Following are a few of these legends.

**The Serpent.** The “orthodox” canonical view is that a serpent, the subtle beast of the field, tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:1-5). And she “gave also unto her husband [Adam] with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6). God caught them in this forbidden act, and “he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Genesis 3:24).

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**Adam’s First Wife.** An alternative Hebrew legend is that God created Adam and his first wife, Lilith (cf. Genesis 1:26-30). The legend narrates Lilith’s anger over Adam’s attempted dominance and their consequent estrangement. Lilith then disguised herself as a serpent and deliberately tempted Adam’s second wife, Eve. In this legend it was Lilith who initiated the “fall” of humanity and all Creation. Lilith is only mentioned once in the Scriptures (Isaiah 34:14), where her name is translated “screech owl”!<sup>1, 2</sup>

**The Angel.** The prophet Isaiah portrayed the king of Babylon who desolated Israel as the fallen angel, Lucifer. Isaiah exclaimed, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! . . . Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness . . .” (Isaiah 14:12, 16, 17)? This prophetic utterance was later transposed to identify Lucifer, the fallen angel, with Satan and his temptation of Eve.<sup>3</sup>

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**Goddess.** The Nag Hammadi document, the Apocryphon of John, claims that “[C]reation results from the ‘fall’ of [the goddess] Sophia (‘Wisdom’ . . .), whose product is Ialdabaoth (also called ‘Saklas’ and ‘Samael’). ‘Ialdabaoth’ is the biblical Creator, and he, together with his fellow ‘archons,’ creates the world and the corporeal part of man.”<sup>4</sup>

**God.** “Gnosis [knowledge] begins in the garden of Eden. The snake is a hero because it passes redeeming gnosis to Adam and Eve. The God of the Old Testament [*YHWH* = ‘Jehovah’] is seen as an ignorant or evil demiurge (creator) because He thinks that He is the only God. He does not know that there is a God of salvation, who is above him. This is a polemical mythology, reflecting a Gnostic defense against Rabbinic and, especially, Christian opposition.”<sup>5</sup>

Another ancient legend claimed that God had disguised himself as the phallic symbol of a serpent. God then entered the Garden and impregnated Eve. Through this “maculate” conception Eve gave birth to her firstborn son, Cain (= “acquisition”), who murdered his brother, Abel (= “transitoriness”) and then gave rise to the Nephilim (= “giants”).<sup>6, 7, 8</sup> The Nephilim, known as the sons of God (*Elohim*),

saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. . . . There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God (*Elohim*) come in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. — Genesis 6:2, 4-5.

In this legend it was only long after the birth of Cain and Abel that Eve gave birth to Seth (= “compensation”), who was the progenitor of the surviving human race (Genesis 5).

## The Truth of the “Fall”

The prophet Isaiah described the One-and-Only God and his works:

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: . . . I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. — Isaiah 45:5, 7.<sup>9</sup>

The British scientist, academician and Anglican theologian, John Polkinghorne, has stated that God, because of his relational, self-emptying love, granted Creation what has been termed “the free-process defence.”<sup>10</sup> That is, God permitted Creation to relationally respond to his creative endeavors. Furthermore, with the

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*creatio continua* (“continuing creation”) of humanity, God also granted both free process and, ultimately, free will. “God wills neither the act of a murderer nor the incidence of a cancer, but he allows both to happen in a world to which he has granted the freedom to be itself.”<sup>11</sup> Because of God’s permissive actions, he has accepted the responsibility for evil and, in the Christ event, has borne all the consequences of evil that have occurred throughout the history of Creation.

Creation is the result of God’s fundamental intentions to enable Creation to freely relate to, with and for him. And God not only permitted evil; he also intended that Creation should have the pedagogical opportunity to experience evil early rather than late in cosmic eternity.

Polkinghorne has declared that the “new creation represents . . . not the replacement of the world, but its redemption. Gabriel Daly says: ‘The word ‘new’ could mislead here. It does not imply an abolition of the old but rather its transformation. It is a ‘new creation’ but, unlike the first creation, it is not *ex nihilo* [‘out of nothing’]. The new creation is what the Spirit of God does to the first creation. The new creation is not *ex nihilo* but *ex vetero* [‘out of the old’].”<sup>12</sup>

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## Endnotes

1. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-ROM ed. (1997), s.v. “Eve — In the Aggadah.”
2. See *Wikipedia — The Free Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Lilith,” at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilith).
3. See *Wikipedia — The Free Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Lucifer,” at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucifer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucifer).
4. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-ROM ed. (1997), s.v. Berger A. Pearson, “Nag Hammadi Codices.”
5. Alan F. Segal, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), p. 560.
6. This legend is contrary to the canonical statement that “Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord” (Genesis 4:1).
7. See Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 236.
8. The Hebrew introduction of circumcision of the male foreskin on the eighth day after birth was considered an act of blood sacrifice and can be regarded as a proleptic (anticipatory) atonement for the primeval act of “maculate” intercourse that allegedly occurred after the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest (Sabbath).
9. See “The Gospel for the Postmodern World III: The ‘Other Side’ of God,” *Outlook* (January 2008).
10. John Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality: The Relationship between Science and Theology* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), p. 84.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 103.