Angels and Demons

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A Christian Primer of the Spiritual World

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To the next generation,
Aaron, Beth, Kiri, and Meg,
as you engage the world seen and unseen

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The Diabolical World

Preface

The popular media are filled with books, movies, videos, and internet links on angels, demons, and the spiritual world in general. Highly entertaining for a great many people, these accounts vary in levels of accuracy in their presentation of Christianity. Instead of origin, aim, and purpose of the faith, the media mine Christianity for its props and do so without concern for its context or message. The cross is used to deflect a vampire, candles are lit in front of statues, or a priest is called to shout Latin incantations at the possessed. The deeper questions of what makes the cross sacred, why statues call people to prayer, or how a priest becomes the agent of exorcism are rarely discussed. Moreover, if these questions are addressed, the result can often be inaccurate to the point of making Christianity appear as mere superstition.

I have been teaching for most of my adult life, first in high school and now as a university professor. During the course of these years, my students both in class and privately have posed to me various and innumerable questions on issues dealing with life, death, Christ, Satan, and the Church as well as the occult. In response, I have had to face the hurdle of the sound bite, which our society has come to rely on to supply answers to even its most complicated questions. People expect ready and concise

statements to their queries, but such answers, especially those addressing the spiritual world, are comprehensible only when we know the background, the context, and the grand narrative of the Christian Tradition.

This book is an attempt to construct as succinctly as possible the general framework into which the Christian understanding of the spiritual world exists. To do so, it draws on Christian Tradition as transmitted primarily through Sacred Scripture but also through liturgy and the Creed. It does not address every facet of the Christian life, for no work can do that, but through references and a bibliography, I hope that readers can pursue related topics on their own.

The book is divided into three major sections. Part 1 is general exegesis of both the Old and New Testaments and their treatment of angels, demons, and the spiritual world in general. It also elaborates on eschatology, or the end times, a major Christian theme in the Bible. Part 2 functions as an overview of the angelic realm and, by necessity, includes a discussion on souls, social justice, purgatory, and eternal life. Part 3 addresses the diabolical world, specifically Satan, Lucifer, and the devil, and discusses the development of our Christian understanding of evil spirits by tracing its history through the Pseudepigrapha and literary classics. It also presents an extended treatment of the occult, exorcism, neo-paganism, and even a feast day much discussed in certain circles, Halloween. In addition to the bibliography, I have supplied a short list of other, related works that may be of interest to readers.

This monograph is intended to be, as the title states, a Christian primer of the spiritual world. It is not an interfaith discourse on angels and demons. I write as a Catholic drawing upon the Christian Tradition, and I do so primarily for other Christians. I do not pretend to write on how other faiths view and deal with the realm of spirits. I am an outsider to all other faiths but my own, and as an outsider, I would be forced to presume a

position of knowledge and authority that is not mine and to risk presenting the tenets of another religion inaccurately and unfairly. While there is some overlap of the subject matter with other religious traditions, I deal with them only insofar as they impact the Christian view or share with Christianity a line of development, particularly the two other Abrahamic faiths, i.e., Islam and especially Judaism.

My hope in this undertaking is that readers will arrive at a better understanding of how the spiritual world, a world integral to Christian belief, cannot be divorced from the faith revealed through the incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of his Holy Spirit upon the cosmos.

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Introduction

Christ yesterday and today
the Beginning and the End
the Alpha
and the Omega
All time belongs to him
and all the ages
To him be glory and power
through every age and for ever. Amen.[1]

Any work which purports to present an explanation of angels and demons, good and evil, or seen and unseen phenomena runs the risk of falling into a dualistic view of the universe. Despite strong arguments against such a stance, we are all prone to divide the cosmos into two equal and opposing forces with God, angels, and saints arrayed on the side of good, holding at bay Satan, devils, and wicked souls, who themselves are forwarding all that is evil. This dualistic outlook forces us into concluding that we really do not know who will be victorious in the grand battle at the end of time; we mortals can only hope that we have not cooperated with the Evil One to such a degree as to ostracize us from aligning with God and his good forces.

I would like to state at the outset of this book, therefore, that the position I describe above, that is, the dualistic notion of

good and evil equally opposed in an eternal battle with each other, a battle whose final outcome is in doubt, is not the Christian view of creation. Indeed, it is the most un-Christian of all interpretations. It is an understanding that is not supported by either Scripture or Tradition.

The Christian faith rests on the unshakeable and irrefutable fact that our lives, as with all creation, are an integral part of Christ's own victory over sin and death, made so by his incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection. Christ has claimed creation for the forces of good, and the forces of evil are powerless to overcome them. Good has already won the battle, evil is on the run, and there is no chance of the tide ever turning the other way, evil actions and human suffering notwithstanding.

What I wish to address in the following pages is how Christianity, relying on its Scriptures, sacraments, and living Tradition deals with what is commonly called the "paranormal." This attempt is not a denial of either good or bad supernatural entities. Angels, souls, spirits, and demons exist, and although psychological conditions can easily be mistaken for them, the paranormal is not solely a psychological phenomenon.

Part 1

Sacred Scripture

Chapter 1

Pentateuch and Historical Books

Within the Christian Tradition, Sacred Scripture not only relates the narrative of salvation history but also occupies a sacramental position. Both the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God in human words.[1] The foundation of the Christian faith rests on the belief that this Word of God became flesh in the person Jesus Christ, a fact that Christians call the incarnation. Consequently, by reading the Bible, we not only see and hear the stories of God engaging his creation and his people but also hold in our hands the very grace and promise that has become incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. To understand the role angels play in our lives and why demons interfere with us, we must ground all discussion on the implications of the incarnation. To do this, we must investigate the Bible itself, for it provides us with the storyline of God's dwelling among us.

The Pentateuch

Genesis

The story of the fall in Genesis 3:1-8 has become so familiar. Often our imagination has filled in details that the text does not

supply. For instance, nowhere does it say that the serpent is the devil or is in league with him; yet, we all assume that Satan plays a role in the temptation of Adam and Eve. Genesis does not support such a conclusion, however. Even as Genesis continues on to the first murder by Cain of Abel, there is no mention of Satan. Nonetheless, God personifies sin in his warning to Cain: "sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Gen 4:7).

This reference provides us with two interesting trajectories with regard to evil and human complicity with that evil. First, sin or wrongdoing is not regarded as an act of a beneficent God; second, sin is equated with a malevolent being or demon whom the human being, Cain, can master. Still, there is no counter-force opposing God; a demon may run interference with the well-ordered universe, but in no way can this demon overpower either God or Cain. Cain's fault lies in granting that "lurking" sin authority over his human thoughts and actions.

Although nothing in Genesis 3 states that the serpent is the devil or Satan, the tempting, seductive tone of the conversation with Eve has most certainly set this reptile in league with the Evil One, if not identified it with him. There is nothing overtly wrong with our tendency to do so, but the association should alert us to the fact that in the biblical narrative, the identification of certain actions to Satan as well as defining Satan as a real supernatural being has a long line of development, and much of that development comes from sources outside the canonical text.

Benevolent Spirits or Angels

Genesis is much more expressive in dealing with angels than with demons. In the very story of the Fall, for example, once Adam and Eve are cast out from the Garden of Eden, the Lord God stations the cherubim at the entrance of the Garden to guard it. These great winged creatures do not threaten or even speak to the couple; they are solely in service to God, protecting all that

is holy.[2] The next citation of an angel occurs in Genesis 16:7. Sarai's slave girl, Hagar, flees the maltreatment of her mistress, and an "angel of God" comes to rescue and console her.

Angels take on a major role in Genesis 18–19. Three angels, disguised as three traveling strangers, stop at the tent of Sarah and Abraham and are welcomed as guests.[3] The three live up to their name of "messenger," for the term "angel" is the English form of the Greek word *angelos*, a translation of the Hebrew *malachah*, which is used in this Genesis text and whose meaning is "messenger." Abraham and Sarah treat the supernatural beings according to the ancient code of hospitality. These three angels depart but not before leaving a blessing: they predict the birth of Isaac (Gen 18:10).

These three angels continue their journey to Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:1-22). Actually, only two proceed to the notorious cities; one, who actually happens to be the Lord, stays back to inform Abraham of the impending disaster, and Abraham bargains with him to save the city. Alas, these angels can only rescue Lot and his family, so heinous is the sin of rape.[4]

The biblical narrative provides a valuable insight in this passage. It is not always clear in the Bible when the Lord is speaking and acting and when an angel is doing so as the Lord's agent. This confusion between the two underscores the closeness angels have with God; they represent their master very well. No matter how difficult a message may be, or even how unsettling or fearful an angelic visitation may seem, angels always bring goodness and blessing to either an individual or a company of people, if they heed the angelic message.[5] This characteristic is one distinguishing factor between demons and angels. Angels are good; demons are bad.[6]

Exodus

Just as Genesis shows an angel identified with God, so does Exodus with the theophany at the burning bush. The text states

that "the angel of the Lord" appears to Moses (Exod 3:2), but the Lord himself calls out to Moses (3:4). Further on, the same kind of connection occurs between the Lord and the angel, recognized as a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. This angel guards the people and leads them out from Egypt and into the Promised Land (Exod 13:21-22; 14:19, 24).

The writer of the Exodus goes to great lengths to show that Pharaoh has plenty of opportunities to cooperate with the Lord's plan for his people, as explicated by Moses; the Pharaoh, however, does not. The text has two explanations for the Pharaoh's stubbornness. The first is that Pharaoh hardens his heart, and the second is that the Lord hardens Pharaoh's heart. This account might sound grossly unfair or, at best, confusing. The purpose of the narrative is not to provide a smooth plot line; rather, it is to show the omnipotence of the Lord God and his abiding concern for his people. The Egyptians believed that Pharaoh controlled the social and natural worlds; Exodus wants to show that the Lord God and not Pharaoh is in charge of the universe, even if that makes the story line confusing.

Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Throughout most of the Pentateuch, other than the references cited above, there are no other citations referring to demons, the devil, or Satan. Nonetheless, there are allusions and a basic understanding that anything that is not from the Lord is evil. The first commandment is a prohibition against idolatry, and reminders to avoid such practices surface throughout the remaining three books, particularly in Deuteronomy 4, 12, and 13. Although there are no explicit references to diabolical entities in these prohibitions, there arises from them the understanding that running after false gods is an abominable evil. We will return to this concept below, but suffice to say at this point that to the Lord belongs the earth and everything in it. To worship someone or something else, therefore, is to deny this fact, and the grievousness of such practices on the behalf

of the Israelites is aggravated by the special, loving relationship the Lord has with the people he has chosen.

Idolatry is participating in a lie and falsehood. The Pentateuch may not acknowledge outright that other supernatural beings exist independently of the Lord, but it does not deny their presence in the world either. From the point of view of the various writers of these first five books of the Bible, the other gods are liars, imposters, pretenders, and to turn to them in worship is forsaking and insulting the one holy and true God.

Historical Books

Angels are prominent within the historical books doing what they do best: acting as messengers from God to his people. An angel gives Joshua the battle plan for Jericho (Josh 5:13–6:5). In the book of Judges, angels appear frequently, and not always with a friendly or positive message. The angel of the Lord who went up to Bochim upbraids the Israelites for making pacts with the native people in the Promised Land (Judg 2:1-3). Because of this transgression, the angel states that the inhabitants will not be cleared from the land and that their gods will become a "snare" for the Israelites. As the various episodes in Judges unfold, we can see that the pagan gods do not actively work against the Israelites—indeed, they are pretty passive. Rather, because God's people run to them instead of the Lord, they exchange a true and loving relationship for a false one, and when they do, their society faces difficult consequences. The Israelites then repent and return to the Lord only to apostatize yet again. It is a cycle that repeats itself over and over. Although the false gods are not equated with demons themselves, since they are false, nothing good can come from them, and nothing does.[7]

At this point in the OT narrative, the false gods are named: Baal and his consort, *Astarte(s)*.[8] Baal was the principal god of the Canaanites, Philistines, and Phoenicians surrounding the

people Israel. Sometimes spelled *Bel* when compounded with another word, e.g., *Zerubbabel*, the word literally means "lord." It often appears in the plural form, and when it does, it means "gods." So, within this system, there would be one chief god, Baal, who was generally the storm god, as well as lesser baals, or gods, each with other spheres of influence, such as streams, forests, etc. It should be evident from the name how heinous it would be for the Israelites to run after the baals. Not only would they be worshiping a false god, but by its very name, the false god in question would be pretending to be the Lord God or *Yahweh*.

Israelites erecting these representations of these gods and goddesses in various places in their land are guilty of the highest form of blasphemy and apostasy, and the Israelite prophets do not deal kindly with them, often condemning the rulers who allow such worship to go unchecked.[9] For the devout Israelite, the singular and omnipotent Lord Yahweh not only stands above, beyond, and over the pagan baals and astartes but is the only God, and there are occasions when he sets out to prove it, and for this exercise, especially in the Historical Books of the Bible, he uses his angels.

The relationship between the Chosen People and the Lord's angels is personal, dynamic, and positive. Angels are *not* gods; they are the Lord's messengers who appear in dreams or in human form at select places and times. The book of Judges has plenty examples of these divine messengers. When an angel visits Gideon, he is moved to action in saving the Israelites from the Midianites by first destroying an altar to Baal that his father had built (Judg 6:25-31). When the townspeople want to stone Gideon for this deed, his father defends his son and tells the townspeople that, if Baal is really a god, Baal himself should be able to take revenge. Of course, Baal, being a false god, cannot harm Gideon.

The juxtaposition between the angel's support of Gideon and the Israelites on the one side and the impotence of Baal against

the Lord's people on the other exemplifies a theme running through the whole book of Judges. Although the Israelites may apostatize and often do, and although this apostasy fractures their relationship with the Lord God, the baals and the astartes to whom the Israelites turn are ultimately powerless before the Lord and can in no way compete with him.

The Samson cycle (Judg 13–16) begins with the visit of an angel to Samson's father and mother. The mother refers to him as a "man of God," which is another name for a prophet, but she also tells her husband that this man's "appearance was like that of an angel of God" (Judg 13:6). When the angel returns to complete his message about Samson, Manoah tries to persuade him to stay for a meal, but the angel declines, telling Manoah instead to turn the meal into an offering to God. Manoah asks the angel his name; the angel refuses to state it, replying that his name is incomprehensible; and with that, the angel ascends to heaven in the flame of the sacrifice (13:18-20). The lesson to Manoah, the Israelites, and contemporary readers is the same: the Lord is directing this operation, and the angel's identity is solely to be the Lord God's messenger; there are no separate honors for him, and he is not to be confused with the Lord.

If the Israelites fall into apostasy, angels, functioning as messengers, often bring them back to the Lord. The particulars may vary with each passage, but there are three constants in the different accounts. First, the Israelites express a need to the Lord. Second, the Lord responds to the need by sending an angel as a messenger. Third, there is no confusing the angel with any deity; there is only one God, who is the Lord.

1 and 2 Samuel

The books of Samuel relate the rise of the Israelite monarchy first with Saul and then with David. There are no accounts of angel appearances, but there are references to worship of the baals and the astartes.[10] Even the passage describing Saul's "evil spirit" (1 Sam 16:14-23) does not discuss possession by a

demon. Rather, the symptoms described most closely resemble clinical depression and bipolarity. Yet, these books contain a very famous and dramatic passage of Saul's consultation with the Medium of Endor (1 Sam 28:8-25).[11] This piece not only serves as the climax to the story of Saul and David but also reveals the application of the laws against the occult.

There are explicit laws against consulting with the dead and necromancy. In Leviticus we read, "Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God" (19:31), and "A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned to death, their blood is upon them" (20:27). Saul apparently enforces these prescriptions (1 Sam 28:9), yet he violates his own decrees in visiting the medium.

Ironically, the medium is able to conjure up the long-deceased Samuel from Sheol, just as Saul requests, who reiterates what he foretold as a prophet (1 Sam 15); matters for Saul are simply following the course that the Lord has ordained. Yet, the fact that she is able to rouse Samuel would seem to validate the claims of necromancers: they can summon the dead despite the Lord's claim on the universe. Nonetheless, the medium's reaction to seeing Samuel (28:12) confirms the Lord Yahweh as the God of the living and the dead. Samuel is a prophet of the Lord, and the fact that he appears demonstrates that he is acting with the Lord's permission. When the medium shrieks, she acknowledges that she and Saul have gone where they should not have transgressed, and she fears for her own life.[12]

1 Kings

The First Book of Kings is divided between the dynastic history of Judah and Israel (1–16; 20–22) and the stories of the prophets Elijah and Elisha (17–19). There are no angelic appearances.[13] Instead, the text concentrates on the apostasy of the people in running after the false gods and Solomon's guilt

in encouraging such apostasy by his marrying so many foreign women.

Solomon has a large harem of foreign wives hailing from Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and Asia Minor (1 Kgs 11:1). These women end up doing what the Lord warned they would do: they turn Solomon toward the strange and false gods (1 Kgs 11:2-10). Three of the gods—Chemosh, Milcom, and Molech—are actually the three different pronunciations of the name of one god in the different lands bordering ancient Israel. Worshiping them is bad enough, but having temples to them within the confines of the Holy City of Jerusalem exacerbates the apostasy, especially since the palace stands next door to Solomon's famous temple to the Lord. Solomon tries to mitigate the offense by building a temple to Chemosh and Molech on a hill opposite Jerusalem for his wives to use (1 Kgs 11:7-8), but it does not erase his apostasy. To this day, that hill is called the "Mount of Scandal." This polytheism entails far greater evils, however. Chemosh, Molech, and Milcom were particularly vicious gods that demanded child sacrifice. If Solomon built "high places" for them, there must have been such reprehensible ritualistic slaughter taking place.

On this point, we come to the greatest visible difference between the worship the Lord required from the Israelites and the worship the gods of the neighboring peoples demanded from their followers. Human sacrifice by law and tradition is absolutely forbidden within the religious tradition outlined in the Old Testament. One of the lessons the Hebrew nation learns from Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac is that, unlike the gods of the Chosen People's neighbors, the Lord does not demand or want child sacrifice; the story is an action statement (Gen 22:1-18).[14] This point is later codified in the Mosaic Law where it becomes an abhorrent offense to "make[s] a son or daughter pass through fire" (Deut 18:10-13). The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah particularly rail incessantly against this terrible crime,

and the fact that they do indicates that the Israelites must have been practicing it, not only the general population, but the royal house as well.[15]

An explanation as to why the surrounding polytheistic cultures felt so inclined to sacrifice their young is helpful for establishing the context and mindset.

The people dealt with their gods on a *quid pro quo* basis. For example, a particular god would guarantee a bountiful harvest if it in turn received tribute. The tribute could be the firstfruits of the harvest, a choice animal, or any other precious and prized possession. The logic continues right up the chain, for what could be more precious than one's children or loved ones? The people were only doing what they thought they had to do, as gruesome as it was. Their religion was not based on divine revelation, as the Israelites claim that their faith was. This situation, however, also serves as a foil to the requirements of the Israelite faith.

Starting with the covenant made with Abraham (Gen 15:1-21; 17:1-15) and continuing with Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:4-15) and atop Mount Sinai (Exod 19–20), the Lord God establishes a loving relationship with his people, and the people are to respond in kind by remaining faithful to that covenant. This mutual relationship is not *quid pro quo*. Even when the people forsake the covenant—and they constantly do—the Lord remains faithful and calls them back. In terms of how this relationship is expressed cultically, sacrifice of the children is forbidden, and a firstborn animal is substituted. Moreover, even that custom will eventually evolve from animal offerings to grain offerings to following moral prescripts.

For the present purpose of defining the line separating Judaism and Christianity[16] from polytheistic claims on the universe, and thus developing a theology that encompasses both demons and angels, it is essential to understand the crucial role that revelation plays. Ancient Israel's neighbors worship the creature

and not the creator, whereas the Israelites, as inheritors of the revealed covenant, worship the creator and not the creature. There will be more about this point below.

Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18) provides us with a snapshot of the differences between the Lord God and the storm god, Baal. The king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Ahab, is married to Jezebel, the daughter of the Sidonian king, Ethbaal (1 Kgs 16:31).[17] Jezebel brings in all the idols, false gods, and prophets along with her entourage. Unlike Solomon and his foreign wives, however, Jezebel does not merely worship the baals on her own; she enforces her religion on the whole land and persecutes the prophets of the Lord God and all other followers as well, and Ahab follows along with her.

Because of this situation, the land becomes cursed with a drought that only Elijah the prophet can lift. In order to show King Ahab and the general population the fallacy of the baals, Elijah organizes a contest on Mount Carmel where he alone challenges the "four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table" (1 Kgs 18:19). Each group is to sacrifice a bull, Baal's prophets to Baal, and Elijah to the Lord God. The scene that follows provides a glimpse into pagan religious practices of that age vis-à-vis those of the Israelite prophet Elijah.

The contest is for everyone to witness who is the true God, the Lord or Baal. The prophets of Baal keep repeating the call, "O Baal, answer us!" to no avail (1 Kgs 18:26). Scholars interpret their "hopping" around the altar as some kind of ritualized dance used to get the deity's attention. This dance is combined with the blood from their self-lashing and gashing. The pain combined with the frenzied dance leads to an excited, prophetic state (1 Kgs 18:28-29). They have been performing this ritual since early morning and enduring Elijah's taunts the whole time but to no avail.

There are subtle yet important differences in the way Elijah handles the problem of igniting his sacrificial fire. The twelve stones for the altar recall the Israelites' covenant with the Lord. The slaughtered bull, the wood, and the altar are drenched with water three times (1 Kgs 18:30-35). Elijah's prayer is direct and succinct. The Lord's relationship with his people is emphasized by naming "Abraham, Isaac, and Israel [=Jacob]." Finally, Elijah states in everyone's hearing, "let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding" (1 Kgs 18:36). This last sentence is important. Elijah is not trying to control or manipulate the Lord as the pagan prophets try to do to Baal, "O Baal, answer us!" (1 Kgs 18:26). Rather, the Lord God is in charge of everything, and Elijah is his instrument (1 Kgs 18:1-2), and this is the point that Elijah wants all to see.

The competition between Baal and the Lord for the people's hearts continues into 2 Kings. Elijah intercepts messengers that Ahaziah sends to Ekron for consultation with Baal-zebub. Because Ahaziah apostatizes in this manner, he brings about his own death (2 Kgs 1:16). Meanwhile, the pagan Naaman, because he seeks out Elisha for a cure, is healed of his leprosy. Naaman even acknowledges that the Lord God stands above the whole earth and has no equal (2 Kgs 5:1-15). The story uses the foreigner, Naaman, who has benefited from the one and true Lord God, to assert the monotheistic faith of Israel in light of the polytheistic beliefs surrounding God's people.

Tobit

Although part of the canon for the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox traditions, Tobit is included as apocryphal material in most Protestant Bibles. It reads like a religious novel, and, for our purposes, it is most interesting because the archangel Raphael plays a major role, as does the demon Asmodeus.

This discussion will concentrate on only these two characters and, interestingly, the dog.

Separated by distance but unknowingly related by blood, both Tobit and Sarah are suffering, he from blindness and she from sevenfold widowhood; each of Sarah's husbands dies before the marriage is consummated. Tobit and Sarah pray to God for death. God heeds their prayers and sends the angel Raphael to remedy both situations. Raphael will cure Tobit's blindness and drive out from Sarah's house the wicked demon Asmodeus who is responsible for killing Sarah's husbands on their wedding night (Tob 3:16-17). Tobit sends his son Tobias to Media to collect a sum of money and pays Raphael, disguised as his kinsman Azariah, to accompany him. Tobit's wife Anna is inconsolable, fearing she will never see her son alive again. When Tobias and Raphael walk out the door, the dog follows (6:1).

With Raphael's help, Tobias arrives in Media carrying with him the heart, liver, and gall of a large fish that had tried to swallow his foot while Tobias was bathing in the Tigris River. Upon entering the house of Raguel, Sarah's father, they are treated to the customary hospitality feast. Raguel overhears that Tobias is interested in marrying Sarah, and Raguel seals the marriage contract that night (7:9-16). Heeding Raphael's instructions (Tob 6), Tobias and Sarah burn the heart and liver on the incense pot as soon as they enter the bridal chamber. The stench drives away the demon Asmodeus, who flees to upper Egypt. Raphael pursues him there and binds him hand and foot. Raphael returns immediately. Meanwhile, before engaging in sexual intercourse, the couple pray (8:1-8). Raphael, Tobias, and now Sarah return to Nineveh, and as they leave, the dog once again follows (11:4).

When Raphael, Tobias, and Sarah arrive at the home of Tobit and Anna, Tobias applies the remaining fish gall to Tobit's eyes, and he regains his sight. Raphael then reveals his true identity: "it was I who presented and read the record of your prayer before

the glory of the Lord; and likewise whenever you would bury the dead. . . . I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand ready and enter before the glory of the Lord" (12:12, 15).[1]

Tobit is a late book within the canon; scholars date its writing to about 200 BC. In dealing with the subject of angels and demons, therefore, it is very helpful in giving us a glimpse of how the Jews of that time interpreted the presence of demons and angels. The demon is called Asmodeus; this name surfaces again in our studies. Asmodeus is also exorcised from the chamber with smoke, though foul-smelling, and Raphael pursues him and *binds* him.

On the other hand, angels, as seen with Raphael, are categorized according to their duties; Raphael, for instance, is one of the seven angels who "stand[s] ready and enter[s] before the glory of the Lord" (12:15). Moreover, angels have a direct contact with God and do everything he wishes and commands (12:14).

Before Tobit dies, he gives advice to his son Tobias. He tells him to take his family and flee Nineveh for Media where he will be safe in the face of Nineveh's impending doom (14:4). Tobit also relates that his countrymen and countrywomen in Israel will be scattered and exiled from their homeland. Drawing on prophetic literature, Tobit also acknowledges the restoration of Israel and her vocation to the rest of humankind: "Then the nations in the whole world will all be converted and worship God in truth. They will all abandon their idols, which deceitfully have led them into their error" (14:6).

Tobit's deathbed prediction introduces a new element into the traditional Israelite interpretation of the idol worship as practiced by Israel's neighbors. Not only does idol worship represent obeisance to a counterfeit deity, but the idols themselves have deceived people with lies, falsehood, and error. Tobit holds that the pagan nations of the world deserve better, and one day they too will turn to God in true worship. The connec-

tion of polytheistic idols with deceit, however, is a step toward tying them to the realm of the diabolical and demonic.

The two references of the unnamed and ever-faithful pet dog in Tobit are the only two positive accounts of a dog in all of Scripture; every other verse mentioning a dog is a curse or a pejorative statement. The writer of Tobit implies the presence of God's protection through one of God's creatures. It is not an exaggeration to say that the dog, in assisting Raphael in his care, is a sacramental element confirming how all the earth reflects the glory of the Lord, and the treatment of that canine in this text has implications for how humans treat God's other creatures.