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### THE FALL

#### FALL OF ANGELS

**A**LL spiritual beings, angels and men alike, are created by God with the Beatific Vision, the direct vision of Himself, as their destiny. All of them need supernatural life to give them the powers of seeing and loving that their destiny calls for. And for all there is an interval—for growth or testing—between the granting of supernatural life and its flowering in the Beatific Vision. Once God is seen as He is, with the intellect in the immediate contact of sight and the will in the immediate contact of love, it is impossible for the soul to see the choice of self against God as anything but repulsive, and in the profoundest sense meaningless; in the immediate contact, the self knows beatitude, total well-being, and no element in the self could even conceive of wishing to lose it. But until then, the will, even supernaturally alive, may still choose self.

So it was with the angels. God created them with their natural life, pure spirits knowing and loving, and with supernatural life. And some of them chose self, self as against God. We know that one was their leader; him we call the devil, the rest demons; he is the named one—Lucifer (though he is never called so in Scripture), Satan which means Enemy, Apollyon which means Exterminator, Beelzebub which means the Lord of Flies. The rest are an evil, anonymous multitude.

The detail of their sin we do not know. In some form it was, like all sin, a refusal of love, a turning of the will from God, who is supreme goodness, towards self. Theologians are almost at one in thinking it was the sin of pride; all sins involve following one's own desire in place of God's will, but pride goes all the way, putting oneself in God's place, making oneself the centre of the universe. It is total folly of course, and the angels knew it. But the awareness of folly does not keep *us* from sinning and did not keep them. The world well lost for love—that can be the cry of self-love too. One of the secondary theological excitements of the next life will be learning the detail of the angels' sin.

The angels who stayed firm in the love of God were admitted to the Beatific Vision. The rest got what they had asked for—separation from God: He still maintained them in existence out of their original nothingness, but that was all. Note that their choice was final. Men are given another chance, and another, and another. Not so angels. We have no experience, and never shall have it, of being pure spirits, spirits not meant for union with a body as our souls are; but philosophers who have gone deep into the concept see reasons why an angel's decision can only be final, and a second chance therefore pointless.

The angels who sinned were separated from God. They must have known that this would mean suffering. God had made them, as He has made us, for union with Himself. Their nature, like ours, is a great mass of needs, needs which only God can meet. All spiritual beings need God, as (and immeasurably more than) the body needs food and drink and air. Deprived of these the body knows torment, and at last dies. Deprived of God a spirit knows torment, and cannot die. It is deprived of God by its own will to reject God, but that it will not change: its self-love is too monstrous. The lost will not have God, who alone can meet their needs, but who

by the greatness of His glory shows their own self for the poor thing it is. Union with Him would be self-love's crucifixion, and self-love has become their all.

There is more to be said of hell than that, and later more will be said; but that is the essence of it. One single detail must be added. Hell is not simply a place of self-inflicted torment, it is a place of hate. Love, like all good things, has its source in God. Cut off from its source, it withers and dies. It is as though the moon, in love with its own light, rejected the sun. Hell is all hate: hate of God, hate of one another, hate of all the creatures of God, above all of those creatures who are made in the hated image.

#### FALL OF ADAM

God created man with the natural life of soul and body, and with sanctifying grace, God dwelling in his soul and pouring supernatural life into it. In addition He gave man preternatural gifts, not supernatural but rather perfections of the natural—guarding it against destruction or damage. Notable among these were immunity from suffering and death, and integrity. This last is perhaps the one we look back to with the greatest longing, for it means that man's nature was wholly at peace: the body was subject to the soul, the lower powers of the soul to the higher, the natural habits wholly harmonious with the supernatural, the whole man united with God.

The point of union, for the first man as for all spiritual beings, was in the will, the faculty which loves, which decides. And he willed to break the union. He sinned, disobeying a command of God. The detail of the sin we do not know—Genesis describes it as the eating of forbidden fruit, but we are not bound to see this as literal. Two things about it we do know.

Man fell by the tempting of Satan; it was the first engagement in a war which has gone on ever since and which will not end until the world ends.

And what Satan tempted our first parents with was the promise that, if they disobeyed, they should be like gods. Satan must have felt the full irony of it. Pride had wrecked him, pride should wreck men.

For Adam, the individual man, the results can be simply stated and simply comprehended. He had broken the union with God, and the life ceased to flow. He lost sanctifying grace; supernaturally he was dead.

He lost the preternatural gifts too. He could now suffer, he had come under the natural law of death; worst of all he had lost integrity, the subordination of lower powers to higher, in the rejection of his own subordination to God. From now on every element in him would be making for its own immediate and separate gratification: the civil war within man had begun.

For Adam, the man, the future was stateable as simply. He could repent, turning to God again; God would remake the contact and sanctifying grace would be in him once more. But the man it was in was a very different man. The preternatural gifts were not restored, so that integrity was not there: it was to a man with his powers warring among themselves and tugging away from God as often as not, that grace was given back. To figure his condition, we have but to look at ourselves.

But Adam was not only a man. He was *the* man. He was the representative man. For the angels the testing had been individual; each angel who fell did so by his own decision. But the human race was tested and fell in one man, the representative man. In his catastrophe every man till the end of time was involved. There has been much mockery about this, of the "Eve-ate-the-apple-we-get-the-stomach-ache"

variety. But, with no disposition to mock, we can still find something baffling in it.

The difference between the testing of men and angels is not the problem. The angelic race could not be tested in an individual angel, for there is no angelic race. Men are related to one another, because we are all brought into being, procreated, by others. Not so angels. Each is created whole and entire by God; he can call no other angel father. Our souls are the direct creation of God, but by bodily descent we are all children of Adam. And in our father we fell. But why? How could his sin involve us? That is the real problem, and we must be grateful for any lights we can get upon it.

Obviously there is something in the solidarity of the whole human race clear to God but not to us, that He could so treat the race as one thing. Some involvement in the fate of others we take for granted—a father makes decisions for his family, a ruler for his people: the solidarity of the family and the nation sufficiently explains the fact of one man's will being decisive for all. We do not see a similar solidarity for all men whatsoever—the foreigner is remote from our mind, the dead more remote, the unborn remotest of all. But no one of them is remote to the eye of God, who not only makes all men, but makes them in His own image. God sees the whole race, every member of which He created, as one thing—somewhat as we see a family as one thing or even a man. The mere number and variety—myriads upon myriads of men—and the uncountable ages, do not impede the vision of the eternal and omniscient God.

#### RESULTS OF ADAM'S FALL

So all men were involved in the catastrophe of Adam's sin. We are all born with natural life only, without the supernatural life of sanctifying grace. That was the chief thing Adam lost for each of his descendants.

A certain precision is necessary here. We sometimes slip into thinking that if he had not sinned he would have kept grace and we could have inherited it from him. But grace is in the soul, and we do not inherit our souls; each soul is a new creation. Adam's obedience was the *condition* on which we should all have come into existence with grace as well as nature. He disobeyed, the condition was not kept, we are born without sanctifying grace.

That is what is meant by being born in original sin, which is not to be thought of as a stain on the soul, but as the absence of that grace without which we cannot, as we have seen, reach the goal for which God destined man. We may be given grace later but we enter life without it, with nature only.

And our nature too is not as Adam's was before he failed the condition, but as it was after. The gift of integrity, guaranteeing the harmony of man's natural powers, has gone. Each of our powers seeks its own outlet, each of our needs its own immediate gratification; we have not the subordination of all our powers to reason and of reason to God which would unify all our striving; every one of us is a civil war.

At two points principally the disorder is at its worst, the passions and the imagination.

Passions are good things given for man's service; but in our actual state they dominate us as often as they serve us—more often indeed, unless we make an effort at control which costs us appallingly. They were meant to be instruments which we should use; instruments should be in our grip; only too often we feel as if we were in theirs.

The imagination is a good thing, too. It is the picture-making power by which we can mentally reproduce sights seen, sounds heard, textures touched, tastes, scents. For the intellect, the knowing power, it is a necessary servant. Made as we are we could not very well live in a material universe without it. But all too often it is a master, substituting its

pictures for the hard effort the intellect should be making, refusing to let the intellect accept spiritual truths simply because imagination cannot make pictures of them.

It is worth our while to pause here and think over this dominance of imagination in ourselves—the times when we meant to think some problem out and imagination so distracted us that at the end of an hour we realized no thinking had been done; the times when we made some good resolution, and the mental picture of a girl or a drink shattered the resolution in an instant. And all because in Adam we lost the gift of integrity.

But it is not only as individuals that we were all involved in the catastrophe; we were involved as a race too. In Adam the race was tested. Before his sin the race—in him—was united with God; after, the unity was broken. There had been unity between the race and God; now there was a breach between them. Remember that, for God, the race is a fact, a reality. Each man is not only himself, he is a member of the race.

Because Adam broke the unity, his children were born members of a fallen race, a race no longer at one with God—a race, therefore, to which heaven was closed. A given man might be virtuous; but he was a virtuous member of a fallen race. Loving God, he might gain sanctifying grace, which means the power to live the life of heaven, but he still belonged to a race to which heaven was closed. Only if the breach between his race and God could be healed, could he attain his own destiny, reach heaven; even naturally we are members one of another.

This is *the* problem created by the sin of the representative man. The race had been at one with God; it was no longer at one; the central problem was at-one-ment, a word whose meaning we disguise by pronouncing it atonement. With at-one-ment all the rest of our theology is concerned.

## HOW TO RESTORE A FALLEN RACE?

There has been an immense amount of theological thinking on atonement, at-one-ment, as a problem; more particularly as a problem the human race had set God. The sin of the race stood, and must remain for ever, an obstacle between men and their true destiny, unless either humanity could find some way of expiating it, making compensation for it, or God simply forgave it. Even with the sin expiated or written off, the breach remained and must remain unless God chose to remake the broken contact—not simply between individuals and Himself but between their race and Himself.

Fathers and Doctors of the Church have thought magnificently on what God could and could not do, on why the way He chose was the best way and whether it was the only way. But both the space at our disposal and our status as beginners in theology mean that this discussion is not for us—not here, not yet. We shall concern ourselves with atonement not as a problem but as a reality, not what God might have done but what He did.

We know that He meant to redeem mankind and heal the breach, and make heaven once more open to men. Because that was God's intention, He went on giving sanctifying grace to those who loved Him, a gift carrying with it the power to live in heaven and meaningless if heaven were never to be open to them.

We know that He meant to redeem. We may hope that our first parents knew it too. But the first statement of what He would do was strange; it did not carry its meaning on the surface; and it was addressed not to them but to Satan—the seed of the woman should crush his head.

Satan, in the shape of a serpent as Genesis relates, had tempted men to their ruin. They were to be punished; so was



he. And Genesis shows God as ironically phrasing his punishment in terms of the serpent form Satan had adopted—he should go on his belly and eat the dust of the earth for ever. He would continue to tempt man and one day man would defeat him utterly; these prophecies too were cast in serpent terms—Satan should lie in wait for man's heel, a descendant of the woman would crush his head.

I have lingered thus upon Satan because we so easily forget him. Even those who accept his existence forget his active malevolence, at most think of him as a sort of ugly extra, not a principal in the struggle of man's soul.

Our Lord did not see him as negligible. He called him "a murderer from the beginning, a liar and the father of lies". As His own passion and death were approaching, He spoke of Satan again and again. Here, in the very dawn, with the first human order wrecked, God's first statement of what He would do is made to Satan and in terms of Satan's overthrow.

What God would do, He would not do quickly. The disease admitted into humanity by the choice of self as against God was given every chance to run its course, work out its logic. God's providence did not desert man; those who implored Him were not left unaided; but it was Satan's carnival all the same; he had gained no rights by his success over Adam, but he had gained immense power: he was the prince this world obeyed.

How long this first stage lasted we do not know, but as history at last begins to see mankind, the sight is at once heartening and horrifying: religion universal, everywhere twisted and tainted with lesser or greater perversions, but God never wholly forgotten and often marvellously remembered.

Four thousand years ago, the plan of redemption suddenly seems to take shape—at least to our eyes. God spoke to Abraham: his children were to be God's chosen people. Out of the chaos of the nations, one nation was to bear mankind's

hopes. They were to be the guardians of monotheism, proclaiming that God is one; and of them was to be born the Saviour of the world, the Messiah, the Anointed One. Of His kingdom there should be no end.

The Jewish prophets multiplied their utterance upon both points—upon the one God and upon Messiah—with mixed success. By the time Messiah was due to come, indeed for centuries before, the Jews were unshakably monotheistic. But only rare ones among them had grasped the essential nature of the kingdom the Saviour was to found, and the supreme truth about the Saviour Himself they did not know.