

THE BIBLE HISTORY OF SATAN. IS HE A FALLEN ANGEL?

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The Bible history of Satan. Is he a fallen angel? by Various

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THE BIBLE HISTORY OF SATAN.

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THIS title must not be thought strange nor its subject so clear and certain as to render examination superfluous ; no doubt most men have given their assent to a theory which I cannot but think destitute of foundation, but they have done so for the most part without full inquiry, and, consequently, without genuine conviction ; but, at any rate, true or false, the theory is one claiming the authority of inspiration, and, as such, well worthy of our most attentive consideration ; and the object of the following pages is to test popular belief, by Scripture revelation, in reference to it.

To do this the more clearly, it will be necessary, at the outset, to state generally *what* that popular belief is ; secondly, we must examine passages in the Apocalypse and elsewhere with a view to show that they are not to be applied literally to Satan, or if so, that they do not refer to his history at a period prior to the creation of man,

before which time the Devil was what he is; thirdly, we must refer to some texts which tell of fallen angels, but those not Satan and his angels; fourthly, we shall come to the main object in view, viz. the history, nature, station, pursuits, power, and destiny of the Devil, so far as revealed in Scripture.

First, then, what is the popular idea of the Devil generally entertained, and supposed to be founded upon Scripture? Is it not this, that at one period Satan was a good angel; that, moved by pride, he rebelled against God, and was punished, with other subordinate angels, by being driven from heaven; that thereupon he commenced his too successful warfare against the souls of men? This is popular belief, and by that term I mean not only the belief of the vulgar, but, so far as I know, the belief also of every commentator on Holy Writ. But the question for our consideration is, what is the Bible history on the subject? In the tenth chapter of St. Luke, verse 18, our Saviour—but without any allusion, as has been suggested, to Isaiah, xiv. 12—says, “I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven;” but this, as well as the account of the expulsion of Satan from heaven by Michael the Archangel (Rev. xii. 7), is figurative language, denoting the triumph of the religion of Christ over the kingdom of Satan. This is the universal interpretation, and yet it would appear that the *literal* signification of a text, universally

held to have a *figurative* meaning only, has unwittingly paved the way for the reception of an idea nowhere taught in Scripture. But suppose a literal allusion, with or without the figurative application, still the event cannot establish as a fact that Satan was an angel of light, and fell from heaven previously to the fall of man; for our Saviour's vision, as well as St. John's, refers to a period subsequent to our Lord's advent, and therefore cannot account for Satan's state and position when he tempted Adam and Eve to their fall.

But let us examine our Saviour's vision a little in detail (St. Luke, x. 18), "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Doddridge explains this as of Christ seeing Satan's (supposed) fall from heaven on his first transgression, but it seems much more like a prophetic vision, in which he foresaw and foretold the destruction of Satan's kingdom by the preaching of the Gospel, of which, in fact, the seventy were now rejoicing in the first-fruits, and saying, "Lord, even devils are subject unto us through thy name." "Behold," our Saviour adds, "I will give you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and upon the whole power of the enemy," not only alluding to Satan as "the serpent," but literally to the serpent at Melita, and, figuratively, to the power given, by which His religion should survive the persecutions of its adversaries. The expression "fall from heaven," signifying only from great power and distinction, is not without its parallel

in heathen writers. Thus, Cicero, "Collegam tuam de cœlo detraxisti," "You have pulled down your colleague from heaven;" and again Pompey is said, "Ex astris cecidisse," "to have fallen from the stars of heaven,"—in both cases meaning from a great height, but not from heaven any more than I believe our Saviour to mean that Satan fell from heaven. But I much doubt whether the expression is even so strong as it stands in our translation, whether it is not rather, "I saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven;" *that the lightning falls from heaven, not Satan*, but his fall was to be like it in rapidity and magnitude. Isaiah uses similar expressions: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" (Isa. xiv. 12.) But this is no allusion to Satan, nor is it so considered by commentators, but applied to the King of Babylon.

Let us further examine St. John's account of the expulsion of Satan from heaven by Michael the Archangel. (Rev. xii. 7.) This is not a representation of actual war in heaven, as adopted by Milton and others, but of the conflict between Christianity and Heathenism, or Christianity and Popery: the former upheld by Michael, so frequently God's agent for the defence of His people; and the latter by Satan, the prince of this world and its wickedness. In Daniel, xii. 1, we read of Michael, "the great prince that standeth for the children of thy people;" and in a preceding chapter (Dan. x. 13), of the prince

of the kingdom of Persia (no doubt the Devil exercising an evil power over Persia), withstanding Daniel twenty-one days, who is then aided by Michael. In St. Jude we find an allusion to Michael the Archangel contending with the Devil about the body of Moses. (Jude, 9.). In Zachariah (iii. 1), we have Joshua, the high-priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him; a perpetual check given by God's Archangel to the devices and power of Satan,—devices and power so cunning and vast that angels might check, but Christ alone could ultimately destroy, and even Christ *only by His own death*, as we read (Heb. ii. 14), "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, *that* through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, *i. e.* the Devil." Next, let us examine the supposed incentive to Satan's rebellion against God—pride. Upon what is this idea grounded? St. Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy (1 Tim. iii. 6), says that a bishop "must not be a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." Hence it has been assumed that by pride Satan fell from heaven; but if we study the original, the passage appears rather to signify "lest he expose himself to the censure of *the slanderer*," just as the word *διαβόλος* is used two verses afterwards, "Let not the women be *διαβόλους*," "slanderers" (1 Tim. iii.