

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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True Spirituality and *Christianity Today* (Part 4)

One of the greatest successes of World War Two was Operation FORTITUDE. This was the invention on the part of the Allies of a fantasy invasion force directed at the pas de Calais. Notionally under the larger than life General Patton, a fabricated '1 Army Group' was created in south-east England. Using a massive array of dummy landing craft and a signals network, a phoney order-of-battle was established bigger than the actual 21 Army Group which landed in France. The deception was so effective that it kept many of Rommel's major Panzer divisions pinned down at Calais well after the D-day landings had taken place.¹

As a result of the Fall, *all* of humanity is in a state of Spiritual darkness. As such we are easily deceived (Titus 3:3). In fact, as Jeremiah 17:9 tells us, our own hearts are utterly deceitful. Old John Newton observed. "The heart is here characterized, first, As deceitful, and that above or in all things: second, As desperately wicked: in so dangerous, so deplorable a state, as is not to be conceived or found out. "Who can know it?" The word in the original [*ānash*], which we translate *desperately wicked*, signifies a mortal, incurable disease; a disease which, seizing on the vitals, affects and threatens the whole frame; and which no remedy can reach. This idea leads us to that first transgression, whereby man, departing from God, fatally destroyed his soul's health, and sunk into that state so pathetically described by Isaiah, chap. i. "The whole head is sick;" all the powers of the understanding disordered: "and the whole heart faint;" all the springs of the affections enfeebled. "From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness, but wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores;" the evil growing worse continually, and no help or helper at hand: "they have not been closed nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment." In consequence of this deep-rooted disorder, the heart is deceitful;--that is, it deceives and fails us in every instance: it promises more than it can perform: it misleads us with vain desires; and mocks us with unsuccessful efforts: like the faint attempts of a sick man, to perform those actions which require a state of sound health and strength."² Christians are constantly warned about the danger of being deceived (Gal. 6:7; Eph. 5:6; II Thess. 2:3; I John 3:7) and that Satan is the great deceiver (II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9; 20:8; I Tim. 4:1). Richard Gilpin, the noted Puritan divine wrote extensively on this subject. "*The subtlety that the Scriptures do attribute to sin, or to the heart, is mostly and chiefly intended to reflect upon Satan, as the author and contriver of these deceits.* In Heb. iii. 13 there is mention of the 'deceitfulness of sin,' but it is evident that something else besides sin is intended, to which deceitfulness must be properly ascribed; for sin being, as most conclude, formally a privation, or if we should grant it a positive being, as some contend, yet seeing the highest notion we can arrive at this way, excluding but the figment of Flacius Illyricus, who seems to make original sin indistinct from the very essence of the soul, is but to call it an act. Deceitfulness cannot be properly attributed to it, but with reference to him who orders that act in a way of deceitfulness and delusion; which ultimately will bring it to Satan's door. If here the deceitfulness of sin be devolved upon the subject, then it runs into the same sense with Jer. xvii. 9, 'The heart is deceitful above all things.' But why is the deceitfulness fixed upon the heart? The ground of that we have in the next words; it is deceitful, because it is wicked, 'desperately wicked.' But who then inflames and stirs up the heart to this wickedness? Is it not Satan? Who then is the proper author of deceit but he? It is true, indeed, that our hearts are proper fountains of sin, and so may be accused possibly in some cases where Satan cannot be justly blamed; yet if we consider deceitfulness as a companion of every sin, though our hearts are to be

blamed for the sin, Satan will be found guilty of the deceitfulness. It may be said a man complies with those things which are intended for his delusion, and so improperly by his negligence may fall under blame of self-deception; but it is unimaginable that he can properly and formally intend to deceive himself. Deceit then, not being from sin nor ourselves properly, can find out no other parent for itself than Satan. Besides this, that these texts upon a rational inquiry do charge Satan with the deceitfulness of sin; they do over and above point at the known and constant way of Satan, working so commonly by delusion, that deceitfulness is a close companion of every sin. The deceitfulness of one sin is as much as the deceitfulness of every sin. Nay, further, that text of Jer. xvii.9, shews this deceitfulness not to be an ordinary sleight, but the greatest of all deceits above measure, and of an unsearchable depth or mystery; 'who can know it?'"³

I. THE FALL OF MAN

A. The sinful inclination (Gen. 3:6a-c). The first sin of man was both internal and external. The internal aspect was the originating and starting of an evil inclination. The external aspect was the exertion of an evil volition, prompted by the evil inclination.⁴ The internal part of the sin was the principal part, the real commencement of the sinning in man. Shedd explains, "When Adam inclined away from God to the creature, he exercised an act of pure self-determination. He began sinning by a real beginning, analogous to that by which matter begins to be from nothing. In endowing Adam with a mutable holiness, God made it possible, but not necessary, for Adam to originate a sinful inclination, and thereby expel a holy one. The finite will can fall from holiness to sin, if it is not 'kept from falling' (Jude 24) by God's special grace, because it is finite. The finite is *mutable*, by the very definition."⁵ Thus, "the fall was a change of inclination, not the exertion of a volition."⁶ Thus, in the case of both Eve and Adam sin had already occurred before they took and ate of the fruit. The eating was only the finishing of the sin.

S. Lewis Johnson's comments are worth noting. "Eve was mesmerized as she listened to a creature instead of the Creator, following impressions against specific instructions, making self-fulfillment instead of God's glory her goal, Eve sinned. In Adam's case he was not beguiled, but the man sinned willfully (cf. 1 Tim. 2:14). The progress of the psychology of sin, however, was the same. It was internal and then manifested itself externally. Yet, they both were still religious!"⁷

All aspects of sin lie in the first, it seems. In body, soul, and spirit the sin takes place, for the appeal of the tree was to every aspect of the man. It was good for food, the bodily aspect. It was attractive to the eye, pleasing to the aesthetic soul. And it seemed to have the power to confer wisdom, an intellectual, or spiritual aspect. (I John 2:16)" "Thus," writes Pink, "we learn here a deeply important fact, namely, that Satan *works from without to within*, which is the very reverse of the Divine operations. God begins His work in man's heart, and the change wrought there reacts and transforms the outward life. But Satan begins with the external and through the bodily senses and emotions of the soul works back to the spirit—the reason for this being, that normally he has not direct access to man's spirit as God has. This same line was followed in reference to our blessed Lord. "Command that these stones be made bread"—appealing to the bodily senses; "Cast Thyself down"—a challenge to His courage or an appeal to the emotional nature of the soul. "Fall down and worship me"—an appeal to the spirit, for we worship the Father "in *spirit* and in truth."⁸

B. The sinful volition (Gen. 3:6d-f). The acts of the two are described simply, "she took from its fruit and ate," but oh! how difficult their undoing. Kidner comments, "God will taste poverty and death before 'take and eat' become verbs of salvation."⁹

"And he ate" is the simple clause that describes Adam's sin. Led, instead of leading—a curious way to achieve deity—the man sinned. Eve had reasoned, contrary to the dominant characteristics of her status, and Adam acted emotionally, contrary to the dominant characteristics of his nature. But the fall became a fact.

The late Meredith Kline captures the heart of the matter when he writes, "The woman's new religion was polytheistic. She idolized herself as well as Satan, for she arrogated to herself the divine prerogative of final judgment in discerning between good and evil and in defining the meaning of reality in general. Her new theology was evidenced in her assumption of a critical stance over against

the word of God. In reaching a decision on the relative merits of conflicting legal and prophetic words of God and the devil, she did so on the basis of her newly liberated powers of reason, functioning autonomously without a pre-commitment to the absolute authority of the Creator as the God of truth. Presumptuously assuming divine right, she redefined the special, exceptional tree as a tree the same as all others, pleasant to the eyes and good for food (Gen 3:6a; cf. 2:9), and assigned to it a new name. By her fiat it was no longer to be the forbidden tree but the desirable tree – desirable (should the truth be told) to satisfy the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Then, further and more openly demonstrating her antifaith by her antiworks, she availed herself of the fruit of the desirable tree (v. 6b). Partaking of this tree was also a confirmation of the woman’s league with the devil. He had pointed to the fruit of the tree of knowledge as in reality the seal of the abundant life, inviting man to partake of it. This was, in Satan’s reconstruction of the situation, the sacramental tree of his covenant, substituted for God’s sacramental tree of life. Somehow Eve was able to assimilate into her new theology the devil’s concept of this tree as a special tree, the sacramental means to divine wisdom, along with the interpretation of it as just another tree. And, in confession of her antifaith, she spurned the table of the Lord and accepted the invitation to eat of the sacramental tree of the prince of demons, so ratifying her pact with him. Moreover, in her missionary zeal for her new religion, the woman presented the evil-spell to her husband and made a convert of him (Gen. 3:6c). Whereas she had responded to the tempter at first with what had the formal appearance of being a defense of the Lord, she now unashamedly acted as the devil’s advocate and apostle.”¹⁰

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL

A. **The covering (Gen. 3:7).** The feeling of shame had its root, not in sensuality or physical corruption, but in the consciousness of guilt, as their hiding of themselves confirms.

They knew they were naked, for the glory of holiness was gone (cf. John 19:23). The fig leaves are a pathetic human expedient and become the first religion of works (cf. Tit. 3:5-7). The instinct of shame and the desire to cover it was right and confirmed by God (cf. v. 21), but the means were only human.

B. **The covering (Gen. 3:8).** The consequences of their sin involve flight from the earliest form of special revelation, the presence of the Lord God with them in the garden in the cool of the day. Cf. 2:19, 22. It was probably a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, a theophany. The actions of the couple reveal that man himself feels that due to sin he cannot appear in the presence of a holy God (cf. Hab. 1:12). He needs a covering, an atonement (cf. Psa. 32:1; Rom. 4:7-8, etc.). Cf. Rev. 6:16-17. Without it the sense of exposure to judgment is overwhelming, but with it he may “see His face” (cf. Rev. 22:4).

“Their hiding from God under the covering of the trees,” Kline comments, “like their hiding from each other under the covering of leaves, pointed to a sense of shameful nakedness, in this case a spiritual nakedness which they felt before God’s eyes. This nakedness resulted from their loss of the covering of righteousness, the garment of the beauty of holiness. They had lost the ethical glory of God-likeness which is the prerequisite to stand as priest before the Face of God and reflect the Glory of God. Whatever the half-truth of Satan’s prophecy of increased God-likeness (Gen. 3:5), the fact was that by rejecting God’s holy commandment they had rejected and lost their original endowment with the image of God and had instead taken on a likeness to the devil. He was their newly adopted covenant father. The Genesis narrative conveys the point that man’s nakedness signified a likeness to the serpent-Satan by means of a word-play on the similarity of the sound of the Hebrew word ‘naked’ (Gen. 2:25; 3:7) to that for ‘subtle,’ used for the serpent (3:1), the pun being made more obvious by bringing the two words into proximity in Genesis 2:25 and 3:1. In a more substantial way the same fact becomes evident in the reproduction of the subtle evil of the serpent in the pattern of man’s behavior under divine interrogation. That love of the truth which is part of the spiritual glory of the *imago Dei* is nowhere to be seen in the defensive retorts of Adam and Eve. The tempter’s counsel had been urged and adopted in the name of advancing knowledge, but the consequence of man’s disobedience of the word of God was an obscurant suppression of the truth. Finding it impossible to hide their persons from God’s Presence and being constrained to submit to a

process of judicial interrogation, they still persisted in their attempt to thwart the discovery of the truth. To hide the facts about their apostasy, they resorted to evasion, distortion, and deception, the tactics of the tortuous serpent.”¹¹

- C. **The response of God (Gen. 3:11)**. The Lord replies to the man, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The questions are not asked for information, but rather to incite Adam to reflect upon what he has done.
- D. **The defense of Adam (Gen. 3:12)**. The man runs in the age-old path of self-vindication. The first man to play the classical game of passing the buck is the first man! Will Rogers said that the history of the United States could be divided into two eras: (1) the era of the passing of the buffalo; (2) the era of the passing of the buck. The second era is still with us!
- E. **The reply of God (Gen. 3:13a-b)**. “What is this you have done?” God replies, the interrogation being directed to the woman. Again, the question is designed to provoke thought on her part.
- F. **The defense of Eve (Gen. 3:13c-d)**. Eve’s reply shows that she has learned the art of passing the buck from her husband already, for she blames the serpent. “The serpent deceived me, and I ate,” she says. “The man had laid the blame upon the woman, she lays it upon the serpent. The Hebrew word *pāṭāh* means to deceive, to lead astray, to beguile any one, *i.e.* to represent to him that such and such an evil will not happen to him, 2 Chron. xxxii. 15; Jer. xxxvii. 9; comp. *exapataō*, 2 Cor. xi. 3; I Tim. ii. 14. It is the right word for what the woman had experienced, but the wrong thing is that both did not first of all smite their own breasts.”¹² The reply is the basis of the Apostle Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 11:3, “But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.” The order in which God addressed the participants in the event of the fall indicates His view of their responsibility in it. He addresses the man first, the woman second, and then finally the serpent.

CONCLUSION: Jonathan Edwards was adamant that Satan’s chief deception was active through groups advocating a restoration of the revelatory gifts. Edwards believed Satan was desiring to have his word supplant the Word of God. This was indeed the conclusion of William Goode’s great and thorough book: ‘It is surely a time, then, when, more than ever, we should stand by the acknowledged word of God as our *alone* guide and rule, and hold ourselves aloof from any pretended new revelations, in which we are so likely to be deceived. The latter bears upon the face of it pretensions against which our Lord has especially warned us. The former is, as God himself has assured us, able to make us wise unto salvation, and furnish us for our Christian course *so as to leave nothing wanting* (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Relying on the latter, we are building on a foundation of which comparatively we know nothing; resting *wholly* on the former, we are building on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.’¹³

ENDNOTES

¹ As cited in Melvin Tinker, Evangelical Concerns: Rediscovering the Christian Mind on Issues Facing the Church Today (Mentor, 2001) p. 176.

² The Works of John Newton II (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1985) p. 262.

³ R. Gilpin, Daemonologia Sacra; or A Treatise of Satan’s Temptations (rpt. Soli Del Gloria, 2000) p. 53.

⁴ Cf. William G. T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology II (rpt. Zondervan, 1967) pp. 168-79.

⁵ Ibid., II, p. 171.

⁶ Ibid., II, p. 173.

⁷ S. Lewis Johnson, Lectures on Systematic Theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Fall 1984.

⁸ A. W. Pink, Gleanings From Genesis (Moody Press 1950) p. 37.

⁹ Kidner, p. 68.

¹⁰ M. Kline, Kingdom Prologue (Two Age Press, 2000) p. 126.

¹¹ Kline, p. 130.

¹² F. Delitzch, A New Commentary on Genesis I (rpt. Klock & Klock, 1978) p. 159.

¹³ Victor Budgen, The Charismatics and the Word of God (Evangelical Press, 1985) p. 242.