

has its existence in non-being."¹²³ Sin strips us of life—of God. Evil emerges as a result of personal sin, as we read: "From where did this [evil] come? Is it not the obvious consequence of your libertinism and your choice? It is certainly thus and no one can claim the opposite. Ask yourself."¹²⁴ As a consequence of the Fall, evil enters into the world; it is permitted by God for the sake of repentance and the conversion of humankind: "From this proceed illnesses in cities and countries, droughts, bad harvests, the destruction of cities, earthquakes, floods, the vanquishing of armies."¹²⁵

1) *The Fall of the Angels*

- 142 Evil, as the rejection of God, also applies to the invisible angelic world: "God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment" (2 Pt 2:4). The angels who opposed God are named *devils*, *demons*, *evil spirits*, or *fallen angels*. "The devil ... was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44).
- 143 The fall of the angels was a consequence of pride—self-assertion in opposition to God and in the desire to become his equal. The angels faithful to God spoke out against those who fell: "Who can be equal to God?" "Who is like God?" (in Hebrew, *Michael*). In the liturgical tradition, the Archangel Michael who led the battle against the fallen spirits, is called *Archistrategos Theou*, "the chief commander of God's army." The Church commemorates the feast of the Archangel Michael and other bodiless powers on November 8/21, and also dedicates to them the Monday of every week.
- 144 Other names for Satan (from the Hebrew, the accuser), who is the antagonist of the Archangel Michael, are the Church Slavonic word *Dennytsia* (related to the word for daylight), and the Latin word *Lucifer* (meaning *light-bearer*). By his free decision, the former light within him was separated from its Divine Source and became darkness. Christ also warns humankind of this danger: "Therefore consider whether the light in you is not darkness" (Lk 11:35).

¹²³ GREGORY OF NYSSA, On the Soul and Resurrection, Conversation with his Sister, Macrina: PG 46, 93.

¹²⁴ JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew, Homily 59, 2: PG 58, 575.

¹²⁵ BASIL THE GREAT, Homily Explaining that God is not the Author of Evil, 5: PG 31, 337.

2) *The Fall of Humankind*

- 145 Holy Scripture recounts the story of the Fall of humankind in Paradise, utilizing the image of the serpent: "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made" (Gn 3:1). The Holy Fathers perceived in the image of the serpent the enemy of God and humankind—Satan. The serpent proposed a false divinization¹²⁶ to humankind, suggesting the thought of becoming like God but without God, by means of one's own effort. The devil in Paradise "lured Adam with a vain hope for divinization,"¹²⁷ proposing that he consider the measure of goodness resides not in God but within himself.
- 146 the craftiness of the serpent consists in twisting the words of God's commandment: "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?'" (Gn 3:1, see Gn 2:16-17). The insidious question of the tempter draws Eve into a dialogue with him, which gives birth to doubt within her about the truthfulness of God. The Evil One takes advantage of this doubt within Eve in order to deceive: "You will not die ... you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gn 3:4-5). The deceit of the Evil One is based on the premise that God is deceiving humankind with his commandment, thereby undercutting their freedom, and that by eating from the tree of good and evil, they will become like God.
- 147 The deception of the serpent becomes a temptation for Eve: "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise" (Gn 3:6). Eve submits to the temptation: "She took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate" (Gn 3:6). In this way, our first parents transgressed God's commandment, and through this, sin and evil entered into the world: "Sin came into the world through one man" (Rom 5:12). With the eating of the forbidden fruit the illusion of self-deification vanishes, and instead of the expected good, evil and emptiness emerge: "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Gn 3:7). The sin of our first parents resulted in severing humankind from God, the Source of life—humankind then became mortal. "As the body becomes a corpse when the soul leaves it destitute of its own vital energy, so also does the soul then become a corpse when the Holy Spirit leaves it destitute of spiritual energy."¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Octoechos, Tone 6, Sunday, Matins: Resurrection Canon, Ode 4.

¹²⁷ BASIL OF SELEUCIA, Third Oration: About Adam, 3: PG 85, 57.

¹²⁸ JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, Homilies on Ephesians, 18, 3: PG 62,124.