

**CHRISTIAN ETHICS, MORALS AND VALUES**

**-OR-**

**THE TEMPTATION TO DO GOOD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

More and more, for my own understanding of things, I take the "Anna" approach -- I refer to "Anna" as in "Mister God this is Anna". I try to break things down to their simplest parts and ideas.

p.19 of "Mister God this is Anna"

The local parson talked with Anna, then age 5 or 6:

The Parson said to Anna, "Do you believe in God?"

"Yes"

"Do you know what God is?"

"He's God!"

"Do you go to church?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I know it all!"

"What do you know?"

"I know to love Mister God and to love people and cats and dogs and spiders and flowers and trees ... with all of me."

Then again, describing Anna:

P. 20: "The idea of collective worship went against her idea of private conversations with Mister God. As for going to church to meet Mister God, that was preposterous. After all if Mister God wasn't everywhere, he wasn't anywhere. For her, churchgoing and Mister God talks had no necessary connection. For her the whole thing was transparently simple. You went to church to get the message when you were very little. Once you got it, you went out and did something about it. Keeping on going to church was because you hadn't got the message or didn't understand it or it was 'just for swank'". (Swank means to be stylish.)

Anna understood basic truth.

### **WHAT IS CONFUSING ABOUT TEMPTATION:**

Temptation is never about making me a better Christian or a better person. The value of temptation to me is to ground me and settle me into who I am -- not to make me who I am. Temptation is always about God's life flowing through me to others.

When you are grounded and settled into who you are, then you truly are the savior and intercessor to your world.

Temptation is something you get caught up in at the moment and then you come back to who you are.

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ". (Eph. 4.13)

### **THE FLOW OF THE UNIVERSE**

The universe always flows "out from the middle". God is the middle and the universe is inside Him.

God is love and therefore He is God for others. That is basic truth and is how things "flow". Everything is reconciled to Him through the blood of His cross. (Col. 1:19-21) He now lives, "flows" His love, His life in us, through us, as us. (Gal. 2:20) Our focus is now not on us, but rather on the ministry of reconciliation -- (2 Cor. 5:18) -- that's the Truth, as Jesus is the Truth (John 14.6), living His life through us.

### **TEMPTATION MUST ALIGN ITSELF WITH BASIC TRUTH:**

Our topic is temptation. I'm not sure how to define temptation. But the topic itself is not relevant. There is only one topic anyway -- Jesus.

Temptation must result in the God's life flowing through us to others. It has to. God's creation will operate as He designed it to operate -- from the middle out as His expression. That is true despite "appearances" of the opposite -- that the universe is separate from God, not eternally an expression of God. Seeing truth despite appearances requires faith -- which we will talk about in a moment.

### **TEMPTATION CAN BE VIEWED NEGATIVELY OR POSITIVELY:**

Now, temptation, like anything else viewed two ways, negatively or positively -- appearance or reality.

From the appearance side, temptation can be explained as something happening "to me". It is "about me". For the confused Christian, it is part of my Christian self-improvement program, maybe, because I have done something wrong, or maybe God is teaching me a lesson.

Or.

From the reality side, when, knowing that we are all fathers, intercessors, other-lovers or however you describe yourself -- you know temptation is not happening "to me". Temptation must operate in accordance with basic truth -- love flows out. Therefore, ultimately, temptation is not "about me" -- it must be about the life and love of God being expressed to others.

The only "about me" thing is that temptation provides the opportunity to further ground and settle me into the reality of Jesus living His life in me, through me and as me. However, that opportunity is only an intermediate step in the flow of love to others.

### **HUMANS ARE THE ONLY ONES NEEDING MIND RENEWAL:**

A mind renewal by revelation is required to understand that temptation is the method God uses for believers to be grounded and settled into who they are -- for the purpose of His life to flow to others. Whereas, for the most part, Christianity has it backwards, that temptation is just for me -- for my "Christian growth".

It seems to me that all of creation, except humans and especially Christians, just are who they are without question. All of creation just "is", as God created them, and don't think twice about it. Birds are birds, fish are fish -- the list goes on. And all creation does express God. Christians are the only confused part of creation -- not sure who they are. But we do have an excuse. The "who we are" did change at the moment of salvation. We were a vessel of wrath, now a vessel of mercy. But it takes a

while for the mind to catch up. And, with that change, eventually comes the revelation of union with our Creator.

### **ORIGINAL TEMPTATION AND ORIGINAL OPPORTUNITY:**

Now, there is a saying, to paraphrase, "I learned everything I needed to know in kindergarten." Well, in a sense, the first three chapters of Genesis is our kindergarten and from it we can learn most everything we need to know.

What is Original Temptation? Original Temptation is satan's temptation to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

God had warned Adam that if he ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that he would die -- a spiritual death. (Gen. 2.17)

Satan, in the form of the serpent said, "... unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Gen. 3.4-5)  
That is Original Temptation -- the temptation to do good.

Original Temptation, in the "Garden", although it produced "original sin" could potentially have produced "original opportunity".

Temptation always produces "opportunity" -- which we will discuss in a moment. "Original temptation" actually gave opportunity for Adam and Eve -- of which they did not avail themselves. They could have told satan to "pound sand" and decided to eat from the Tree of Life and become grounded and settle into their union, instead of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But they didn't.

### **ORIGINAL TEMPTATION IS REALLY OUR TEMPTATION:**

Now, I think this whole discussion of temptation is our personal experience of Genesis 3. When we experience temptation, we are in the Garden, in front of both trees. So, today, have the choice of one tree or the other. One tree is death. One tree is life. Choose life.

The real choice, when standing in front of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is the opportunity to either "be

yourself" or to "be someone you are not". "Yourself" being Jesus as you and you are nothing but Jesus as you. But, the Christian may not know that, so despite who you are, you can live as if you are someone else. In practice this means eating the fruit of the wrong tree.

Every temptation is an offer to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

So, if you compare our temptation with that of our parents, Adam and Eve, it must be understood that our temptation is exactly the same quality as their temptation. The same is true of Jesus' temptation, and I will discuss that further.

Despite the fact that Adam and Eve lived in God's garden with full access, 24/7, to the Tree of Life -- Jesus -- our parents chose religion -- focusing on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They gave into the temptation to see and process life in an ethical manner -- with the promise that they would be "like God" -- if they learned how to avoid evil and do good.

The reality is that we are a branch of the Tree of Life with His life flowing through us to our world all the time, eternally. Temptation, understood properly, gives us the "opportunity" to become further and further grounded in the reality of our union with the Tree of Life.

"We see that the uniqueness of the Gospel is that when He who is self-giving love takes over a human life, the one who is taken over himself becomes an other-lover, and not just blessed but a blessing, not just healed but a healer, not just loved but a lover." NPG

#### **ORIGINAL TEMPTATION PRODUCED ORIGINAL RELIGION:**

I think the "original temptation" was satan's call to live a life based upon ethics, morals and values -- in other words, a "religious" life.

That notion is quite contrary to the normal way of thinking of temptation -- the stirring of the desire to do evil -- which is definitely part of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Either way it's the wrong tree.

The temptation to do evil is easy to deal with -- "that's not me and so that's that...". The temptation to do good is

another story. The temptation to do "good" as presented to the Christian -- as mostly preached in the "church", is far more subtle, almost impossible to detect the hand of satan and much more likely to keep the Christian's focus off who he really is. That is until the utter frustration with Christianity sets in and the believer is more likely to embrace his death on the cross with Jesus.

#### **HOW I BEGAN THINKING ABOUT TEMPTATION:**

I attend a non-denominational church. My wife and stepson are members. I have not formally joined. I like the church, but it's a bit frustrating at times.

The topic of temptation crystallized when I attended two Wednesday night church meetings on the topic of "Christian ethics, morals and values". The man, who taught the class, is a fireman, and he teaches regular "ethics, morals and values" to other firemen and policemen. My mind was racing the whole time.

At the conclusion of the first meeting I said privately to the speaker "I'm a lawyer, I really don't have any ethics, morals or values". He thought that was funny. He laughed. I didn't laugh. Then, I corrected myself and said, "I'm a Christian, I have no ethics, morals or values." Well, he did not think that was funny and stopped laughing. I went on and said "I have Jesus living His life in me, as me". I suggested that a Christian focusing on and living a life of "ethics, morals and values" was exactly what happened in the FIRST and MOST BASIC TEMPTATION of mankind. Satan tempted Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. You could call that religion -- doing good and avoiding evil, which will always result in failure, exactly where satan wants us. But what is "knowledge of good and evil"? Is that not ethics, morals & values? That was man's first and still #1 temptation.

I said, "think about what you are teaching".

There was no fear in the Garden until Adam got "religion". His relations with God were normal, casual and without fear. Religion brings fear, distrust and confusion.

At that moment, after talking to the fireman, I realized two things.

#1. I realized just how subtle satan is, especially on the subject of temptation. "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made." (Gen. 3.1) He has thoroughly convinced the world and, more important, the church that his influence is to tempt people, especially Christians, to do evil -- murder, steal, hate, look at internet pornography, etc. -- and he does these also. But, his greater influence on the church is to tempt Christians to do good -- THE TEMPTATION TO DO GOOD IS THE MOST SUBTLE AND POWERFUL INFLUENCE SATAN HAS ON CHRISTIANITY -- to focus on living an ethical life and condemning ourselves when we are not able. His influence is to continually eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, when the Tree of Life is right there. The Tree of Life is Jesus.

Now, I'm not saying, "Let us do evil, that good may come" -- which is exactly what Paul was accused of saying. (Rom. 3.8)

Satan can get the world to believe that he wears a red suit, has horns, a tail and carries a pitchfork. And he has convinced the church that Christianity is a self-improvement program, with ethics, morals and values from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He is that subtle and almost impossible to detect. I'm blowing his cover.

I quote: "This trying to do good becomes a believer's chief sin, in place of trying to do evil, the sin of the unbeliever". NPG, GOD UNLIMITED p. 106

#2. I realized exactly what my frustration is with the church. This subtle temptation of satan to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil means the focus of Christianity, as preached and taught, is that once you are saved Christianity is a "self-improvement program" -- doing good and avoiding evil. So following that logic, temptation is about improving my "walk with God" -- when it is already a union and can not be improved except to understand, fully, the reality of union with the Savior.

Now, here it is: when the Christian keeps his focus on himself he never comes to the full realization of Christ in me, as me -- Fatherhood as described in I John.

The "spiritual warfare" is not about whether or not satan can defeat God in the end or the battle against sin. That is silly. The only spiritual warfare I see is satan's attempt to get us to take our eyes and focus off of the total truth of Jesus living His life in us, as us. In other words, can he get you to believe that you are a struggling, sinner "barely" saved by grace?

The church would never give satan credit for pushing morality among Christians. He's too subtle to get caught doing that. He has the world convinced he's pushing evil. Just think about how subtle that lie is. When satan has someone in front of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil he can push either way. To the one inclined to do evil -- tempt with evil -- and to the one inclined to do good -- tempt with good.

Children - Young Men - Fathers, has nothing to do with quality only one's perception of himself. Children and Young Men are all about me. They are far more susceptible to the Big Lie of Separation & Self-Improvement.

Think about the influence of satan on the "young man" Christian [95% of the church] when he is tempted. He's got him in front of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and satan will say, "come on now that you are saved, Jesus will "help you", "empower you", "show you the way", "give you love" -- so that you can "live by his commandments", "please him", "earn jewels for your crowns", "over-come sin", "be better because unbelievers are watching", etc., etc. "I write unto you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the wicked one." (I John) John doesn't say this is good -- only this is indicative of where you are at -- certainly not intended to be permanent.

While those ethics, morals and values remain the focus of the Christian, he never embraces union.

By the way, I went back next Wednesday, thinking "maybe". I wasn't laughing.

**SATAN' S FALL:**

**Satan's Fall**

by  
Norman P. Grubb

"Satan authored his fall;  
Not from being evil,  
But by trying to be God."

And, his influence on us is "trying to be like God by being good".

**THE CHRISTIAN, IN FACT ALL THE CREATION, IS EXACTLY WHERE  
GOD HAS THEM:**

I don't fault anyone for being who they are and living where they're at. I only shed light -- speak the truth in love when the time is right.

You don't know why God has revealed His Son in you, instead of someone else -- since He loves all the same. You don't know why God made Galatians 2:20 real to you. He did. I really can't explain, why, at age 19 I went to hear this old missionary speak at All Saints Episcopal in Fort Worth, Texas and then bought his book, "The Spontaneous You".

I was barely a Christian, a Jewish-Christian, for one year and I was already fed up with "ethics, morals and values". I had already been filled with the water from the Tree of Life and now satan wants me to start eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

I would still go through the Catholic Church, the Southern Baptist Church, the Assembly of God Church, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, speaking in tongues, Bill Gothard, Christian "book of the month club" -- but I was still fed up with it and every time Norman came to Fort Worth, I was there and bought another book and I knew he was right.

So my point is it's pure grace that any of us know Union. We have certainly not earned the "knowing" that Jesus lives in us as us. It certainly is not a Christian's fault that he is stuck in the "young man" phase of Christianity, as described in I John -- children, young men, fathers. It's not his fault that he can not see the influence of the wicked one and although he is saved, still succumbs to the

temptation to live the "ethical life". The temptation to be the "young man" of I John: "You are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the wicked one."

Christian "growth" is mistakenly thought, by the "young man", who is all about himself, in terms of: getting closer to God, knowing more, understanding more, living better, praying more, fighting the devil, reading the bible more, doing more good works, witnessing more, saving more souls - - whatever, until such time as? What?

"[E]ver learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the *truth*" (2 Tim. 3:17) "Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." (Gal. 4.1)

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." (Heb. 5.12)

Where does it end -- this is all about the temptation to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine (Christian 'how-to' books), by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive..." Eph. 4.14

### **THE REALITY OF FATHERHOOD OF EVERY CHRISTIAN:**

Reality is that we are a permanent branch of the Tree of Life and never, ever have to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But we don't all know that. Many Christians believe that ethics, morals and values -- the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil -- is a necessary part of "Christian growth". The mistake is that "Christian growth" is only growth in understanding by revelation -- the renewing of the mind.

I like to use I John terminology: Children, Young Men (Women) & Fathers. As NPG described it "salvation, sanctification and saviourhood". This whole discussion of temptation and the two trees ties in with thoughts of Christian growth.

If Christian "growth" were a process of "becoming" then it would make sense to talk about temptation as part of that process. Christian "growth" is only in the "understanding" of who you already are and the grounding and fixing in the reality of Jesus in you, as you. The contribution of temptation is about the grounding and the fixing, but not for us, for others.

I quote: "Just here lies the error of God's people, and the deceit of Satan. He will always make it appear to us that there is still this old separation, the fruit of the fall. God is still away there in heaven, while we are here on earth; whereas the Scripture says that, even with regard to the risen and ascended Christ, we are raised and seated with Him -- in Him in the heavenlies, even as He is in us in the earthlies, a spiritual union beyond adequate description by human language. Satan knows that if he can keep us in the delusion of separation, we are at his mercy, weak in a crisis, wavering in a decision. We feel our weakness, bewail our ignorance, for we see our separate selves and know their limitations and corruptions; and the best we can attain to is to call on God to send help from without, and struggle to believe that He will." NPG p.27  
TOUCHING THE INVISIBLE:

And on page 57: "Thus in actual experience we feel and see carnality, until unbelief is reversed and transmuted into bold acceptance and declaration of the established truth in Christ, that we are dead and that our life is hid with Him in God."

I compare a newborn Christian to a fertilized human egg -- a one-cell embryo. The one-celled human being is already, genetically, all the person he will ever be. He just doesn't know it and hasn't developed or tested himself. His genetics are set. He is 100% a complete human being.

At the very moment of faith the Christian is all he will ever be, except he doesn't know it. Why? Because there is a swift and immediate replacement of Satan for God, and it is absolute and complete. So the newborn Christian, as the one-cell, genetically complete human, is 100% Jesus in him, as him. He just doesn't know it. He is already a Father as described by I John. By that I mean the Father "knows Him who is from the beginning", a co-savior, an "other-lover" and an intercessor -- "as He is, so are we in this world". I John 4.17.

## **JESUS BECAME FIXED BY HIS TEMPTATIONS:**

Here's the most important aspect of this discussion of temptation.

Jesus was not born fixed in the revelation of who He was -- the Messiah. He had to become fixed. He had to be offered a bite of the apple -- from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." (Heb. 5.8) "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4.15)

He was always tempted. Although we only know the tip of the iceberg. Jesus went through the same process of fixing and grounding in His reality of saviourhood as we go through in the fixing and grounding of co-saviourhood and it is by the way of temptation.

Compared to the temptations that Jesus experienced, and as I said about Adam and Eve, our temptations are of the exact same quality. What I mean by that is the Jesus was presented with the same opportunity that we are when tempted. Remember that temptation is an opportunity to be yourself or not. By choosing to be yourself, you ground yourself deeper into the reality of who you are. Think of any example of having to choose two courses of action. I could react to the situation that is happening to me -- or -- realizing who I am -- ground myself in the Life that lives and flows in me.

His identification with us is complete. His temptations were exactly as ours today. Jesus, as a human, stood before the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Satan did not show up in a red suit. "Wouldn't it be *good* to be an earthly king? You would be a kind and benevolent king, unlike Caesar. You could get everyone to believe in you now." In a sense, as discussed, this is temptation to do good -- to focus on ethics, morals & values -- as a means to accomplish His end. If you control the world and all the people you certainly could get the gospel out more efficiently. As 100% human the thought had to occur to Jesus that this might be a route to go. The crucial moment comes when He rejected that opportunity to be someone that He was not. As a result, at the beginning of his public

ministry, He became further grounded in who He was. He was not to be an earthly king, but rather the crucified messiah.

And again, Matthew 26.39 "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..." This temptation was presented to allow Him, maybe, more time to get the word out. However that would avoid the purpose of his birth. Then the decision "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

I've actually heard Christian say "I want to get to the point where I am so close to God that I am no longer tempted." Jesus was tempted up to the last 18 hours of his human life!

We have to go through the same process. When temptation happens, it is never a question of do this "it is good" or don't do that "it is bad". The question always is "who am I? I am Jesus in my form, to my world". That is how temptation is processed -- eating from the Tree of Life.

Christians do this, Christians don't do that. How did Jesus deal with that little voice in his ear -- the temptation to do good and avoid evil -- His temptations -- "Messiahs don't drink wine, Messiahs don't whip people, Messiahs don't ruin other people's temple businesses, throw their money on the floor and scatter their goods. Messiahs don't get angry." He said "just be quiet and get away from me, I know who I am." Jesus was fixed in the revelation of who He was.

With temptation comes the opportunity for grounding and settling the reality of our union. We are His body, His hands, and His mouth in this world. John 5.17: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

### **TEMPTATION DEVELOPS FAITH**

With temptation comes the choice to be "who you are" or "be someone else". Who you are is easy. You are Jesus Christ to your world. You are His perfect expression. "Someone else" would be a confused and struggling Christian on a self-improvement program.

I said I would talk about faith and here is how faith ties in.

The only way to understand life on this side or the other side (after physical death) is to live by faith. All of life is operated by faith, on some level or another.

Faith is seeing reality over appearance. Faith is seeing need met.

James says (James 1) <sup>2</sup>"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers *temptations*; <sup>3</sup>Knowing this, that the trying of your *faith* worketh patience. <sup>4</sup>But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

We are "perfect and entire" in our person. James had to know that. The fact of Jesus living in me, as me, makes me "perfect and entire". Therefore, James is not talking about the perfecting of our person, but rather the perfecting of our faith -- by temptation. But remember, the perfecting of my faith is not "about me" -- it is always "about others".

And in being about others, living by faith, you can be in the church seeing the "young men and women" as "fathers". You can see the one denying Jesus as "saved". You can speak the truth in love to anyone. To the unsaved you can say "Jesus is the One you are looking for". To the confused Christian you can say "Jesus is the One you are". "[A]nd calleth those things which be not as though they were." Rom. 4.17

But what is faith -- ultimately it is living and being in God's truth -- I am God's son -- Jesus living His Life in me for others.

On the other side of life (human death) we see God face to face -- on this side there is at least lingering doubt so we must learn to use faith on this side of life -- so we take every word of scripture and without the necessity of "seeing" the healing we know the healing is complete, without hearing loved ones professing all the right words -- we know they are in God's hand.

NPG talked about "safe sons". What I have concluded he meant by that was when you know who you are you are

trustworthy and, more important, you can trust yourself. It is being grounded and settled into your union identity. So when the temptation comes, you recognize it for what it is and you reject it. You reject the temptation because the temptation is to be someone that you are not.

**IN CONCLUSION:**

Happily, for many, we come to the end of our rope with Christianity as a "religion". In our understanding we move on from "young men". We turn from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and see that we already are a branch of the Tree of Life. We embrace the reality of our death on the cross. We affirm, by faith, Jesus is not only in us, but also lives through us, as us. And becoming grounded and settled into fatherhood, we now know that we are intercessors and co-saviors. That is ultimately how temptation produces life and love "for others".

By the way, the Tree of Life is the tallest tree in the Garden because when you climb to the top you get totally above a life of ethics, morals and values.