

Zarah & Pharez

Part Six

Questions & Answers

** Does sonship teach the evolution of God?*

As we have shown in prior writings, this idea is primarily pantheistic in nature. And, as we have been emphatic to state throughout this series, sonship does not teach pantheism by any stretch of the imagination. However, there is another philosophy which also promotes an evolutionary concept of God, which we would do well to consider. That philosophy is called *panentheism*.

For the sake of those unfamiliar with this teaching, we'll give a brief overview of it. Panentheism, also known as Process Theology or New Thought, is a philosophical attempt to reconcile the differences which exist between classical theism and pantheism. While it was first introduced as a working theology in the 20th century, its roots are deeply embedded in Far Eastern philosophical soil. The philosopher recognized as being primarily responsible for its present form is Alfred North Whitehead, while the one mainly responsible for its popularity is Charles Hartshorne.

While there are numerous strains of thought within Process philosophy, there are certain characteristics which are generally constant throughout. *Process Theology is built on the assumption that momentarily developing experiences are the basis of all reality.* That is to say, the only actual existence is experience, whether that experience occurs within the realm of mind or matter. Occasions of experience are the basic building blocks of reality. This is why Process philosophy has often been referred to as *panexperientialism*. It's the belief that present experience, as it unfolds moment by moment, is the only thing that really is or that matters.

Process Theology teaches that since reality is experience, it's in a constant state of change. It's in the never-ending process of development. For, its teachers say, each experience provides an occasion for another experience to transpire; and when the

experiences of past and present unite, they create the possibility of yet another experience to occur in the future, infinitum. It's the job of all existence, therefore, to work toward the creation of new unities, or combinations of experiences, in order that life in its varied forms might be perpetuated and sustained. This necessarily causes unity to be seen in a new light. It's understood to be an ongoing process of unifying, rather than a static changeless state of being.

Now, the question might be asked how God fits into all this, and how Process philosophers manage to incorporate key tenets of theism and pantheism into their theory. In this way. While God is viewed as having personality (as is in classical theism), He's nevertheless seen as having two poles of existence—the potential and the consequential. These two poles are dependent one upon another in a dialectic sense of unity. The potential pole represents what He can be. It embodies His capacity to become. From this side, He is perfect, idealistically complete and entire. On the other hand, the consequential pole is the temporal side of God, that which He has actually become thus far. This is the side wherewith He relates to creation by way of experience. In this, He is to the universe what the soul is to the body; and, as such, He is subject to the same process that creation is undergoing (the main difference between panentheism and pantheism on this point is that, while the former teaches that God is inseparable from the universe, the latter teaches that the universe is God). In other words, Process Theology teaches that there's a side of God that, along with creation, is in the process of becoming, of evolving, of changing with each new opportunity that comes along. In fact, the reality of His existence depends on it.

To hear Process philosophers explain it, as each new unit of reality is created, the consequential side of God's personality learns something that it did not know previously. And with each new revelation, God is given the opportunity to respond to it in a new and different way. (Like oxygenated blood coursing to the brain, the experience of having this constant stream of knowledge flowing into the Mind of God is viewed as being the thing that gives life to His potential side). You see, in Process Theology, there are things which will transpire in the future which will surprise even God! And each opportunity presented before Him will allow Him to expand, to grow, to become what He was not heretofore. This process must continue indefinitely, in order for God to exist.

Summarily, then, Process Theology holds that God is as dependent upon creation as creation is upon Him. And this cycle of dependence requires creation, like God, to exist in a state of eternity. Neither God nor the created universe could have had a beginning. God could never have been without a body (universe) of some type, because the very process which sustains His existence demands it. Though professing otherwise, panentheism basically equates God with His creation, in much the same way that pantheism does. Therefore, the world is really not different from God—it's simply one of His poles of existence. What the world is at the present moment is also what God has become for the time being. To quote from Harthorne's own words, *God, in His latest concrete state, is jointly made or produced by God and the world in prior states of each. We are not simply co-creators, with God, of the world, but in the last analysis, co-*

creators with Him, of Himself end quote. In other words, God is limited to what we make of Him by way of experience!

Now, some of the logical conclusions of this line of reasoning are these. If reality is defined by moment-by-moment experience, then all reality is thus subjective in nature. And if reality is subjective, then ethics are situational, and not the same for every generation. Furthermore, if ethics are relative, and are determined by momentary experience, then this means that God is forced to adjust His moral standards to conform to the condition and general outlook of the world. After all, if God is constantly changing with the world, then so are His values. And while there might be some ideal good in the potential side of God, the consequential side is the side by which He interrelates with us. We can only do what we think is right at the time, and know that God will do whatever is necessary to line up with those decisions.

Without going into great detail, the difference between classical theism and panentheism can be described in simple terms. Theism affirms that God is the Rock of Ages. Panentheism views Him as shifting sand. Theism accepts the fact that God is unchangeable, the One in whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. Panentheism states that He must of necessity change in order to exist. Theism teaches that, unlike His creatures, God is perfect, and totally beyond process or the need thereof. Panentheism sees a lack in God, and therefore seeks to fill that lack by an evolutionary process. Theism takes the view that, while God is complete in Himself, He nevertheless allows the members of the body of Christ to help make up the fulness of His divine expression in the earth. Panentheism sees this, not as something which God allows, or as a divine privilege, but as a necessary act of Self-preservation. He would have no being apart from us!

If we ascribe to God a "split-personality," what comfort can we possibly find in that? And if we accept a god who is merely striving for perfection, what assurance do we have that He will achieve it? His conduct and character would be as unpredictable as the weather! These are all thoughts which demand consideration. If we say that God is both potentially perfect and yet presently imperfect; infinite, while at the same time finite; complete, and yet incomplete; omniscient, and yet lacking in knowledge, are we not creating irreconcilable contradictions in our minds about the nature of God? If there is any possibility of God becoming something that He has not always been, then He cannot possibly be the great *I AM* of Biblical report. The very title attests to a fixed and eternal state of Being, not to that which He can become. But if we allow room for Him to change, to evolve, or to be altered even one iota in His divine constitution, then He cannot claim to be the same yesterday, today and for ever! That leaves no room for ifs, ands, or buts!

While we're at it, here's something else to consider. If God is in the process of evolving, and the potential side of His being is sustained by the supply side (and vice versa), then how did this whole system get started in the first place? It brings to mind the old proverbial question, *which came first, the chicken or the egg?* If the potential side of God came before the consequential, then how did it become actualized to begin with?

And if the consequential side came before the potential side, then where did it receive the potential to become? You see, it's just a never-ending circle which never receives an answer!

Scripture declares that God sustains, or upholds all things by the word of His power. But nowhere does it say that we uphold Him by the word of our power, or by anything else we can do! It's an absolute absurdity to think that God is dependent upon us for anything!

Within God's omniscience, all things are known to Him. This means that He doesn't need to learn anything, either by way of experience (learning for Himself) or by way of education (learning from others). He's the only true "Know-it-all" there is! We've often heard it said that God had to experience the Incarnation in order to understand what it was like to be a man. But if God is omniscient (and He is), then He already possessed an understanding of this before the Seed was ever planted in Mary's womb! (In fact, this knowledge belonged to Him before Adam even came into existence. Remember, it was God who came up with the "man" idea in the first place!) Ah, dear reader, understand this, and you will have understood a great truth. It was not at all for His sake, but rather, for ours, that He came into the sin-blasted planet in the likeness of sinful flesh. He came to reconcile us unto Himself through the death, burial and resurrection of His Son!

God totally transcends all processings, testings, and developments. Being already perfect within Himself, He needs nothing to help Him achieve that status (nor has He ever). But what a comfort it is to know that He will go through *our* processing experiences with us, even carrying us whenever necessary. And when we come up out of our wilderness, we can do so leaning upon the arm of our Beloved! Praise His wonderful name for that!

We can build our thought-houses on the solid Rock of theism or the shifting sand of pantheism, but when storms assail our theologies, we'll know which of these will stand. This is why we say that sonship does not embody pantheistic philosophy, or any of the thought-patterns associated with it. Sonship magnifies the Lord, rather than minimizing Him. He is gloriously transcendent over all creation, while at the same time being immanently involved with us. And while "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end," He Himself remains the same yesterday, today and forever. We can comfort one another with these words.

**** Some teach that God is the Universal Mind, or the collective consciousness shared by all mankind. Would you accept this as a valid sonship teaching, and, if not, could you explain the reason why it should be rejected?***

First, let us quote from one who teaches this, and then we'll offer our comments.

Metaphysician Joel S. Goldsmith has written, "God is consciousness. God is your consciousness and my consciousness. God is individual consciousness, and that consciousness is the creative principle of the universe. This truth must be firmly established within us..."

○When you find God to be the consciousness of your own being, when you find that God is your very consciousness, your very awareness; you will have found all the forms as which God appears. You will then find God unfolding Itself~~YYY~~ Consciousness unfolding Itself, revealing Itself~~YYY~~ as your daily experience...

*○Consciousness is my supply. My very life, my very being, is my supply. Wherever I am is this Self-maintaining and Self-sustaining Principle; and wherever I am, all that God is, must be. This Consciousness which is I am, this Consciousness of my being, is my supply, and It appears outwardly as loaves and fishes or dollars or automobiles or apartments.○
(From his book, *The Master Speaks*.)*

The belief that God is consciousness is at the root of all Tantric tradition, and is very much in accord with psychologist Carl Jung's teaching of the "collective unconscious". (Jung believed that there is a collective unconscious behind all conscious experience, which not only links everyone to all cultures of the past, but to each other, as well). Furthermore, it is the central idea behind the so-called Akashic Record (that is, that there is a Universal Mind, Primary Substance, or "Book of Remembrance" within and upon which all vibratory impressions occurring in space / time have been registered), a belief which is extremely common among New Age advocates in general. Its main purpose is to establish a common link between all men, and to point out God's presence in them.

From the above quote of Goldsmith's, there are a number of things which can be determined. First, it becomes obvious that this teaching is but another of Adam's attempts to reduce God to a manageable form. If God is nothing but consciousness, then He can be governed or manipulated to suit our wishes. But if He transcends consciousness, then He is in a position to govern us, and to require of us that which a Father would expect of His sons. It's as simple as that.

Secondly, if consciousness is God, then that would mean that consciousness is the only reality that exists. Everything else outside the realm of consciousness would be an illusion. The world itself is merely our perception of it. This is known in philosophical circles as solipsism (all is mind), and leads to a number of related problems.

Thirdly, if God can be defined as mere consciousness, then He must of necessity be stripped of personality. This, too, becomes evident from the above quote, wherein Goldsmith refers to God as "It." Elsewhere in his book, he says, *○That is the secret, you see. There is an It called God. God is. But God is only available to you and to me in proportion to our contact with It.○* We don't know about you, but to us, the idea of calling God an "It" is offensive!

Our rejection of this as being a valid sonship teaching should be easy enough for anyone to understand. In order for there to be such a thing as sonship, there must first be a sense in which we know God as our Father. But if our Father is an "It," then where does that leave us? It leaves us without the possibility of ever having the type of intimacy that is naturally experienced in a father / son relationship. Needless to say, those who buy into this view do so at a terrible cost.

Dean Halverson has written, *What is the logical result of viewing God as an impersonal force? There are several answers. When we deny God's personhood, the sense of God being other than us diminishes. God becomes a mystical being who is part of all existence. Without a transcendent God to sustain the value of separate objects in an objective reality, reality collapses into a oneness. God becomes identified with the mystical oneness, even as we are; thus we become divine.*

More and more, we become the primary object of study, and we lose accountability to anything or anyone outside of ourselves. We become radically autonomous. We become the sole source of meaning, truth, and value. We take on the ability to create and control our own reality. In short, we take on the attributes of God ---end quote.

His point is a powerful one. Whenever people lose sight of God's personage, they invariably turn their attention to themselves. They become the center of their own little universe, and feel that they are not accountable to anyone other than themselves. They become their own highest authority, all the while assuming that every one of those voices in their heads is God's. What a strong delusion this is!

God has made us conscious beings; he has given us the ability to cognize and to recognize, not only ourselves, but the existence, truth, and facts of that which surrounds us. While God is certainly the Author and Creator of individual consciousness, He is not synonymous with the thing created. The absurdity of this can be seen by a simple illustration. As you know, the telescope is an optical instrument which enables us to know things which are outside of our normal range of cognition. But how many of us would confuse the apparatus through which this knowledge is acquired with the inventor of the apparatus? Few, we trust.

God may come into our consciousness; He is certainly capable of making us aware of His presence. But we need to remember that consciousness is merely a faculty of our being, that part of us which enables us to know ourselves, our world, and our God. It is not God Himself! Therefore, we would say without hesitation that anyone who would define God as an ability, an enablement, or a faculty of the mind KNOWS NOT GOD!

**** Another teaching which is along the same line, and which, incidentally, has also been attributed to the message of sonship, is the teaching that the devil is nothing more than the carnal mind in man, or that *oit* is simply the dark side of nature. How would you respond to that?***

Again, this idea belongs to the body of teachings known as metaphysics, and should be acknowledged as such. It has nothing to do with sonship, though there have been those who have vacillated between two opinions, not knowing where to come down on the subject.

The Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, published by the Unity School of Christianity, says this about the devil. *The $\$$ devil $\$$ signifies the mass of thoughts that have been built up in consciousness through many generations of earthly experiences and crystallized into*

what may be termed human personality, or carnal mind. Another name of the §devil§ is sense-consciousness; all the thoughts in one that fight against and are adverse to Truth belong to the state of mind that is known to metaphysicians as the Devil.○ It goes on to define demons this way: ○Demons, or evil spirits, are conditions of mind, or states of consciousness, that have been developed because the creative power of man has been used in an unwise or an ignorant way.○ And the word ○Satan○ is thus defined: ○The same as the devil. [It is] the deceiving phase of mind in man that has fixed ideas in opposition to Truth. Satan assumes various forms in man§s consciousness, among which may be mentioned egotism, a puffing up of the personality; and the opposite of this, self-depreciation, which admits the §accuser§ into the consciousness. This §accuser§ makes man believe that he is inherently evil.○ ¥¥¥5/end quote.

Adding to this is Joel Goldsmith§s definition: ○Paul gave us another name for the devil or evil when he called it §carnal mind,' although he, too, made the mistake that most modern metaphysicians have of fighting the evil." He went on to say, ○Devil, carnal mind, or mortal mind? It has only the power that universal belief gives it, and that is why we suffer from it without even knowing that it exists. But once we awaken, once we understand that the devil, Satan, mortal mind, or carnal mind is not power, but a suggestion offering itself to us for acceptance, we can say No and then forget it○¥¥¥end quote.

What, one might ask, are the arguments that metaphysicians use to defend their position? One of the prime contentions they have is the idea that the existence of Satan, as a personal entity, originated from mythology. According to metaphysicians, the concept of an individual devil never really appeared in Hebrew culture and literature until after the Babylonian captivity. Immediately thereafter, it emerged from Talmudic writings as a result of Israel§s supposed theoretical evolution toward dualism. This, they claim, proves that the concept was not original, but was borrowed from surrounding religious systems which already had a complex and highly developed satanological belief, such as Persia§s Zoroastrianism.

A second argument upon which their defense rests is in the way in which the word *satan* is used in the Old Testament. Pro-gnostic advocates such as Elaine Pagels state that *satan* never once describes a particular person in the original Hebrew texts. Rather, they say, it speaks of an adversary or adversaries in general; and it serves as a title, not as a proper name. The word *hassatan* (properly translated, *the satan*, with the definite article) is used in reference to a host of different characters, including the Angel of the Lord (Numbers 22:22). For liberal theologians and metaphysicians alike, this generalization is more than enough to show that *satan* is not a distinct being, but anyone or anything that fulfills the role of an opponent.

In speaking on behalf of the teachings of sonship, just how would we describe Satan? Is he a person or a thing? Is he a distinct entity, who possesses self-consciousness, intelligence and will, or is he just an impersonal force within mankind which motivates them to think and act wickedly? Is he a living creature, endowed with the mental capacity to reason and to act on his own, or is he simply a state of consciousness, or a translating

(or traducing) channel through which information passes in its journey to the human psyche? Sonship presents him as being the former, rather than the latter; and we're prepared to give our reasons why we believe this to be the case.

We'll begin by addressing the first argument offered by metaphysicians. Is it true that pre-exilian writings are devoid of the presence of a personal devil? The wording of this question can be misleading. While we agree that the word *satan* is not employed as a proper name in the early books, this is not to say that there is no evidence of the belief in the existence of a personal devil in them. For instance, the book of Genesis opens with the scene from Eden, and an encounter which occurs between the woman and the serpent. This has generally been accepted as one of the most defining moments in history, when human innocence first met with the embodiment of evil. In resistance to this, however, the matriarch of Theosophy, Madame Blavatsky, wrote, *“This personification, denominated Satan, is supposed to have been represented by the serpent in the Garden of Eden; nevertheless, the epithet of Satan is nowhere in the Hebrew sacred writings applied to that or any other variety of ophidian.”* (*Isis Unveiled*, volume 2, 481) Her point has a measure of validity. We will not find the name Satan in Genesis chapter 3. Nevertheless, whether or not a name is attached to the serpent in this particular story should make little difference to us. It clearly introduces a character, whose chief purpose is to steal, kill, and destroy. Rather than being depicted as simply a negative force within mankind, the character seen here exhibits all the qualities of intellect, emotion, and will, as he sets out to work his wiles on the first couple. Furthermore, it's apparent that the autonomous exercise of his actions was such that it incurred God's righteous judgment. The very fact that judgment was pronounced against him shows that God held him to some degree responsible for his deeds (which, in turn, suggests that he has a natural propensity toward rebellion). Finally, we should notice that the judgment which he incurred was distinct from that which either Adam or Eve received. The fact of the matter is, the issuance of a personal judgment could not have been possible in the first place, had the serpent merely served as a representation of the negative aspect of nature, or of some natural faculty within man. A personality was necessary in the scenario, someone other than Adam to whom the sentence decreed could directly apply, else the Lord would have simply included it in Adam's judgment. That seems logical enough, doesn't it?

While the name Satan may not be used in the narrative in Genesis, it would be negligence on our parts should we miss the obvious inference as to his identity. In the curse pronounced by the Lord over the serpent, God said, *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”* (Gen. 3:15). The apostle Paul made a direct reference to that, when he wrote to the church in Rome that *“the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly”* (Rom. 16:20). Therefore, there can be no mistaking that the New Testament writers saw the two names as being synonymous. In fact, John referred to him as *“that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world”* (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). You can't get much more specific than that.

When we look at the book of Job, we find one of the clearest pictures in the Old Testament of an individual spiritual entity possessing malicious intent toward man. The

book opens with the sons of God appearing before the Lord, and Satan appearing with them. Whether this is an actual event which transpired in the heavenlies, or just a metaphorical illustration is not the issue. The significant thing is that the Lord used this to reveal something of the nature and existence of Satan, as well as the relationship that Satan has with his Creator. It stands to reason that if we would question the existence of the devil as an independent entity in this story, we would also have to question the existence of the sons of God, as well. Both were said to have appeared before the Lord, and both were acknowledged by their appearance.

As it was in the Genesis account, God carries on a conversation with the adversary in the book of Job. He has dialogue with him at length. This is noteworthy. You see, not only does the Lord speak to him as He would to any personal being, but the adversary responds in kind. How could this have happened, if Satan were merely an antagonistic, blind force, or a fallen, faulty faculty within man?

Finally, we should look at Zechariah 3:1-2. Metaphysicians have contended that since the definite article *the* generally appears before the word *satan*, it shows that it is always meant to be seen in a general sense. But here, the definite article is removed, thereby removing the validity of their argument. By way of vision, the prophet was shown Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. Then, the Lord said unto Satan, *○The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee.*" Whatever one makes of the vision, the one thing that cannot be denied is that Satan was directly addressed by name.

These three places stand out among others in the Old Testament as evidences of the belief of a personal devil. The writer of Genesis was obviously aware of his existence, as well as the prophet Zechariah. Furthermore, unless the Israelites to whom Zechariah spoke were familiar with this personage, they could not have been expected to understand who he was speaking about without explanation. It only stands to reason, then, that the idea of Satan was already embodied within their religious worldview before this word was given.

Nevertheless, when we come to the Gospels, there should be no mistaking where Jesus stood on the issue. And what He had to say concerning Satan should speak for all who embrace the true message of sonship. Indeed, could there be a greater spokesman for the teachings of sonship than the firstborn Son Himself?

Even a cursory study of the Scriptures would show that Jesus recognized physical and moral evil in the world from two standpoints—1) as existing *in* man physically in the form of bodily disease, or spiritually as moral evil, and 2) as having a source in the cosmos *outside* of man. He also recognized and promoted the idea that this evil coalesced in a kingdom which was inhabited by an unnumerable multitude of wicked spirits, but was singularly headed by one known as Satan. Furthermore, He not only taught, but very forcefully demonstrated that this kingdom was in direct opposition to, and in conflict with the kingdom of God, and was to be resisted at every point where the Lord directed.

The first mention of the devil in the New Testament immediately followed Jesus's baptism in the Jordan River. Luke 4:1-2 says that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. (We have no way of knowing whether or not this was the first time Jesus had ever had a face-to-face encounter with the adversary; but obviously, it was important for Him to begin His ministry with one.) It was there, in the wilderness, that He engaged in open dialogue with the tempter, hearing the words which were spoken to Him, and answering them with God's word. Furthermore, Jesus directly addressed him as "Satan," leaving no doubt as to his identity (Lk. 4:8). Having overcome all the temptations which were presented to Him, therefore, scripture says that the devil departed from Him for a season, and the angels of God came and ministered to Him. Afterward, it says that Jesus went forth "in the power of the Spirit" (verses 13-14), and was bent on a mission to destroy the works of the devil (I Jn. 3:8). This was ultimately accomplished through His death on the cross (Heb. 2:14).

The reality of Satan, and the entire demonic realm, is clearly seen by the fact that Jesus commanded evil spirits, and they responded to His word. When He entered a synagogue in Capernaum, the unclean spirit which possessed a man therein cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God." Jesus merely rebuked him, saying, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him" (Lk. 4:33-35). When there was brought to Him a dumb man who was possessed with a devil, Jesus cast out the devil with His word, and the string of the man's tongue was loosed (Matt. 9:32-32). When the Syrophenician woman besought Him in behalf of her demon-possessed daughter, Jesus told her, "Go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." And when He entered into the countryside of Gadara, the spirit possessing the tormented tomb-dweller cried out, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." Jesus said unto him, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit." Before the spirit departed into a herd of swine, however, Jesus asked it, "What is thy name?" To which the spirit responded, "My name is Legion for we are many" (Mk. 5:1-17). This one example alone says volumes for our case.

Now, you would think that if the idea of a personal devil was the product of mere mythology, Jesus would have dispelled it as myth. But not only did He fail to dispel it; He proved that He believed in it! He cast out spirits by the finger of God. He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil. He received all who were brought to Him that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them (Matt. 5:25). His attitude was that Satan had men bound, and His purpose was to deliver them from that bondage...and He never led men to believe otherwise! You see, Jesus never pretended that the devil didn't exist, or that the problems that were manifesting themselves in the masses were merely the result of "wrong thinking" on their parts. He simply took authority over the devil, as often as He encountered him!

Looking through the epistles, it's an inescapable fact that His disciples not only accepted Jesus's belief in the reality of demonic personalities, but they also incorporated that belief into their own teachings. It was a common factor in their overall spiritual cosmology. For

instance, the apostle Paul said that our struggle is not with flesh and blood, but against "cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens" (Eph. 6:12; NEB). Peter wrote that our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking who he may devour. He went on to say that we are to steadfastly resist this adversary in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren in the world (I Pet. 5:8-9). James said, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Their use of personal pronouns when referring to the devil shows that they believed him to be a personal being. Furthermore, Paul's mention of Satan's ability to transform himself into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14) strongly implies that they believed him to be of the angelic order (howbeit, of the dark persuasion). This was certainly the impression that the early church fathers had from Apostolic teachings. Satan was no more to be seen as just a nebulous center of moral influence than was Gabriel, or any other of the angelic beings mentioned by name in Scripture. Therefore, if Jesus and His disciples were deceived (as some of His critics have charged), and if they were entertaining simple-minded folklore and silly Jewish superstitions, then they surely were effective with them! They had results to show for what they believed, and multitudes of grateful people to attest to the veracity of it.

On balance, we do want to recognize the fact that there is an affinity between the carnal mind and the devil. Sonship strongly emphasizes that the two work hand-in-hand. In fact, it is within this "dustbowl" fixed between man's ears that the serpent writhes upon his "belly," and from whence he receives his "meat" (Gen.3:14). And there can be no doubt that he is definitely most effective when he works in concert with the carnal mind of man. But we also realize that there is a difference between them, as well. If the devil is nothing more than the carnal mind, and exists nowhere but within mankind, then how would we explain Luke chapter 4? Shall we say that when Jesus was tempted of the devil in the wilderness, He was grappling with a carnal mind? The very thought of such a thing should be considered inconceivable to any true believer! And what about Judas? Are we to assume that when Satan entered into him during the Passover feast, this was the point in which he received a carnal mind? Come on, now! That would be a little hard to swallow! And what shall we say of the 8th chapter of the book of Matthew? That one passage alone should dispel the idea that the devil is limited in his existence to mankind. And are we to believe that the herd of swine into which Jesus cast devils were actually possessed by carnal minds? Some might be so gullible, but we refuse to follow that crowd. (Of course, there are those who say that these accounts were mere parables, stories which were provided to convey spiritual truths, but which never really happened in a physical or historical sense. However, if that were the case, could not the same be said of the entire gospel account? We would have to question *everything* that was written [including the birth, crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus], if we question anything...and that would lead to an unraveling of our faith.)

Sonship teachers acknowledge that our English word devil comes from the Greek word *diabolos* (Gr. #1228 in Strong's), and that it is a compound word, composed of two root words, *dia* (Gr. #1223) is a primary preposition which means, *the channel of an act; through*, while the word *ballo* (Gr. # 906) is a primary verb which means, *to throw*. When we incorporate these words, we have the idea of an act that is

accomplished by throwing or passing something through a channel. Furthermore, as a singular word, Dr. Strong gives the definition of diabolos as *a traducer; specially Satan:--- false accuser, devil, slanderer*. The word traduce, according to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, means *to turn from one language or form into another, to debase or pervert by translating, or to lower or disgrace the reputation of, i.e. to expose to shame or blame by utterance of falsehood or misrepresentation*. A traducer, then, would be one who is guilty of traducing; that is, one who seeks to debase, pervert or misrepresent truth through the process of mistranslation. But where sonship departs from New Age or metaphysical teaching is in this: nowhere, in the definition of this word, is there any indication that this *channel* or traducer is something impersonal, or that it is a natural faculty of the human mind. The implication is simply not there! Therefore, we outrightly reject the idea as being scriptural.

Please understand that by defending the orthodox teachings of the Church concerning the devil (that he is a personal entity created after the angelic order), this is not to say that sonship upholds what has become the *traditional* teachings of him. Quite the contrary. You see, since the third century A.D. (when Constantine successfully incorporated so much of Babylon's theological beliefs with those of Christianity), Satan has undergone somewhat of an evolution, and individuals have been given free license to imagine what they would of him. Nowadays, it's not uncommon to hear folks describe him like the figure who appears on the Underwood Deviled Ham can label, with horns atop his wicked head, clad in a red hooded suit, and with pitchfork in hand. Some have even elevated him beyond the status of an angel to that of a god; and, in many cases, to a position of equality with El Elyon, the Most High (this is basically how Zoroaster presented him...as the exact moral opposite to the "good" God, and as a shareholder in His sovereignty). Sadly, this has resulted in a negative reaction by those who have chosen to dismiss his existence entirely.

We agree that far too much time has been devoted to promoting a "devil-consciousness." Many folks have become entirely too preoccupied with the idea of Satan, both the real and the imagined, for their own spiritual good. This is especially true in many Pentecostal circles and ministries, where their constant references to the devil (either rebuking him, or blaming him for every little problem that comes along in life) has made them a mockery in the eyes of the world (not to mention it being a distraction from the centrality of Christ in the church). But it's just as foolish to believe that Satan is naught but the carnal mind, when the Bible has declared otherwise.

(We will say this. There is a dimension in which the presence of the wicked one doesn't disturb us. What we mean by that is, he is no longer seen as a "fear factor," or as a problem or a threat. Again, we could look at the scene revealed in the first chapter of the book of Job. Here we find Satan appearing before the Lord, earnestly desiring to sift Job like wheat; but he is seen as being absolutely powerless to do anything without the express permission of God. Now, again, that doesn't mean that he doesn't exist, or that he isn't real. It just means that he is entirely under God's control!)

We should also point out that not all New Agers deny the existence of personal supernatural entities, or write them off as being fictional characters. To the contrary. Many of them believe that there is a vast host of supernatural beings in the invisible spiritual realm outside of man, but assume that all such beings are amoral (morally neutral) in nature. For instance, Blavatsky dismissed the idea of a personal devil, but she certainly believed in spiritual beings. In fact, she often entertained them, and that, not unaware. But in her mind, neither the they nor the messages which they delivered were anything to worry about, because all contact from the spirit world is meant to help mankind discover its true deific state.

Of course, true sons of God know not to accept every spirit which comes to them, but to ◦try the spirits, to see whether they be of God◦ (I Jn. 4:1). Paul even said that if an angel from heaven should come, and preach any other gospel than the one which he§d preached, we were to ◦let him be accursed◦ (Gal. 1:8). But this also brings us to what is perhaps the greatest single reason why metaphysicians oppose the idea of a personal evil entity called the devil. ***To admit that there is such a being who is the principal embodiment of evil would be to admit that there was such a thing as evil.*** And that, to the morally relativistic mind of the metaphysician, would be unthinkable.

Let it be clearly understood that sonship does not major on minors, or seek to draw unnecessary attention to the adversary. But the bottom line is this. While those who embrace sonship acknowledge the fact that there is an internal aspect of Satan§s presence in man, they do not see where this requires them to dismiss the idea of a personal devil who exists outside of him, either. The one idea does not cancel out the other, nor are they mutually opposed. Furthermore, there is no more reason to believe that the devil is the carnal mind, any more than there is to believe that the cab driver is the cab. Satan may steer the carnal mind in the direction of his will; but that does not make them one and the same.

If we are to believe the Bible, then, we must see that it clearly teaches that there is a personal spiritual entity known as Satan, and that he heads a host of hostile spirits known as demons or devils. It also shows that these spirits are in direction opposition to the purposes of God, and are vehemently opposed to the birth of the Manchild (Rev. 12). Again, this doesn§t mean that sons of God are to spend their time telling stories about *the Boogeyman*, or looking for *boogers* under every bush. Nor does it mean that we emphasize the external existence of Satan over the internal. We should be more mature than that. But it does mean that we will acknowledge the reality of his existence (both within and without), and will not shun our responsibility to deal with him as Jesus did.

The concluding remarks in *Hastings§ Dictionary of the Bible* express our own convictions on the subject. We§ll close with it. ◦*That a supreme transcendent and personal (and, to the Christian consciousness, righteous) reason and will is ever present and potent in the entire realm, is a necessary postulate of any intelligible universe. The assumption that other superhuman as well as subordinate agencies are at work, and that some among these are embodiments of evil influence, adds no fundamental difficulty to those which already exist. No moral world is conceivable except as involving*

interrelations between personalities. Now, it is a matter of historic notoriety that some personalities have lived in this world that might be called the incarnations of evil influence. The supposition that other and superhuman personalities may also be foci of evil moral energy, and operate like ganglionic centers in a nervous system, presents no fundamental difficulty in addition to the difficulties already involved in the problem of evil. That Satan exists as a personal center of evil influence, physical as well as moral (for the two are closely associated), is the undoubted teaching of the Bible. He is not presented to us as the absolute origin of evil or the only source of it, but as its most potent superhuman representative. ○ ~~¥¥~~end quote.

to be continued...

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