

Who's Afraid of the Morning Star?

The name Lucifer, which is usually identified with Satan, means "Bearer of Light" or "Morning Star" and refers to the Devil's former splendor as the greatest of the angels.^[1]

I first got the concept of the Devil from the Jesuit priests. Those guys were in charge of my Elementary and Middle school education and of part of my High School education too. I first got the concept of God from them as well. In the Biblical theology that they taught me those two concepts are inseparable. God is the Good guy up in heaven and the Devil is the bad guy down in hell. Sort of like a good cop-bad cop situation. They play a different game, but they're both out to get you.

According to the Jesuits, there's an ongoing battle for the hearts and souls of humanity between those two guys. They keep trying to outwit each other in their effort to kick each other out of our minds. Jesus Christ, for example, the hero of the Bible and reportedly one of God's greatest Ambassadors, went around exorcising Devils from people and throwing them into pigs, which then went ahead and threw themselves off cliffs.

But who is the God of the Bible? Well, the God of the Bible is a personal one, an individual or entity who resides somewhere up in heaven, way beyond our sight, watching our every thought and deed. As powerful as this God seems to be to millions of people, to me he often looked like a needy guy who couldn't live without everybody's attention. He may often be willing to grant you some boons, but only if you prostrated yourself before him and begged him. Ultimately, I thought the God of the Bible was a corrupt guy who could be bribed with offerings like good thoughts, good actions, alms, etc.

He also seemed to be a super egomaniac guy with a humongous inferiority complex who wouldn't tolerate the slightest insinuation on his name. For example, if you were to say that God is a nincompoop (for the love of God, don't say it!), you would run the risk of having him cast the greatest calamities on you for the rest of your life.

Can you picture this? A guy with a power so great that he can create an entire Universe with all the diversity of life and things that exist in it, a guy capable of creating complex beings such as we humans are, could he be as insecure and paranoid as to be constantly wiretapping our thoughts and conversations so that he could vent his rage and resentment on his offenders and ultimately send them to a Guantanamo-like Hades?

What kind of God would that be?

But, anyway, I'm not here to talk about the God of the Jesuits alone, but about him AND his arch-rival the Devil, formerly known as The Morning Star. First of all, as we all know, the creator of that horned, spear-tailed red creature is not an evil foreign force hiding in the bowels of the Universe, but our good ol' friend God himself. The God of the Bible created the Devil. Can you imagine this? The Jesuits always told me that their God was the good guy in all of this, but if that is so, why did he create a super-evil dude like Satan?

There are two basic possibilities as to why such God created the Devil: 1) God is not as good and pure as we might have thought he was or, 2) God is not the omniscient and omnipotent guy the priests would have us believe he is.

According to possibility No.1, God created the Devil because he's a part-time sadist. He often enjoys torturing people, making us suffer. But he's sort of like the CIA used to be in Central America and other parts of the world during the 50's, 60's and 70's. He doesn't like to get his own hands dirty, so he tortures people by proxy. "Ah!" he said to himself one day, "Being the omnipotent guy that I am, I'm going to create my own personal Gestapo Chief and will send him down to Earth to do all the dirty work for me."

So he created Satan, who in turn created his own cohorts of lesser Devils to help him do the job (like the lesser Devils Jesus exorcised from people and threw into pigs). Smart dude the Jesuits' God. In his scheme of things, he would get the credit for all the good things in creation while the other guy, Lucifer, would get the blame for all the bad ones, even though it was Him who created him for that purpose.

Now, possibility No.1 may sound quite plausible to many people, but not to everyone. So if you think that this possibility is a little bit hard on Mr. God and you think that sheer sadism could have never been the reason that he created Satan, then why did he do it? Why did He create him?

Maybe he did it because of possibility No.2. This possibility gives Mr. God a little more credit on the moral side, but takes credit away from him on the questions of omniscience and omnipotence. This is the possibility that the Jesuits constantly talked to me about during my childhood. According to this, God created Lucifer believing he would be like a brilliant and loyal Secretary of State for His eternal administration or something.

But Lucifer was way too beautiful and proud to take any orders from God, so one day he tried to oust Him in a coup d'état, but failed. As a result, Lucifer was supposed to be ostracized for eternity to the rectum of the Universe, but the cunning scoundrel broke loose and keeps coming back to Earth to haunt us all.

So, if the paragraph above is true, what would it tell us about God's power to know everything that was, is and will ever come to be? A lot. For if God is really the all-knowing entity that the preachers would have us think he is, how come he didn't know from the beginning that Lucifer would one day turn into the evil Satan?

Any B student of omniscience knows that you don't go around creating splendid beings that will later turn bad and will end up giving you and the rest of your creation lots of headaches and disappointments. Then why would God, who is supposed to be the A-1 guy, the cream of the crop when it comes to omniscience, create a jerk like Lucifer who was destined to turn against Him sometime in the future?

There are basically two immediate answers to this question: A) Either God did not know that Lucifer would turn evil sometime later or, B) He did know, but he still went ahead and created him.

If answer A is correct, then God is not the omniscient guy the Jesuits told me he was, for he didn't know that Lucifer would someday become the Devil. But if answer B is correct, then God is the part-time sadist we contemplated in possibility No.1, for he knew in advance that Lucifer would someday become the Devil and would someday come to Earth to torture us all, yet He still went ahead and created him.

But, again, let's not be too hard on Mr. God. Let's set aside the fact that he's not the omniscient guy the Jesuits told me he was. Let's disregard the fact that he doesn't always know what he's doing and that, therefore, he's entitled to make a big blunder every once in a while. So one day, out of the alleged infinite goodness in his heart, God created Lucifer expecting him to be His masterpiece, but the ungrateful twerp eventually gave Him the finger and went ahead and became the Devil.

So God blew it on this count. Big blunder, no? And now what? Is He just going to sit there and watch his former Morning Star go around raising havoc, reaping war, pestilence and famine across the world with impunity? Will He allow Lucifer and his Storm Troopers to continue trying to snatch our souls forever? Isn't there anything God can do about this?

Well, if God were indeed as omnipotent as the priests told me he was, there's a couple of basic things he could do. For example, he could give Lucifer an ultimatum; make him an offer he can't refuse: "Listen here, Luci, I had enough of you going around torturing my Earthlings and doing Extraordinary Renditions on their souls. I'm the Boss here, remember? And anyway, your shenanigans are useless. Haven't you read My Book where it says that in the end I win? So let's cut to the chase and let's call the whole thing off right away, OK? Otherwise I'll pulverize your

soul back into nothingness. Do I make myself clear?" And the Devil would understand, would take an early retirement and would never bother us again.

Or if God were in a more conciliatory mood, he could summon Lucifer to his heavenly palace, have him kneel before Him and, touching Lucifer's shoulder with the Divine version of Excalibur, He could tell him: "OK Luci, I hereby turn you into a sweet and adorable God-loving guy." And voila! The benighted Devil would see the light and would become our dearest friend.

Or, ultimately, if everything else failed, God could simply snap his fingers and Shazam! The Devil would disappear forever.

But why doesn't the God of the Bible do any of that? Is it because he can't do it? Is it because he really isn't omnipotent? Apparently so, for if he could do it, but refused to do it, he would have to be the sadist we described in possibility No.1, no?

And so we're back to square one. Either the God of the Bible is a part-time sadist, or he's neither omniscient nor omnipotent.

But there's a third alternative to the Jesuits' God: The possibility that he doesn't exist. For if such God existed, he wouldn't be the One and Only God that the priests told me he was. By necessity, such relatively powerless God (he's unable to get rid of Satan) would have to share celestial power with other Gods, good and bad alike, including the Devil. But I don't think the Jesuits and their ilk would be ready to recant on their One and Only God anytime soon. Something tells me they would rather sweep these questions under the rug forever.

For my part, being the Occam's razor fan that I am, I opt for a very simple explanation: There's no personal God anywhere. God exists, but he's not a person or an entity sitting out there in heaven, way beyond our sight and scrutinizing our every thought and deed. No. There's a One and Only God for sure, but he's not outside creation. He IS creation itself and everything that exists within it.

Consequently, if there's no personal God anywhere, then there's no personal Devil either, for there would have never been anyone there to create him in the first place. From this perspective, the idea of the Devil is just the greatest conspiracy theory ever conceived (i.e., the Devil is always out to get you), and a pretty convenient one too.

The Devil is the perfect scapegoat any wrongdoer can find, for if anyone is ever caught with their hands in the cookie jar they can always claim that: "Hey, I'm basically a good guy. I really didn't want to do this bad thing. The Devil made me do it."

Very often, the idea of the Devil is just a pretext that some people use to shield themselves from blame, so that they won't have to admit that the "evil" one is potentially each and everyone of us. For example, I find it odd that some people should demonize some films depicting some aspects of Hitler's life (i.e., "The Downfall," 2004) because they say such films "humanize" Hitler. What are they talking about? Hitler was never an extraterrestrial demon. He was always a human being quite similar to you and me.

He was clearly an extremely evil individual, but he was not from another planet. He was born and raised on Planet Earth just like you, me and everybody else. He just embodied one extreme of the human equation, the evil extreme, just like some outstanding people like Jesus, Gandhi, Buddha, Mother Therese, Ramana Maharshi and others embodied the other extreme of the equation, the good one.

So who's the Devil in all of this? Nobody is. Not even George W. Bush, contrary to what Hugo Chavez said at the United Nations in September of 2006. The Devil simply doesn't exist. For if it's true that the God of the Bible is omniscient and omnipotent, and if it's true that such God is good and that therefore he cannot be a sadist, then it's also true that the Devil could have never been created. For if the Devil had been created, then the God of the Bible would have to be either a sadist or a very naïve and largely powerless guy.

In a nutshell, the idea of the Devil cancels out the idea of a good, all-knowing, all-powerful personal God. No question about it. The story of the Devil is just a hoax, a fabrication, the greatest conspiracy theory ever concocted. But if this is true, what would it tell us about the personal God of the Bible? Well, if you didn't wake up and smelled the coffee yet, you probably never will.

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[1] Paraphrased from www.reference.com