

Rex Omnium and the Epic Spiritual War

As part of my Lenten exercises this year, I am reading a book by Paul Thigpen entitled, "Manual for Spiritual Warfare." Thus far it has been a very sound and useful read, but a theme (that should be obvious to any Christian) is emerging that has occurred to me before but I've never deeply considered.

The theme is that the Christian life is chiefly about doing battle with the Devil. As the book proceeds, makes a compelling demonstration that one aspect of our life in this world after another is ordered toward waging spiritual warfare in the army of God.

Many people will use (erroneously) the fact of evil in the world as an argument for the non-existence of God. "After all," they say, "if God is all powerful and hates evil and loves mankind, why doesn't he just eliminate evil once and for all?" There are several problems wrong with this line of thinking, chiefly:

- the assumption that God is not doing anything is wrong. He is doing something and is in the process of destroying evil utterly

- the assumption that we are merely innocent, victimized, non-combatants is entirely wrong. We are:

- * responsible for the rampage of evil, for "through one man (Adam) sin entered the world"

- * victimizers, for the wrongs done to people most often are done through the actions and choices of other people

- * combatants, for we are offered the armor and weapons to battle the enemy and called to the mission of spiritual warfare and to help to right the wrongs we have brought upon creation.

Often I've asked, what is the purpose of this life on earth?

I've wondered why Jesus is waiting so long to return in force with his angels. The book I am reading is giving me a new perspective on what might be going on. It is also neatly meshing a number of things Catholic that seemed a bit arbitrary and disjoint to me with concepts that make them far from arbitrary and entirely connected. These are things that all Christian denominations profess to greater or lesser degrees, but as usual, they seem to possess a fullness in the context of Catholicism. Here are a few of my thoughts:

I am leading a Lenten bible study program that provides a framework for reading the Bible in its entirety through the books within it that compose its narrative thread. That is, read the story and augment the story with the supplemental material as you want/need. But what is the "story" in the Bible? It is the story of Creation. The important thing to me is that it does not begin nor end with mankind. It begins before the emergence of man (and I'm not making any claims about how that came about, only that it did, and that it occurred very late in the process). It ends with the perfection of creation with the "new earth" (whatever that means). What we observe about humankind is that the story is not about us, it merely includes us. We enter into the story and we have a roll to play in it, but the story is bigger than us. No matter how significant our composition or our importance in the story, we must first accept the fact that we are not the most significant nor the most important. Here is how the story goes:

- God, complete and perfect unto himself, determined to express Himself in a work of creating, and so he made the heavens and the earth.
- God made man to "cultivate" and "keep" the creation he had made. From the beginning, God made everything for Himself, and He made man to be its steward, to tend to it for Him. He placed a very powerful angel in the Garden to watch over mankind (Ezekial 28:14).

Now this next bit is Biblical interpretation according to Graowf. I am not a theologian, nor do I know the Catholic interpretation of this in full, so you should not take this as authoritative, but it works for me to knit the story together, so here goes:

– The angel assigned to watch over Adam was envious, and he turned on the man. He invaded the body of the serpent and deceived first Adam's wife, Eve, and then Adam, so that they turned from God and sought first after their own gain rather than remaining true to their purpose. The price for their disobedience: mortal death and the loss of sharing in the divine life (which leaves them unprotected against the wiles of the Evil One, and the possibility of eternal death).

– Mankind is cast out of Eden, losing their state of grace. The Devil and those angels who chose to ally with him, fought a great battle with Michael, who led the angels loyal to God, and the contumacious angels were cast out of Eden as well and denied further free access to Heaven. An enchantment of confusion was placed upon the minds of the fallen, so that neither man nor demon can perceive beyond the veil between Heaven and Earth without the aid of the Power of God. Thus the fates of men and demons were cast together into the fallen world, where they wandered into beguilement and chaos.

– But God in His Mercy would now allow even for the willful self-destruction of the stewards He appointed over his Creation to bring His magnum opus to ruin. For in imbuing mankind with an immortal soul, He promised eternal life, and in making mankind both spirit and matter, He made mankind complete only when the human person is both matter and spirit, and thus the honor of His promise requires man a material world to dwell in. But God is a God of justice, and though the angels, with perfect knowledge of God, have no possibility of redemption, mankind does, but Justice demands recompense, and so through man must come payment for man's transgression. As the fall of creation came through the free choice of man, so must the payment come through the free choices of men.

– And so God began the task of redeeming mankind by leading

him from his fallen state back to a state of grace. He called to man, led his chosen people, guided them until he had prepared the world for His coming.

– At the pivotal point in the history of the world, God entered into it, to deliver his message to fallen mankind, to instruct them in the way to salvation for Creation. And because only He could know it, and only He is able to deliver Justice, and since redemption must come through recompense paid by humankind, God Himself became a man, through the free cooperation of Mary, in the person of Jesus, the Christ. A great power rippled across time and space when He was Incarnated as Man, for in sharing His divine Nature with the nature of a man, the Son, Jesus, became dependent Himself upon a material body in order to be fully complete. No longer could creation be undone, for now it was fused with the Godhead.

– Just as man's fate was tied to creation, the Son's fate was tied to man's. And though the Son never sinned, nor shared in the culpability of Adam, yet the Son suffered the fate of Man: He died a mortal death. But death could not contain Him, for the Son, being God, is Eternal, and so the Son rose from the dead, and having paid the ultimate price for the transgression of his earthly kind, received the reward that was Adam's treasure: perfect presence in the Divine life and stewardship of all Creation.

– So Jesus became Rex Omnium, King of All That Is, and the King of All set forth to raise an army to do battle with the Evil Spirits, and he equipped his army with armor (Ephesians 6:10+). And he gave them weapons (2 Corinthians 10:4).

– And now, in the present, we are soldiers in a spiritual war. We fight an enemy that is not human and that we cannot see. It is an enemy that can manipulate the material world with supernatural power, that can impress ideas and motivations into our very minds, that can even take control of our bodies. It is an enemy that has superior intellect and power to our own. Our only defense is the shield of faith, which surrounds us with divine interventions according to our belief and

understanding, and our only offense the weapons of grace granted by the power of our faith. Chief amongst our armor and weapons are Prayer and the Sacraments. Our allies are the Saints in Heaven, the angels of God, the Holy Spirit, and the King of All.

– On the Last Day He will come, and with His angels and the saints will sweep the Enemy from the earth and free Creation from the bonds of Death and Sin.

– And the Earth will be remade, and the gates of Heaven opened, and all of Creation will be restored in its fullness and those allied with the King will receive the reward of life eternal in the presence of the Divine, as man was meant to live. And those who rebelled, both angels and men, will receive their reward as well: the reward of eternal life in the absence of the Divine.

The important thing about the story is our integral place in it as participants in the work of restoring Creation. It is kind of our second chance, as inadequate as we are, to make good on our charge as stewards. Instead of fixing the problem for us, God intervenes, becomes one of us, and fixes the problem through us. That is both encouraging and humbling, but makes clear why we share in suffering the horrors that we have brought upon God's creation, and also why we are warriors commissioned to do battle to save it. It also pinpoints why we need to prepare ourselves for the battle each day.

Take seriously, therefore, your duty to "guard" the Garden, put on the full armor of God and equip yourself with the weapons of spiritual warfare. You are more important and more precious than you imagine.

40 Days

Lent begins today, as opposed to lint, which is entirely different and requires far less personal commitment.

I will be reading "The Manual for Spiritual Warfare" by Paul Thigpen as my Lenten exercise this year. I will also be giving up alcoholic beverages, which, if you read this: <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/15487287/> you will see is not a small effort on my part, though I am more partial to Grizzled Claw Gin than brandy (even Cognac).

I will periodically post thoughts about the book and inspired by the book, as well as, I'm sure, occasional pinings for a "bit 'o the Claw" as we say on Tereathon.

My first comment on the book is this: it is welcoming, leather bound with silver-gilded page edges (which, I suppose, is technically not "gilding" since gilding refers to gold, but it's all I've got), not too thick, but hefty, and 4.5 x 7 inches so it isn't a burden to carry, has a ribbon bookmark (appropriately black) sewn into the binding for my convenience, and sports a simple tooling on the cover: simply a border and a sword. It carries concretely substantial in the hand, and with its stylish, simple, old-world look, feels an ample weapon for hurling at devils lurking to steal the soul. The first chapter is deliciously entitled "Know Your Enemy," so that even before one begins, the aura of a warrior seems to settle around the room.