

CHAPTER 12

The Serpent In the Garden: Understanding the Foundations of Why We Believe a Myth.

In all stories about the fall of man that have come down through the ages there is none so well known as the Biblical account of Adam and Eve and the serpent in the garden that is said to have caused their fall. The beginning of all sin and suffering is often attributed to the monumental event that is believed to have taken place in the Garden of Eden. An event that took place sometime around 6000 years ago according to chronology that calculates the ages and numbers which are provided in the Scriptures.

The story has been told for generations and has either been believed to be wholly literal or believed to be wholly allegory; a mere tale to deliver a message that speaks of mankind's potential to choose to sin. When taken as wholly literal this tale of ancient origin is commonly seen as a true story about a man and woman that were created by the Creator. In the process of performing their assigned duties in their garden paradise abode, they were tricked by a creature that may have been inhabited by Satan or may have been Satan himself as some suggest.

Acceptance of such a story at face value is often the practice of a biblical literalist and is not easy to agree with entirely, while contrariwise, the dismissal of the story as purely lore is equally as difficult to accept from the other end of the spectrum. The issue then could be debated with no resolve for hundreds of years, as has been the case with this ancient tale up until this point. It may be possible to enjoy the both/and perspective on the Adam and Eve tale involving the serpent in the Garden. This tale may very well have content that is both allegorical and literal. The appearance of a serpent in the story has done little to add understanding to either side of the debate but remains a multi-interpreted conundrum that seems to speak of a nefarious force, yet is difficult to pin down. In this present age however, it seems plausible to submit

a comprehensive answer to the question of whom or what the serpent in the garden was. Looking at this perplexing puzzle through multiple modalities of instruction and information such as history, archeology, and linguistic studies, does much to direct a query towards a possible solution to the question. That question being, "Who or what is the serpent in the garden?"

In this chapter, we will be employing not only the aforementioned means to reach a conclusion but we shall be challenged to incorporate some logic and some philosophy. This is necessary in order to unearth an answer that lays forth a conclusion, which upholds a true monotheistic ideology. In exploring the topic of who or what the serpent in the garden was, there is no better place to begin than at the start of the book of Genesis. Genesis is the document, that has for centuries, held the words of this ancient story in somewhat of a vault that locks out man's understanding. This is so, not because the words are incomprehensible, but due to the prolific, popular views, which themselves are somewhat incomprehensible for various reasons and ideological inconsistencies.

Following is the first verse of the book of Genesis and a lengthy thesis to explain that the serpent in the garden is not what most think it to be. Answers to the question of the serpent being a real serpent, or a manifestation of Satan are not easily gleaned from the language of Genesis but diligence in study will prevail and a more acceptable solution to the question will be submitted in the following pages.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning, Elohim created the heaven and the earth.

Well ----that seems easy enough to understand doesn't it? No need to question who it was that did the creating or what was created. It is so nice and simple when the words in the text of Scriptures are easily understood. It is not so nice when the words of Scripture are full of metaphors and concepts from a cultural period that we have long lost and forgotten. So often, the ancient metaphors that are written in Scripture are so far from the modern reader's line of reasoning that we are prevented in part from understanding them. Often times reading Scripture can leave us with the same patchy understanding as one might experience after reading a Newspaper from across the world.

Unless the writer provides a complete context to the story and fully articulates every aspect, nuance, and image of his or her story, the reader automatically places images and ideas from his or her own mental library into the writer's description. This practice is a normal and helpful process for the

reader because it enables the reader to get more out of the story than if the entire writer's tale had not invoked any images for the reader.

We read the Scriptures in a very similar manner, where we see what the writer is imaging through a pre-set library of images in our mind. When a word or phrase is used to describe a character or situation our mind goes to work to complete the image to help us to attain a comfortable level of understanding. Although, the images in the mind of the news story reader may help the reader to avoid the confusion that comes from a complete lack of understanding, they are in all likelihood inaccurate images that were developed out of the library of images that have been inserted into the mind of the reader over his or her lifetime. If the reader were transported to the time and place of the story and was able to perceive with their own eyes and mind the same scenario that the writer shared through the written word, they would understand clearly the situation. What the reader would actually see and what the writer intended to be seen might be quite similar. The reader would probably be happy to see the images as the images were intended to be seen but would also have many words and phrases come to mind to express the scenario in a way that would be more comprehensible to that reader if the story were to be re-written.

It would be interesting to have a group of people read a story from the news in another part of the world and then ask them to describe the images that came to mind while reading. Upon receiving the descriptions from the participants, it would undoubtedly be illuminating to then show a video of the same story and compare the descriptions of the participants with the images that are displayed on screen. It is not likely that a comparison of the images presented to the images described by the participants, would result in exactness of similarities. The participants might find themselves stating that they pictured that all wrong and then have a sense of enlightenment upon receiving the true pictures in their minds to replace the misinformed and uninformed images, which they had previously described in detail.

Thankfully, for most news stories today we are privileged to have the aid of photographic images along side the story. A picture is truly worth a thousand words when it is presented in place of written details describing a scene. A picture of a scene brings much greater clarity to the story than is being told in writing alone and provides imagery that is often unattainable by words alone. Wouldn't it be great if we had pictures of the first few chapters of Genesis? In the absence of pictures, mental images differ from hearer to hearer. The stories of Genesis have been interpreted in picture, by thousands of illustrators and writers for centuries. The imagined scenes that have been put to paper are not necessarily accurately represented in the images that are portrayed. Any story that has accurate pictures of the scenes it writes of becomes vivid to the reader. Sadly, the stories of Genesis and much of the

Scripture lack the vividness that would be found had there been accurate pictures available to add to the written version of the story.

One is hard pressed to accurately perceive of the images related to a written story when they are deprived of a concise image to visualize and store in the memory. This image association works in two ways. If I say, "Don't think of a flower," you automatically have an image of a flower come to mind. Your image might be of a different flower than hundreds of others but you very likely did have an image of some type of flower. The other modality this functions in is if I tell you a story about a beautiful bouquet of flowers that sits on the mantle of a warm country home, filled with the sweet scent of roses. In hearing that story, one is very likely to have had a picture from their image library in their mind of the roses sitting on the mantle. The image may be even clearer because the sense of scent was brought into play when the aroma in the home was spoken of. Whether we are given a negative instruction to not think of something or something like a rose is merely suggested, a typical person has images come to mind. We are very much subject to suggestion and what comes to mind from reading the words of Scripture is no different.

All the suggestions we have received from images one has seen, that were supposedly depicting a certain story, are conjured up in the mind every time the story is reiterated. If a picture of the rose or bouquet were available to be viewed, the reader would then have all their own mental images replaced with the image that is presented to them in the picture. Once shown the picture, the image of that bouquet is now perceived accurately as it is not an image drawn from a mental library that is readily available to apply images to a written description that a person reads. As an example to help make the point that accuracy of mental images is compromised in the absence of clearly discernable pictures, I will simply quote a few headlines below. Take note of what images come to mind, including any details involved. Don't think too hard but pay attention to any mental pictures that come to you as you read the words and the short description of the article.

South Africa: Zuma Trial Heightens Rape Awareness

One of South Africa's most celebrated musicians added her voice to the chorus lamenting the government's failure to tackle the country's tragic rape problem. By **Eugene Soros**.

Charles Taylor Faces Court in Sierra Leone

News of Taylor's arrival in Freetown spread like wild fire during harmattan, the dry and dusty wind that blows out of the Sahara along the northwest coast of Africa. By **Roland B. Marke**.

Senegalese Musician Honors African Leaders

When most African music icons are looking to the West for fame and glory, Senegalese rap musician Didier Awadi is concentrating his efforts on igniting Africa's visions and aspirations. By **Eugene Soros**.

Malaria at a Crossroads

Over the course of the past 4,000-plus years, this mosquito-borne disease has slowly insinuated itself into human society. Its effects are both far-reaching and complex. From an IRIN in-depth report.

These are just four examples from African news in May of 2006. They are headlines and teasers from the internet website WorldPress.org. <http://www.worldpress.org/Africa.htm>.

The images that come to mind for most of us may be similar but the details we could put into the images will be vastly different. Where one person would have a mental picture of swarming mosquitoes while reading the last of the above example news stories, another person may imagine a mosquito "biting" the arm of a young child. Still another may not imagine mosquitoes at all but may picture the emaciated body of a sick mother close to the point of death with her baby in her arms, too weak to cry. Because I do not know much about Malaria, the mental picture I had when I first read this was of military workers going through the region wearing white masks and spraying for mosquitoes. Forgive my ignorance on this issue but I don't even know if they have ever sprayed for mosquitoes in Africa. After writing down the mental image I had of the above Malaria story I clicked on the link to see if my mental images correlated to the picture provided.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Image and caption can be found at <http://www.worldpress.org/Africa/2293.cfm>. Caption with photograph says the following;
Most of the hundreds of thousands of children who die from malaria every year are under the age of five. Almost 90 percent are from sub-Saharan Africa. (Photo: Cris Bouroncle / AFP-Getty Images)

The picture on the website revealed a child sick in bed who appears to be near the point of death. The sick child is being attended by his mother who is stroking the child's face and there was a younger sibling in the picture kneeling near the foot of the bed. The article tells of Malaria as significantly affecting pregnant mothers, infants, and young children. The images in the online photo were similar at best to some of the images I had in mind when reading the headline but there is no way I could have accurately depicted this picture until I saw it. The point is, the words in a story do bring forth images for the reader, but unless the words are absolutely, explicit and fully descriptive, the reader will stand a good chance of entertaining inaccurate images. We are going to encounter this same problem when reading the words of the Scriptures.

As I was researching for this book, while discussing some of the concepts with my own family, I saw first hand the propensity of people to apply images that are in their mental library to written stories that come into their path. This replacement imaging happens readily within the mind's eye of most who read stories from the Bible when they do not have the privilege of knowing helpful information surrounding the context of the tale. The story of the Serpent in the Garden is not exempt from this process and some in my family have become aware that it is difficult to see something differently when the way it is written has engendered the same images for so long.

In a telephone conversation recently, my mother asked me if I could rewrite the Adam and Eve with the serpent account from Genesis, in a plain understandable text for her. We were discussing the literal nature of the writing versus the metaphorical nature of the writing and the words before her on the pages of Genesis were too potent and image invoking for her to move past. Mom therefore could barely perceive of a different message than the one she had in mind from the years of this message being taught, indoctrinated, and reaffirmed. Mom could only see a real snake slithering in a real tree actually speaking to Eve and convincing her to take the fruit. The picture Mom had in her mind of the fruit was clearly an apple. Of course there was more detail in the images Mom saw in her mind's eye than just an apple, but I saw a little more clearly how deeply embedded the images we have "seen" our whole life are, when we read a Bible story that has never had any Polaroids to go along with it. I told my Mom I would write about the serpent story soon and although I will pass along the following "re-writing" to my Mother long before any of you read this book, I submit the following for your discernment. I call it a conceptual and contextual paraphrase of the Serpent in the Garden story.

I will go into great detail to explain my understanding, after the "re-writing" Of Genesis 3 seen below. I will just mention before we go any

further, that those inclined towards Bible worship, known as bibliolatry, will have a very difficult time reading a paraphrase such as I am presenting below. However, if you can trust that you will not be agreeing to a change in the words of the Holy Bible and try to be opened to the potential of finding more truth, then perhaps you will read through the following information with greater ease. As you read the following re-writing of the serpent in the garden account, please understand I am attempting to express what I have come to comprehend is the concept Moses was relaying when he reworked an ancient serpent myth that was common in his culture. The myth was depicting a decision made by the story's characters to choose evil and disobedience as opposed to good and obedience.

The retelling of the ancient story in the manner that I have submitted below is an analytical paraphrase and is not intended to replace or add to the words of Scripture, only to assist in explaining the meaning of the words of an ancient and difficult to understand story.

Genesis 3, A paraphrase to Aid in Understanding;

Now the subtle desire in the heart of man was one thing that Yahweh had made which He chose not to control. All the beasts of the field did not possess this innate potential to choose evil known as the evil inclination, only man and therefore this evil inclination was more subtle than anything else Yahweh had created. Beasts of the field are given instinct where man has been given an ability to choose.

One day as the woman was tending the garden, a thought came to her while tending the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She noticed how pleasant looking the fruit on the forbidden tree was and started to wonder why the Creator, who loved her and gave man so much, would want to keep man from eating the fruit of this "forbidden" tree that looked so delicious. With that in mind she asked the question to herself; "Did God say man shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" Knowing this was not a very safe line of questioning to pose to oneself, the women began wrestling within herself. She said, "No, how can I think that? God told us that we are allowed to eat of the trees of the garden."

As she looked at the trees and pondered, she continued her thought. Reminding herself, "God said that the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden was not eatable." By thinking so, she then took the next step of justifying wrong choices and added to that command of God's. The evil inclination within her was already weakening the good inclination. Adding to God's words was done

by the simple embellishment of the words of the Creator, saying; "God said we can't even touch it or we'll die."

The woman had now claimed that any contact with the tree would kill. The Creator said to eat from the tree would bring death but the woman was saying that to simply touch the tree would bring death. By changing what God had said she was in for a world of trouble. When she spoke this to herself, she reasoned that it was ridiculous to think God would kill her just for touching the fruit of that tree, so she rationalized that it was OK to touch the fruit. Because she had changed God's command in her own mind and saw that she didn't die when she touched the fruit, she was able to convince herself that God must have meant something else.

Wanting to eat this fruit that looked so pleasing she thought, "I didn't die when I touched the tree so I'm pretty sure we won't die if we eat from the tree in the midst of the garden, the reason why God is keeping us from it is that He must want us not to be like Him."

Going on with her internal dialogue she thought, "He is the one making the rules and obviously He is demanding we don't touch or eat that fruit because then we will be like Him. It is entirely likely that because He is protecting that forbidden tree He knows we will be like Him if we eat it. Yes, if we eat from that tree then we will be like God, knowing good and evil, I can't understand why He wouldn't want this pleasure for me. I bet if I touch it that I can better decide if I should eat it or not. Then I will decide if it's worth eating so my eyes will be opened."

After a brief period of wrestling within herself and sorting through the internal dialogue over whether or not to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, the woman's conscience became sufficiently weakened and the subtle, evil inclination took over. The woman could not help but be almost drawn to the tree and its fruit. The fruit smelled and looked delicious and it was something new she had never tried before. It was such a nice looking fruit too.

It was clear to her, after putting some thought into it, that this tree would help her get where she wanted to go by making her wise like God. Seeing the tree in this way, that by eating from it the woman stood to benefit greatly, she had become morally weak in this area and actually reached up and plucked a piece of fruit from the tree. She quickly realized that she had touched the fruit and was still alive so she began to listen to the part inside her that often tries to justify and rationalize wrong choices.

In her mind she had wrongly concluded that God had said that if you “touch the tree it would kill you.” Although really He didn’t say, “you touch it you die,” the woman worked to rationalize her desires and changed the word God spoke to Adam, and then she ate of the fruit she was holding. She ate the fruit without dying instantly, and then gave some to her husband who was with her. He was with her but remained silent not knowing or perceiving the internal battle she was having which brought her to the place of making this bad decision.

Now that both the man and the woman had broken God’s rule and disobeyed willingly, they felt different. Up until this point in their short existence the potential to choose wrong was in them but it was never an issue because they had not acted on it. For the first time they felt a feeling that is common to most people who intentionally choose evil and submit to the craftiness of the evil inclination and the way it causes man to rationalize and justify their wrong actions. This shame, brought on by their sin, opened a crack in their spirit where the evil thoughts and desires found a place to pervade their thoughts more and more. So much so that they even felt ashamed that they were naked. Their physical nakedness was a huge symbol representing that their righteousness was stripped away because of choosing sin, sin that brings death. No, they didn’t die that moment, but the choice to sin ultimately leads to death if the sin is not paid for or “covered.” Therefore, when the man and woman saw that they were physically naked they were ashamed. They certainly were not familiar with this new feeling of uneasiness but being physically naked truly represented their inner man, which now was exposed as being without perfect obedience.

They were no longer innocent, possessing righteous hearts of the first man and woman created. To cover up the outward reminder of their inner sinful choice and resulting feeling of shame, they made themselves aprons to cover their bodies. Almost as soon as they had made their best attempt to make a covering for their shame, they heard their Creator starting to question their whereabouts. It was as if their own consciences were working overtime to bring them to the point of admitting their failure and repenting. As if Adam and Eve hadn’t done enough to try to cover up the shame from their sin by making clothes out of leaves, now they were working harder to avoid the detection of their error by hiding in the trees of the garden. They now felt unrighteous because they were no longer in the pure state of existence that they started in and were hiding amidst created things which were still in the state of purity they were created in. Then, almost as if Adam and Eve were really getting away with their sin, the Creator

who knew where they were, called out to give them a chance to turn back to Him. He said, "Where are you?"

Although it was a weak response, Adam said, "I heard your voice and I was naked and afraid so I hid myself."

Adam said this knowing that he had hid himself because his whole world was spiraling down around him due to the choice to disobey and sin. The knowledge that he disobeyed the instructions to not eat from the tree in the midst of the garden brought all kinds of never before felt emotions. Adam and Eve felt fear that came from the feelings of remorse and disappointment for what they had done. The threat of loss often brings fear and Adam knew loss would be the result of his actions. Adam had no power to take back what he and Eve had done and just make it all go away.

The fear was magnified because of the unknown. The unknown factor was the question of how their perfect life would now change, that life could never be the same now that Adam and Eve the sinners have this experiential knowledge. The fear that there will be a consequence for their behavior but the extent of which was also unknown. After all, now they "knew" good and evil because of the experiential knowledge they had from choosing evil by disobeying.

Yahweh replied to Adam with a question. Knowing full-well that Adam and Eve had eaten from the forbidden tree and were now reacting in shame to their self destructive choice, he asked Adam, "Who told you that you were naked?"

Of course, the Creator knew no one had told Adam and Eve they were naked but through this rhetorical question God was letting Adam know that He, the Creator knew Adam and Eve had realized their shame because they had made a conscious choice to disobey the main rule the Father had given them.

Being very straight forward Yahweh then asked Adam, "Did you eat from the tree that I told you not to eat from?"

Feeling trapped and too weak from his own shame to own up to his own choices, the man Adam blamed his sin on someone else. Adam was unable to take responsibility for his choice to disobey so he blamed it on Eve. Worse still, he twisted it to lay some of the blame on the Creator Himself. Adam answered, "The woman **you** gave me to be with me, she passed me some fruit from the forbidden tree, and I ate it." Even this weak attempt at blame shifting by the man fully implicated him because in his attempt to

avert consequences he admitted that he knew the fruit the woman was handing him was from “the tree,” meaning the one that was forbidden. The Creator questioned the woman now, “What have you done?” He asked the woman.

In response to the confrontation by her Creator, the woman told Yahweh that it was this internal desire to be wiser, which drove her to make that choice, it wasn’t really the choice she wanted to make. The woman said It was almost as if she couldn’t control her self.

Yahweh knew she was speaking of the inner desire she submitted to when she rationalized eating the fruit, thinking that to be as God would help her and her husband. Yahweh then explained the subtle nature of that part of man, which deceives man through rationalizing and justifying wrong desires and actions.

Yahweh said that this active potential for sin that is latent in humans would be continually present. He continued that the “evil inclination” in man would almost have a will of its own, with a personality whereby it acts in a stealth-like manner inside of man. What is referred to as a serpent is the evil inclination that is always ready to rationalize and justify sin. This potential to sin was part of created man and now was activated when the man and woman made a choice to disobey. It would not disappear at the death of the first man Adam and the first woman Eve; it would carry on to the children and grandchildren of the woman throughout time.

Although the propensity to disobey and justify sin is present and active in man, there will be a seed of the woman, the Messiah, who will perform a work at one point in history. The Messiah’s work will all but eliminate this active potential to choose sin. By living a sinless life and dying unjustly only to be resurrected, the Spirit of Messiah will be available to provide the strength to overcome the sinful desire.

This “seed” of woman will perform this work, which will benefit all humankind but the active potential for sin will still hold some sway over the heart of man. The Messiah’s work will limit the evil inclination of man; but because of man having knowledge of good and evil, it will still be strong enough to prevent man from always choosing righteousness and obedience to the Creator. So essentially the Messiah will bring back a greater potential for righteousness by being an acceptable sacrifice that covers our past sin, but because this potential for sin has overrode the potential for righteousness in this inaugural instance in the garden, there will still be times when sin is the result of man’s choices.

Once Yahweh had dealt with the aspect of the human's heart and mind, which can choose evil, He sadly had to deliver a consequence for disobedience to the man and woman. He said to the woman; "Sin choices affect everything and from now on, bearing children will be fraught with difficulties and discomfort which would not have been part of bearing a child had disobedience not been your choice. Because you reasoned in yourself and decided to pluck the fruit that was forbidden and eat it and then hand it to your husband, it appears you think it is OK to make unilateral decisions. This being so, from now on you are going to have a part of you that would like to control your husband and be the boss of him. This will make for a challenge in life for you and your husband. As a couple, you will have to continually work to be lovingly and mutually submissive. If only you had considered this when you began convincing yourself it was acceptable to eat that fruit and didn't consult with your partner."

After delivering the consequence to the woman for her choice, the Creator said to Adam, "Because you were paying more attention to the garden and your surroundings than you were to what your wife's needs were, you Adam will have to work hard to live comfortably pretty much until you die and return to dust in your grave. Had you been paying attention to her you would have seen how obvious it was that she was moving in an unsafe direction when she was assessing the forbidden tree. It would have been better if you were not just "with her," but actually being attentive to her. The ground will no longer produce abundance so simply but will require unpleasant work to gain produce from it. It will no longer yield so easily under your hand but it will be cursed with unfavorable thorns and thistles to slow you down. This, more time-consuming work environment will cause you to have to fight like crazy and be intentional to give the attention to your wife that she needs. You will strive to give her more attention as you should have this day when you were paying more attention to your work than to your wife."

So, even though they were cursed because of their actions Adam knew they had to go on and make the best of it. As a symbol of his intention to provide for His wife and work together with her through what might prove to be a challenging life, where bearing children will be challenging to say the least, Adam said that his wife would be the mother of all living and called her "Eve."

Then Yahweh, seeing the resolve for man to accept his consequence and move forward in the challenges ahead, trusting still in the Creator to care for him, made clothes out of animal skins for Adam and Eve to cover themselves. This act showed

Adam and Eve the Father still loved and cared for them and represented that because of their choice to sin it was necessary there be death to cover it. This was realized in the death of an animal to provide the covering for their naked bodies that were now exposed because of disobedience.

After the new wardrobe was given to man Yahweh said, in a poetic way to emphasize his multiple facets and sovereignty, "Because man has experienced evil as a result of their choice to disobey, man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, it is not allowable for him to eat of the tree of life and live forever." The edict of the Creator meant that humankind could not proceed and possess the gift of never dying a physical death. Through their choice to sin, they have quickened the aspect of their spirit that is designed to inspire them to make a choice to both obey and love their Creator or disobey and lose immortality. It is vital that this choice to love their Creator is actually a choice and not some mechanical preprogrammed response. If they eat of the tree of life in this state, then they will not only be immortal but will be immoral. I must continue on with the plan to ensure there is no immorality and sin in the perfect kingdom of Yahweh."

The analytical paraphrase you have just read admittedly is only one way to hear what the words of the Genesis passage are saying. It is difficult to know for certain what the conversations and attitudes of Adam and Eve were in the Garden. However, the account as presented above shows much greater logic than is found in a traditional, literalistic view. The above version provides an explanation for a poetical manner of writing as would have been done by the writer of Genesis to an ancient culture. Thinking that there was a serpent who slithered into the lives of Adam and Eve and outsmarted them because it was supposedly inhabited by the spirit of "Satan," offends the senses when one tries to consider the logic of such a literal interpretation.

The point alone of a spirit of "Satan" inhabiting another created object goes against all the statements Yahweh made which claim there is "none like him." If there exists a supposed Satan, who has the ability to inhabit the spirit of a creature, then "satan" is like God and God then becomes a liar. There cannot be any entity that can "fill" a person or creature, except The Holy Spirit of Yahweh the Creator.

What happened next was Yahweh sent the man and woman out from the perfect environment, which is to say they are not going to be allowed to enjoy paradise until the sin of theirs is atoned for. So, out they go and they cannot come back to eat of the tree of life. This consequence comes because the Father and Creator has allowed the subtle potential for man to choose sin to be strong enough in the heart of man, that entry by sinful man to paradisiacal immortality

is prevented. Man is unable to receive the immortality of paradise until such a time as the plan for the ages is complete and the seed of the woman has fully put an end to sin, the sin that stems from the sinful desire of the heart of man.

The only way man can eat of the tree of life is through obeying the commandments the Creator gives them. God's commands must be obeyed out of a sincere heart of love for the Creator and His Messiah, the promised seed of the woman. The Tree of Life is protected now but man can find his way back to paradise eventually and enjoy the gift of immortality.

The Tree of Life is not gone forever but it is up to man to follow Yahweh's plan and to eventually arrive at the point where he may once again have the right to the Tree of Life. A verse in Revelation reveals what John thought about returning to the tree of life. He unabashedly declares those who do God's commandments will be those who eat of the tree of life. Keep in mind that Adam and Eve were the first to ever go against the command of God.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Revelations 22:13-14 KJV

The above paraphrase of Genesis 3 is not intended to replace the words in the Torah but to explain what was to be relayed by the writer. The last words of Revelation 22:14 are quoted to help bring attention to the Tree of Life, which is available to all who keep the commands of the Creator. The Tree of Life will be part of "Paradise" once again according to what is read in Revelations. The wording I used to expand on some of the thoughts in Genesis is wording which could be used to describe any parable-like story.

Yeshua of Nazareth is known to have taught in parables and therefore when we read a parable in the Apostolic writings, we know the characters are not literal. The probability of the story in the garden, or at least parts of it being like a parable, which is full of metaphor and non-literal meaning, is high.

In the above re-telling, we see that Eve is not talking with a serpent but she is talking with herself, in the sense of an internal dialogue. She is battling that part of the human being that we all battle from time to time. Eve is fighting against her own internal desires. It is the flesh, or rather her desires, that Eve is battling against. One's desires often lust against the spirit. Paul spoke of this perpetual struggle in his letter to the Galatians;

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. Galatians 5:17 KJV

James also tells us that out of our own lusts we are drawn away. James the apostle knew the origin of our sin choices was not from the evil desires of a satanic salesman but that the origin of our sinful choices was from the desires and lusts that lay inside of us.

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. James 1:14 KJV

Is it Possible That the Evil Inclination in Man is “good?”

In the above retelling of the serpent in the garden account, I tried to express the story in a way that would help the reader understand that the serpent character, which is read in Genesis 3, is a metaphor for the latent sin-potential in humankind. The serpent represents the subtle nature that was created within man from the beginning. A nuance of human character that is the driving force behind sin choices. Every human being on earth has a desire to choose good and a desire to choose evil but where do those desires come from?

There has been a debate for centuries as to whether the human infant is born into sin or if sin is learned. To engage in that debate here would undoubtedly be engrossing and would not be solved by simply assessing and adhering to the typical arguments found on both sides of the debate. Where the debate falls short of being successful on either side is when it fails to recognize that man was created with a potential for both evil and good. Man is not so much either born with sin or born without sin, but man is born with the profound ability and potential for both. Yahweh created man with both the ability to choose good and the ability to choose evil. Interestingly, if one believes the following statements in the bullet points below, then one must believe Yahweh placed the potential for good and evil inside of man and that both of those attributes are good. This is seen by noting that it was only after man was created that Yahweh said, “It is very good”; Genesis 1:31 “*And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.*” Where He otherwise said, “it is good” for that which was created on the previous five days.¹⁴⁶ In using logic to discern the truth, the following points must be

¹⁴⁶ And God saw the light, that *it was* good: and God divided the light from the darkness. *Genesis 1:4 KJV*

And God called the dry *land* Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that *it was* good. *Genesis 1:10 KJV*

And the earth brought forth grass, *and* herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed *was* in itself, after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

considered when finding a way to accept that the evil potential in man was imparted to man at the point of creation, and that it is not an attribute foisted on man by an evil cosmic deceiver. Here then are some points to add to the equation.

- Neither "Satan" nor anyone can create anything because there is none like Yahweh;
- After man was created with the potential for good and evil, Yahweh saw all that He had created and said, "It is very good." inferring that the potential for evil was "good."

All of the other creative efforts of the Creator brought only the remarks that acknowledge the product of His work as, "It is good." However when man was created we heard the Creator saying, "It is very good!"

Now, if Yahweh created man with the potential to choose good or evil and said the entire creation was very good, then the potential in man to choose evil must be "good." Is it possible that Yahweh is saying that the "*yetzer ha ra*" which is known as the evil inclination in man is "good?" If it is true as I am positing that Yahweh did create man with the potential for both good and evil and then said "it was very good," then it must be that the evil inclination is good in His eyes. I am not saying that when man chooses evil it is a good thing. Rather, I am saying the ability and potential to choose evil as well as good is good.

According to Yahweh, choice is good.

Man's evil choices are part of the acceptable plan of the Creator to redeem man. If man were incapable of choosing evil then man would not need a redeemer and would not need God at all. However, throughout life man must learn to choose the good and refuse the evil. Shades of the necessity for man to learn to refuse evil are found in a prophecy about a uniquely anointed child

Genesis 1:12 KJV

And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that *it was* good. *Genesis 1:18 KJV*

And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

Genesis 1:21 KJV

And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good. *Genesis 1:25 KJVA*

who is spoken of to come by Isaiah. It is believed that this prophecy is about the Messiah but an application to all men can be made.

For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. Isaiah 7:16 KJV

Man does not acquire this potential to choose sin as he grows, but the potential to choose sin is inherent. He was created with it and it is an attribute of humans that needs to be managed and balanced. This balance takes place by man coming to understand what righteousness is. This learning process presents man with the option for righteous choices as well as having the option for wicked choices. We humans are neither inherently good nor inherently evil, we are inherently both, and this is what differentiates us from the animal kingdom. We have the privilege of choosing our behaviors in life where animals have only the ability to act on instinct. That is unless you are to train a monkey or like creature to choose between two objects, then it appears you are endowing that creature with the gift of free choice. However, that animal is not choosing between good and evil on a conscious plane because that animal does not know the difference between good and evil. It would be senseless to argue that animals do not have the power to choose because certainly some are trained to choose. This choice is not based on the animal's autonomous free will. Free will is an attribute that is a unique aspect of humanity, which allows us to choose between good and evil. Rather when an animal makes a choice, it is either out of instinct or out of a programmed response through training.

In the Book, *"Classical Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism,"* the authors recognize the inherent ability man has to make choices in the daily walk of life. The authors I quote below use a term you may or may not be familiar with. The term used below is *"halakah"* and has a meaning of walking. Halakah is translated as "walk" in the Scriptures. This use of it is a typical Hebraic use and is always referencing how one walks out their faith.

The halakah embodies in norms of behavior deep reflection on the meaning of human nature. Endowed with autonomous will, man has the power to rebel against God's will, and it follows that rebellion lurks as an ever-present possibility.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Classical Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism by Bruce D. Chilton and Jacob Neusner, p. 92. Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing, 2004

Was the Serpent Motif New to Moses?

To understand the fact that we as humans are created with the power to choose good or evil carries us a long way from the place where we are abdicating the responsibility for our sin choices to some mythic satanic being. I use “mythic” in reference to this being here, because the serpent in the garden has been a mythic or mythological figure for ages before the account of the serpent in the garden story was written into the Torah. In fact Moses, who is the alleged and commonly accepted writer of the book of Genesis, had spent forty years in Egypt and became learned in all the wisdom of Egypt we are told in Acts.

And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. Acts 7:22 KJV

This learning would have included an in depth understanding of all the gods of Egypt, which included the serpent.

To put it plainly the serpent as it was spoken of in many ancient myths was a mythological creature that was said to be full of wisdom and protected the “tree of life.” Is it plausible that Eve would blame a literal snake for tricking her into disobeying God? It is a huge ideological leap into mythology to rationalize such as a phenomenon. A phenomenon that claims that a creature man had named and man was ruling over, was the character that actually deceives a human being. The humans were the top of the intellect chain and unless the serpent was a literal serpent with unbelievable intellect, or the serpent was “Satan” posing as the serpent or appearing as a “shining one” as some teach; then this “serpent” must have been a literary tool used to teach some other point.

We know with almost concrete certainty that the writer of Genesis was a Hebrew and in all likelihood was the great Hebrew leader Moses. Without debating that fact, we can see Moses was able to use this myth involving a serpent, in writing the story of the beginnings and fall of man. Although there are crumbs of a serpent-to-Satan relation left in Judaism today, the pre-Judaism faith in Yahweh (God) was not akin to interpreting the serpent in the garden as Satan or any other literal entity.

Moses, as many great writers today, played off a very commonly understood concept and mythological story to tell the Israelite people about their beginnings. Moses knew his kinsmen had been in Egypt for hundreds of years and because of their connection to Egypt would understand the connection Moses was making to the ancient serpent myth. The serpent was hailed as divinity in Egypt and any connection made to this “divine” creature would have held with it the understandability that was commonly associated with the attributes of this creature/god. Egypt was not the only culture to

possess a belief in the serpent as a subtle intelligent representation of divinity, almost every ancient culture throughout time has held a similar belief. Therefore, the Moses, who was the prophet of the only God, carried this story with him. Moses was allowed by the Creator to incorporate the mythopoetic imagery familiar to the people of the day, into the creation account. An ancient story that had all but been lost and forgotten by the Hebrew people while in a centuries-long enslavement in Egypt. Relating a necessary story in terms that were comprehensible and connectable to well understood ancient mythological themes was instrumental in expressing the profound nature of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, known as Paradise.

Satan Grows in Imaginations Over Time

As was said earlier, we humans automatically place the pictures that have been given us through various modalities of stimulus throughout life, into the text of Scripture and other written works. For many of today's believers in "Satan" and "Hell," the ideas they possess are really second-hand beliefs. Historically there have been many submissions of unique and equally incorrect images and writings about Hell and Satan. Looking at the historical evolution of these ideas is immensely valuable in coming to a correct understanding of Satan. Jeffrey Burton Russell discloses explicitly how the formation of the concepts and images of the devil have been evolving throughout history as a result of personification of evil by past generations. Russell says:

The historical approach observes the origins of the concept, sketches its early lines, and shows its gradual development through the ages down to the present. The concept of the Devil is found in only a few religions. There was no idea of a single personification of evil in ancient Greco-Roman religions, for example, and there was and is none in Hinduism or Buddhism. Most religions- from Buddhism to Marxism- have their demons, but only four major religions have had a real devil. These are Mazdaism (Zoroastrianism), ancient Hebrew religion (but not modern Judaism), Christianity and Islam. Through these four religions, the tradition of the Devil can be defined.¹⁴⁸

Many of the well-known images, specifically of Satan, which have taken up residence in the minds of many, have roots in the descriptions and subsequent artistic works of two pieces of famous literature. These are the famous works

¹⁴⁸ From page 4, *The Prince of Darkness; Radical Evil and the Power of Good In History* by Jeffrey Burton Russell Copyright 1988 Cornell University Press

by Dante Alighieri and John Milton. We will talk about Dante's *Inferno* in a little while; as for John Milton, it was in the 1600's that he wrote a famous poem called *Paradise Lost*. This work of John Milton has been acknowledged as a primary source for instilling many of the images one brings to mind today when the serpent and the Garden of Eden are spoken of. The Wikipedia says this in its entry on the epic poem *Paradise Lost*.

Paradise Lost (1667) is an epic poem by the 17th century English poet John Milton. It was originally published in 1667 in ten books and written in blank verse. A second edition followed in 1674, redivided into twelve books (mimicking the division of Virgil's *Aeneid*) with minor revisions throughout and a note on the versification. The poem concerns the Christian story of the Fall of Man: the temptation of Adam and Eve by Satan and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.¹⁴⁹

Paradise Lost is very creative writing indeed but what Mr. Milton has failed to do in his writing which sadly is not always read as fiction poetry but is taken as non-fiction by so many, was to separate the use of ancient myth and mythopoetic language that is read in the Scriptures, from what is real and literal. Mr. Milton apparently decided at one point in his choice for belief system that this satanic spirit realm and its accompanying hell was a factual and literal group of beings and places. His writing reflected his belief, and through that choice of a belief he was forced to concoct or fabricate if you will, in a hodge-podge fashion, an entire spiritual system in which was contained the main component of the supernatural Satan. I state this as somewhat of a presumption in that it seems Milton's work was not intended to be complete fiction but he articulated it as true and literal to a large degree.

Through this belief system Milton has done what countless other hyper-spiritual individuals have done through the ages, and from my experience, do so presently in constructing their own game and set of rules. The manner in which the spiritually minded have developed their own system of operating within the faith practices they adhere to is very much like creating a new game based on an original that had its own established set of rules. If you sit down today and invent a brand new game, such as a board game or a sporting-type event, it is you the creator, who establishes the rules. The game itself may be inspired by another similar game but because you are the designer, you get the privilege of defining the rules and parameters that are built into the game.

For instance, there are numerous word games on the present board game market. Most of us have played or heard about "Scrabble™." Scrabble™ is an

¹⁴⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise_Lost

excellent game that allows each player to possess up to seven tiles with varied letters on each tile. The player is asked to place his tiles in the acceptable fashion according to the rules on the playing board and in so doing composes a word, which scores him a number of points. The total of points varies depending on the letters used, and the placement of the tiles. The player may acquire a double or triple letter score or a double or triple word score. Board games that are similar to Scrabble™ are numerous and one such game that comes to mind is Boggle™.

Boggle™ is a word building game where the letters are all placed on dice in a 4 by 4-square pattern. When the dice are shaken and then settled in place in the 4 by 4 pattern, the player then attempts to find as many words in the presenting letter combination within a short period. The game of Boggle™ accepts the National Scrabble Associations Dictionary to settle disputes on questionable words. Beside board games that were built in part from a concept seen in an existing game are electronic games. One type of word game that is of the electronic variety has taken the notion of building a game from the concept seen in another game to the digital world, yet the creator of the game was free to define the rules and parameters of play;

Mumbo Jumbo 1.0.2.3 by Tamera A Shaw-McGuire

A twist on the popular Scrabble(TM) game. Use the tiles on the board to find words up to seven letters. Use the bonus squares to receive more points. You can play this game online using the Tams11 lobby found at www.tams11.com.

The number of games taken from concepts seen elsewhere is vast and in each of the games, the designer has implemented his own rules. If you try to play any of these games by different rules, you in essence are actually coming up with a new game. The whole point of the designer placing rules and parameters on "his" game is so that it is unique and different from all the other games in some ways. The designer is now in a sense the one who controls how the game is played, that is if the player agrees to play according to the prescribed rules. John Milton seems to have done this very thing by creating images and concepts to go along with his belief system, which includes a cosmic "Satan." He took an existing concept and reworked it, adding elements and concepts so it became a completely new way to see Satan and Hell but still based it on concepts that developed long before his time. Milton launched his concept of Satan and Hell off another concept drawing inspiration from a previous work. In so doing, Mr. Milton has established the rules for his game; only in this instance, the game is not physical but spiritual. In developing his concept, he made it unique from previous concepts but drew from much available thought that pre-existed himself. The rules he decided to play by are

uniquely his and because they are all in the spiritual realm, which is, for the most part intangible, they become unchallengeable.

These are the rules that he seems to play by and because he is convinced that this is how to play this spiritual game he is able to remain in control and appear that he has a form of Godliness in the concept of "Paradise Lost" as it relates spiritual forces to the reader. Milton is not the only one who has compiled a treatise on the concept of a cosmic "satanic" being who thwarted God's plan to establish an eternal Paradise at the beginning of creation. As I mentioned another writer who may have been a catalyst at embedding a false notion of "Satan" and "Hell" even further in the psyche of humankind is a man named Dante. For your reading pleasure and as an aid in understanding some of the origins of the highly evolved, present day concept of "Satan" and "Hell" please peruse the following synopsis of the poem, which is more of a book, titled "*The Divine Comedy*". The most famous segment of the entire work is called *Dante's Inferno*. Here follows excerpts of the poem as synopsized on the internet encyclopedia Wikipedia. The poem is the transmission of a vision of Hell that Dante claimed to have had. The following explanation and synopsis provided by Wikipedia is far more concise than any that I might provide for you. Please note the remarks of the contributor who supplied the poem to Wikipedia. We are told that this poem has had such a great influence "*that it affects the Western Christian view of the afterlife to this day.*"

The Divine Comedy (Italian: **Commedia**, later christened "**Divina**" by Giovanni Boccaccio), written by Dante Alighieri between 1308 and his death in 1321, is widely considered the central epic poem of Italian literature, the last great work of literature of the Middle Ages *and* the first great work of the Renaissance, and one of the greatest of world literature. Its influence is so great that it affects the Western Christian view of the afterlife to this day.

The poem begins on Good Friday of the year 1300, a significant holiday, "In the middle of our life's journey" (*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*), and so opens in medias res. Dante is thirty-five years old, half of the biblically allotted age of 70 (Psalm 90:10), lost in a dark wood (perhaps allegorically, contemplating suicide-as "wood" is figured in Canto XIII), assailed by beasts (a lion, a leopard, and a she-wolf; allegorical depictions of temptations towards sin) he cannot evade, and unable to find the "straight way" (diritta via) to salvation (symbolized by the sun behind the mountain). Conscious that he is ruining himself, that he is falling into a "deep place" (basso loco) where the sun is silent ('I sol tace), Dante is at last rescued by Virgil after his love Beatrice intercedes on his behalf (Canto II), and he and Virgil begin their journey to the underworld.

Dante passes through the Gate of Hell, on which is inscribed the famous phrase, "*Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate*" or "*Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.*"¹ Before entering Hell proper, Dante and his guide see the Opportunists, souls of people who in life did nothing, neither for good or evil. Mixed with them are the outcasts, who took no side in the Rebellion of Angels (among these Dante recognizes either Pope Celestine V, or Pontius Pilate; the text is ambiguous). These souls are neither in Hell nor out of it, but reside on the shores of the Acheron, their punishment to eternally pursue a banner, and be pursued by wasps and hornets that continually sting them while maggots and other such insects drink their blood and tears. This symbolizes the sting of their conscience.

Then Dante and Virgil reach the ferry that will take them across the river Acheron and to Hell proper. The ferry is piloted by Charon, who does not want to let Dante enter, for he is a living being. Their passage across is unknown since Virgil forces him to let them across, but Dante faints and does not awake until he is on the other side.

Virgil guides Dante through the nine circles of Hell. The circles are concentric, each new one representing further and further evil, culminating in the center of the earth, where Satan is held, bound. Each circle's sin is punished in an appropriately revengeful way to fit the crime. The nine circles are:

First Circle (Limbo). Here reside the unbaptized and the virtuous pagans, who, though not sinful, did not accept Christ. They are not punished in an active sense, but rather grieve only their separation from God, without hope of reconciliation. Limbo includes fields and a castle, the dwelling place of virtuous souls of wisdom, including Virgil himself. In the castle Dante meets the poets Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan. (Canto IV)

All of the condemned sinners are judged by Minos, who sentences each soul to one of the lower eight circles. These are structured according to the classical (Aristotelian) conception of virtue and vice, so that they are grouped into the sins of incontinence, violence, and fraud (which for many commentators are represented by the leopard, lion, and she-wolf²). The sins of incontinence — weakness in controlling one's desires and natural urges — are the mildest among them, and, correspondingly, appear first:

Dante's poem goes on in magnificent detail to speak of no less than 9 descending circles and some of those with various zones that are even more

deep, dark and dire than the upper levels of the Hell. The final zone of the final circle, zone 4 of Circle 9 depicts the place for the worst sinners that ever have or will exist. Dante speaks of this tortuous place and then closes his poem/vision in the following fashion;

Zone 4 (Judecca): Traitors to their lords and benefactors (Canto XXXIV). This is the harshest section of Hell, containing Satan. Satan is depicted with three faces, each having a mouth that chews a prominent traitor. Satan is waist deep in ice, and beats his six wings as if trying to escape, but the icy wind that emanates only further ensures his imprisonment (as well as that of the others in the ring). The sinners in the mouths of Satan are Brutus and Cassius, who were involved in the assassination of Julius Caesar (an act which, to Dante, represented the destruction of a unified Italy), and Judas Iscariot (the namesake of this zone) for betraying Jesus. Judas is in the center mouth, and alone among the three has his head inserted into the mouth.

The two poets escape by climbing the ragged fur of Lucifer, passing through the center of the earth, emerging in the southern hemisphere just before dawn on Easter Sunday beneath a sky studded with stars.¹⁵⁰

Both Dante and Milton, although excellent writers, are guilty of prejudicing their writings based on forgone errant conclusions of the concept of a "satan" and a "Hell." Your guess is as good as mine as to whether or not they were intending that their writings become a part of forming the collective consciousness of society for centuries to come. Perhaps, in a style similar to Dan Brown and his book the *Davinci Code*, both Milton and Dante may have professed that their works were not to be taken as fact but were fictional works, which were composed to entertain the masses. Dan Brown has stated that his work is intended to be fiction although it does in fact contain some fact. So too perhaps, did the aforementioned writers make the same claim. Nonetheless, Milton's and Dante's impact through their ingenious work certainly has some parallels to the impact Dan Browns "fictitious" work has had on religious thought today.

As I said, your guess is as good as mine and it may be true that Dante and Milton set forth to develop a work that would be used to inform the readers of their day what they believed Hell and Satan to be. By extension, a large segment of society today, which was future to Dante and Milton, has

¹⁵⁰ The Divine Comedy can be viewed at; http://www.divinecomedy.org/divine_comedy.html. Excerpt provided above can be viewed at; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Divine_Comedy

the common belief in a cosmic “satan” and his abode. The Harris poll quoted in Reuters News, November 29th, 2007, claims 62 percent of Americans believe in Satan and Hell. Perhaps these historical writers were hoping to impart their theology which spoke of the abode of the wicked upon their death, to all those who might read their works in the future. Regardless of the writer’s intentions, both of these works have proven to be a major piece of the puzzle in understanding the composition of beliefs in our culture today. Their writing has definitely helped to form the contemporary concept of the supposed archenemy of God and the Hell the enemy rules over. In addition, regardless of their intent, both Dante and Milton are guilty of placing concepts in the hands of society that they themselves had adopted from previously known concepts. Both these gifted writers wrote through the eyes of their predetermined understanding of the concept of Satan.

Because of a propensity for much of culture to accept hyper-spirituality and the concept of spiritual men and women having special insight into the “spiritual realm,” both Dante and Milton garnered much support for the concepts explained in their works. Although both men were writing through an incorrect, pre-determined understanding of unproven concepts, they were able to write their own rules. Because most people will not question the “spiritual” visions and dreams of others, Dante and Milton were allowed to play by their own rules to their games and get others to play by the same rules without recognizing when and how those rules were developed. We see in this a clear picture of the evolution of a belief or ideology. Persons of influence developing *theo-spiritual* ideas based on preconceived or previously available concepts is a grievous occurrence which has taken place with great regularity throughout history and has affected many. The practice of studying long-held church doctrines, as opposed to rightly dividing and studying the Scriptures from a properly placed historical context, has led many brilliant men and women astray into further doctrinal error. This typical shortfall and misunderstanding has been the error of many writers and teachers who have put forth works that have added to the forming of contemporary thought about “Satan” and “Hell.”

It is little different to say that one could write a book about the Tooth Fairy and her escapades and then have readers all over the world believe that the Tooth Fairy is real. Readers would fully embrace the Tooth Fairy idea and believe that she truly does come at night, undetected to reach under young children’s pillows. It would be ludicrous to think that the readers would believe the Tooth Fairy literally does remove a carefully placed, sub-pillow tooth and place the currency of the respective country in its place. Along with the acceptance of a myth as fact, one must weigh the factor of time into the equation. This plays a big part in how a belief comes to be cemented in the

societal psyche. The longer a myth is told the more rooted into the human belief system it stands to become. Regarding the heartfelt belief of a myth as it pertains to theology there can be no more profound and true axiom than to say that a lie told long enough becomes the truth.

The entire cycle of people designing their own spiritual reality, which I have made analogous connection to one designing their own game or games, continues to happen over and over again, as time moves on. Dante and Milton both did it when they created their own reality wrapped in spiritual and pseudo-scriptural concepts. They presented it articulately and convincingly to a culture that was not privileged to access of information. Because it appeared to be their experiences; and one cannot argue the significance of another's experiences in determining that person's belief system, their spiritual flavor was accepted and began more and more to be the rules by which others formed their belief systems. Along with that process, the established concept became a template for others to fabricate their own "spirituality" which cannot be challenged by another who is only a bystander able to observe individuals as they play by their own rules. This is such a deeply rooted Gnostic concept in our culture that it is acceptable and has become today what is known as Christianity. With over 33000 different flavors of Christianity that have developed since the first century, one can see where one game inspires another and another and another. Down to the present age, we are seeing such diversity in the explanations and understanding of supposed "satanic" activity that it is difficult, but not impossible; to trace the evolution of these fabricated concepts.

The family tree of similar but unique theological ideas and concepts continues to grow and ultimately the original rules for the spiritual game are no longer used, and possibly forgotten altogether. Recognizing the origin and original parameters of true faith though is different than feeling the need to determine the process of the evolution of a board game which begets numerous knock offs and look-alikes. The true faith, if in fact was started by the Creator of the universe who is perfect in all His ways, is more consistent than the creators of various games are. If in fact there is a true faith that is designed by the one God who Created the heavens and the Earth and all that is in them, then it seems reasonable to believe that He would not make a game with rules that needed constant revision and evolution to make them better. His faith has no need of fundamental change. Unless one can reconcile all the apparent contradictions in the entire bible as we have it today and come up with a faith-based stand that allows for a perfect unchanging Creator, they will be left floundering with seemingly unanswerable questions about who God is and how He desires to be served and worshipped.

The idea of one constant format for a game, or to be more specific, a pattern of worship and obedience to the Creator that is intended for all time, is far more comprehensible than an ever-changing set of rules, which are altered by humanity, as time marches on.

Every child has played a game with a few friends where the rules keep changing every time the game is played and often changed during the game. This makes it impossible for the players to establish a concrete relationship within the game and to the game itself. There is no difference with the evolving spirituality in Christianity today, that many allege has its roots in the Bible. These alterations appear to be done in an effort to create a God who is palatable and not convicting of our rebellious desires that reside in our hearts. The pattern of worship and obedience, which one chooses, can be referred to as ones "spirituality." It is this spirituality that should have endured, being more consistent as a rule instead of evolving from one concept to another. As well, it is this inconsistency and evolving truth, which has brought us to the point in contemporary belief systems, where the most common beliefs about of the serpent in the garden contain the notion either that "Satan" is the serpent or that "Satan" inhabited the serpent for his evil manipulative game.

For our pursuit to be closer to being considered exhaustive, I hope to answer the following very important questions. The questions are;

- Is the serpent in the garden Satan?

And

- Is the serpent a literal snake that is inhabited by Satan and then used by Satan to tempt Eve?

Other topics that will be discussed are;

- What style of writing is the story of the serpent in the garden?
- Is the writer of the story, who is thought to be Moses, speaking literally or figuratively or both?
- When did the serpent come to be understood incorrectly by readers as being Satan, the cosmic entity?
- In addition, we will consider how this story applies to our lives if we are no longer able to see all the components in the story as literal components and characters.

CHAPTER 13

Answering The Serpent In The Garden Questions

Now we shall go on to consider the first question posed in the previous chapter.

Is the serpent in the garden “Satan?”

The short answer is, No!

If as some say, the serpent was in fact Satan who had taken on the form of a serpent, then we are back at the place where we are ascribing supernatural attributes to an entity other than Yahweh. If it is true that there is a God and He calls himself Yahweh in the Torah or as some pronounce it Yehovah; then, it also must be true when He says “He is God and there is none else,” as well as when the God of the universe says, “there is none like me” in Exodus chapter 9.

For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. Exodus 9:14 KJV

If there is “none else,” this means there are no other entities with supernatural powers. This would include all the false Gods the Egyptians and many of the Hebrews had come to believe existed and believed possessed supernatural power. The statement, “*there is none like Me*” was made by Yahweh in the context of referring to the Egyptian gods who were given homage by the Israelites and the Egyptians. If we understand even a few of the thoughts the Egyptians had on the topic of the gods of Egypt and that these gods included supposed deities who enacted evil upon humans, then we have to include “satan” as being the same as one of those gods.

It is a well-known historical fact that Ancient Egypt had hundreds of Gods as we discussed in chapter five. Egypt was not as close to a monotheistic