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THE FALL OF THE ANGELS ACCORDING TO ST. AUGUSTINE

Abstract:

Considering the substantial impact of St. Augustine's stances on the evil in the world, the status and the actions of the devil, and the dangers of collaborating (or compacting) with the dark forces on the development of the medieval theology of violent reckoning against the evil, this text examines one aspect of his use of the motif of the fall of the angels in the analysis of the problem and the proliferation of evil. As one of the last early Christian authors who uses elements from the story from the Biblical tradition and the tradition around the fallen Watchers from the First Book of Enoch, St. Augustine approaches the problem of evil from the standpoint of the importance of free choice and of the intentional transgression. The text first offers a brief overview of the conception of the evil in the Manichean cosmogony, in order to introduce the positions to which St. Augustine explicitly opposes. The important role of the primordial sin according to him is shown, and especially, the status of the devil as a sinner from the beginning, or as a self-determined rebel against God.

The ideas on the origin of evil through the role of the satan are outlined through St. Augustine's polemic against the Manicheans. The majority of the text is devoted to the problem of the angelic (non)blessedness. St. Augustine's position on the existence of two groups of heavenly beings (good and evil) is shown, as is the idea about the awareness, or foreknowledge, of a potentially undisturbed eternal bliss, as opposed to the ignorance (or the foreknowledge) about the loss of this perennial happiness as a result of the intentional apostasy of the bad angels. These few aspects of St. Augustine's complex theology trace his underlying position on the importance of the conscious choice to constantly be(come) better and to imitate God, despite man's initial sinfulness.

Keywords: *St. Augustine, angels, satan, sin, blessedness*

The evil in the Manichean cosmogony

St. Augustine's positions on the devil, his demonic minions, and the relationships of the people with the wicked forces were some of the main stances in the formation of the subsequent theological tradition of a cautious apprehension and a violent self-protection from evil. The story about the fall of the angels from the Biblical tradition and from the famous version about the descent of the Watchers in the *First Book of Enoch* (*1 Enoch*) deals with the problem of the origin of evil as the result of the transgression committed by the sons of God, and their fall in order to unite with the daughters of men. The use of this story of the fall in one way or another persists among the early Christian sources, and St. Augustine is one of the last authors whose works contain clear elements, or motifs, of this tradition of the problem of the fall. In this text the ways in which St. Augustine treats the fall of the angels in his opposition to the heretic cosmogony, and especially in the foundations of his complex theological system will be outlined.

As a converted Manichean, St. Augustine directs a part of his opus to counter the doctrines of Many and the Manichean theological positions. The systems that opposed those of the church fathers had complex spiritual and mythological narratives with suitable teachings and moral directions, especially concerning the origin of evil. In order to adequately respond to such a (type of) material, the fathers elaborated their own stories.[1] According to some gnostic systems, evil had appeared with the creation, because the Demiurge,[2]who had forgotten his own origin, had made the world out of matter. In the Gnosticsystem under the influence of Mani, the dark or evil god (in the Manichean tradition conceived as Darkness, Hyle, Ahriman or Iblis) was of an origin different than that of the good god, and the cosmic events are a constant fight between

[1]The systematic formulation and proliferation of stories was necessary in such an atmosphere of widespread interest in the Christian theological questions, up to a level of superfluity, illustrating, for example, the indignation demonstrated by st. Gregory of Nyssa, who complains about the pervasiveness of theological disputes, following the principle that every person is a scholar of the Scripture and has something valuable to say concerning the acceptance or the refutation of certain Christian ideas. He mentions slaves who had escaped and re-emerged after a couple of days as self-taught dogmatics-theologians, who impressively speak of incomprehensible things. He remarks that everywhere throughout the city there is a multitude of theological issues. If one enquires about the exchange rate for money, one gets a lesson on the Created and the Uncreated; if one asks about the price of a loaf of bread, in reply one gets told that the Father is superordinated and the Son is subordinated. One asks whether the public bath is pleasant, and in reply one is told that the Son had been created out of nothing (apud Bowersock and Brown 2000, p. 69).

[2] Due to the inconsistency in the use of a majuscule/minuscule for some of the terms (such as „demiurge", „devil", „satan", etc.), in the primary and in the secondary sources, this text will also contain such an inconsistency.

the good and the evil, quite in the dualistic spirit of things.[3] It is understandable that the numerous variants of these cosmogonical and cosmological conceptions had influenced the development of the Christian narratives and theological systems, considering the reactivity of the Christian teachings, who had to either incorporate or refute them.

The Manichean worldview presupposes a fight of the light cosmic forces against the dark ones. The ethical and the eschatological concepts from the Dead Sea scrolls expose a clear opposition between the categories of light and darkness. Although Mani was under the influence of Zoroastrianism,[4] being of Persian origin, his doctrine is Jewish-Christian-gnostic, following the Elcesaite community in which he had received his formation.[5] Mani's doctrine is organized around a strict dualism, a motif known and widespread during his time, but it combines various elements from numerous religions. The doctrine was supposed to connect and surpass the teachings of Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Marcionism, Buddhism, the Hellenistic and the Rabbinic Judaism, some gnostic concepts, some parts of the ancient Greek religion, a part of certain Mesopotamian beliefs, and the mystery cults.[6]

It might be assumed that in the development of this Zoroastrian Jewish-gnostic (and even more eclectic) Christianity, Mani had adapted the Jewish *Book of Giants*, thus expanding the preexisting syncretism typical of the Enoch works with references to the Mesopotamian Gilgamesh and Huwawa, for example.[7] This means that it contained obvious similarities with the story about the descent of the Watchers and the birth of the Giants from the Jewish and the Jewish-Christian literature of the time. Reevs thoroughly explores the similarities and the overlaps between the Qumran and the Manichean uses of the works, trying to illustrate as to which point Mani depended on a text such as the one from the *Book of Giants* in his own canonic authorship (Reeves 1992, pp. 9-49; 185-198).He thinks that the Jewish story (or "legend" as he calls it, Reeves 1992, p. 185) on the arrival of the Watchers and the deeds of the Giants played a

[3] A discussion about Mani's dualism, in Koenen1990, pp. 1-34.

[4] On the influence of Zoroastrianism on Manicheism, in Bianchin1988, pp. 13-18.

[5] Forsyth places Mani within this orientation without a doubt (Forsyth 1987, p. 390). On the Manichean *Psalms of Thomas* that have a (possible) Elcesaite source, and about the shared origin of the Manichean adaptations and the Mandaean hymns, in Säve-Söderbergh1949;Van Bladel2017.

[6] On the tension with, and the subsequent domination of Christianity, see Hopkins2001, pp. 246, 263, 270.

[7] The cosmological system containing ideas from Buddhism and Zoroastrianism was oriented around the Jewish and Gnostic Syriac Christianity, and also lead by Bardesan of Edessa and Marcion. On Mani'ssyncretism, Henning 1977, pp. 52-55; Widengren1965, pp. 43-68; Widengren1946, p. 179; Bauer1972, pp. 22-32. On the use of the *Book of Giants* by Mani through a gnostic mediator, see Stroumsa1984, pp. 161-167. On the supernatural motifs in the Gilgamesh and Huwawa story, see Тодоровска 2022.

basic role in the origin, structure and development of Mani's cosmogonic doctrine.

As Forsyth writes, Mani wanted to construct a universal religion capable of surpassing Christianity and expanding the hope for life both East and West(Forsyth 1987, p. 391). He was so successful, that on one occasion the Roman emperor Diocletian was forced to issue and edict against Mani's followers, claiming that the system had infected the entire world, like the poison of a malevolent snake, while records on Manichaean concepts are found in the other direction as well, from its middle-Eastern roots, all through to Chinese Turkistan. Of course, Forsyth reminds us that not only the Romans viewed this religion as a danger to their rule, and so Mani was executed by Mazda's clergy in service to the "great king" of the Persian empire, on account of „inciting many apostasies from the ruling Sassanid dynasty's form of Zoroastrianism" (Ibid).[8]

Three parts, or three phases of the Manichean cosmogonic myth might be identified: an existence before the earth and the heaven; a fight between god and satan and the mixing of Light and Darkness and the creation of the world; and an expectation of the separation of the earth from the heaven. In quite simplified terms, according to Mani, in the beginning, the light and the darkness, the good and the evil, and God and the matter had been separated. The Darkness was self-referential, however: it boiled in itself, filling the need for hatred and strife against itself .The light was forced to undertake some action, but the peace-loving world could not find a way to deflect the attack, not possessing any arms, and nothing belligerent or violent.[9] Therefore, God had to create a new divine hypostasis, which was better suited for combat, and this was the (character of the) First, or the Primordial man.[10]

In the battle between the light and the darkness, the First man was defeated by (the character of) satan, through which the light and the darkness got mixed together, and the light rendered the darkness even more evil. It was believed that satan had swallowed a part of the light of the First man, the First-created by God, which made the parts of the Darkness and the Light to mix, and the swallower of the Light to suffer, as it had begun to act on him as poison. Although the Light was instantly under threat and on the verge of destruction, it won a delayed (or a deferred) victory. The idea is that the other parts of the Light, which constitute the soul, were too extensively mixed with the Darkness,

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[8]As Wright succinctly concludes, unfortunately for Mani, he was disliked by the Romans, the Christian, and the eastern rulers in Persia, and so he got executed on charges of apostasy from Zoroastrianism (2022, p. 241).

[9]On the cosmogony and the cosmology, seePuech,1949, pp. 74-85.

[10]This mythical paradigmatic character, called „Ormazd" by the Persian Manicheans, is similar to the god of the light in Zorosatrianism, Ahura Mazda, who was opposed to Ahriman, the god of darkness.
Forsyth underlines that the existence of this precosmic Man was one of the main gnostic secrets, a key mythological element in the metaphysics of salvation (Forsyth 1987, p.392).

which took another step in this cosmic battle – the creation of the (material, accessible to the senses) world. The world was created as a type of redemption, in order to separate that which had been mixed. The parts mixed with the Spirit of the light (a manifestation of the Light) were transformed into matter and soul. It is interesting that according to this conception, all the parts of nature come from the unclean remnants of the powers of evil; nevertheless, the created world is a prison for the powers of the Darkness, and a place in which the soul gets atoned (although it is also, temporarily, imprisoned). According to this, as Forsyth summarizes, the very creation, if understood adequately, is a redeeming ploy by God, and not a nefarious plan by some satanic demiurge (Forsyth 1987, p.393). The first man of light was saved by the spirit of light, and in *New Testament* terms, the salvation.

The initial situation of mixing, or rather of proliferation of the darkness into the light is noticeable within the various phases of the Manichean cosmogonical plot. The passionate Watchers from *1 Enoch* appear in the Manichean cosmogony as central agents – the rebellion and the procreation are (part of) the same story. The sons of darkness are called after their Aramaic name, Urin, as well as with its Greek translation, „egregoroi".[11]The divine messenger travels in his ship of light (the moon) through the middle of the sky, and it reveals there its forms, both male and female, and gets noticed by the archons, the sons of darkness (male and female). Gazing at the messenger who is beautiful in all his forms, all the archons are filled with desire for him – the male ones for the female form, and the female ones for the male form. Forsyth notices here a gnostic transformation of the Watchers story (Forsyth 1987, p.394).

The male archons ejaculate and the spilled seed, or „the sin", which is actually a part of the light that they had been keeping, falls onto the ground. A part of it falls into the sea (or the moist section of the earth), where it turns into a hateful beast, similar to Saкla, the Prince of darkness. A „great rebellion"emerges from him, and so the primordial Man, the protector of light, is sent to vanquish it. Another part falls onto dry land, and five trees sprout from it, the fruits of which represent sin (Stroumsa 1984, pp. 156-158). In this manner the flora and the fauna are created. From the summary of a typically Christian attack of the Manichean teaching several versions about the stories on the Watchers and the devils can be outlined: some of the angels, refusing the listen to the divine advice, protest against God's will, and one of them falls like a lightning from the sky [becoming the devil], while others, encouraged by the serpent-dragon, copulate with the daughters of men (Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai* 36.3, apud Stroumsa 1984, p. 29).

[11]On the meaning of the name, Henning 1977, p. 341.

Satan and the beginning of evil

St. Augustine attacks these concepts in his works. Apart from the other theological foundations laid by St. Augustine, the issue of the primordial sin takes an important place (*Confessiones*/*Conf.*,2, 4,9). The ideas about the causes for the sin and for the suffering of humanity in St. Augustine are subject to change. Thus, on one hand, he opposes the Manichean idea about evil as preexisting within humanity, insisting on the stance that humanity is responsible for the sin through the possession of a free will, and not through some cosmic force, such as darkness (*De duabus animabus contra Manichaeos*/*Duab. an.,* 10,14). Later on, he states that the free will is not the only reason or cause for the sin. This is complicated, as it seems that in the place where according to *Romans*, 5:12 it reads that „just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned", St. Augustine translates the passage as „in whom (Adam) all (humans) sinned" (*Opus imperfectum*) *Contra Julianum*/*C. Jul.* (*op. imp.*), 1, 3,10; 1, 4,11).[12]Referring to the *Gospel according to Luke*, St. Augustine writes that Jesus is the only one who was born from a woman, and yet holy in all aspects. He had not experienced the contagion of the earthly corruption through the novelty of his immaculate conception and birth. St. Augustine continues by claiming that we all die in Adam, because the sin entered the world through one man, and through the sin, death did, thus moving onto all of the people, of which all were sinners. His fault, St. Augustine concludes, is the death of all (*C. Jul.,* 1, 3,10). St. Augustine then formulates that Adam was, and in him we (all) are. Adam failed (or fell), and in him all failed. This does not mean that people should simply come to terms with their past fall, inevitable sinfulness, and potential damnation, as they do have a constant right to choose, and even an obligation to intentionally become better, by respecting and imitating God's grace.

Christ was tempted by all things, and although similar to a man, he endured in all (the) things, for he was born by the Spirit. Jesus, this means, can abstain from sin. All the people are liars and no one is without sin, apart from God himself. Therefore, it is true that through the joining of (the male and the female) bodies, no one is born and no one can be seen free of sin, apart from

[12]On the argumentation around *Romans*, 5:12, Couenhoven2005, p. 362. The author identifies several elements in the doctrine of the primordial sin ((362-363) developed later in the text. For example, it might be stipulated that the source of the sin is the primordial sin in Eden; that all human being share this sin due to a kind of solidarity with Adam, the ancestor of the human race; and that the results among the people are the inherited sin (the very primordial sin), which is transmitted through birth and manifested in the form of general guilt and of guilt due to a disorder in the wishes and due to ignorance. In addition, according to St. Augustine, the human race suffers its punishment for the sin, because the human powers are depleted, and humans inevitably experience death. The idea is that, as it was briefly mentioned, the sin and the punishment for it are transmitted from generation to generation.

him who was conceived through a different path (*C. Jul.*, 1, 4, 11).[13] According to this, considering that everyone sinned with/in Adam, everyone is sinful, and thus cursed by birth, by the simple fact of having been born (the primordial sin, according to this line of thinking, is transmitted through sexual intercourse, and more precisely, procreation).[14] Still, the problem lies in self-indulgence, which causes man to turn away from God, which in turn causes guilt and sin. Considering that the devil is the reason for this sin, the entire humanity is bound by his chains.

St. Augustine also explores whether satan had been wicked from the beginning of his existence, referring to the idea about satan as a murderer from the beginning, who tricked Adam and Eve and caused death and destruction (*De civitate Dei*/*Civ. Dei,* XI, 13–15). The other angels were blessed, for they had submitted to the Creator. According to the Manicheans, the devil was created by an evil nature, consistent with the idea about the cosmic forces which are unambiguously good or evil. According to St. Augustine, the right to choose is key: the devil himself chose not to dwell in the truth of his creator. Since he is not contributing to the truth, there is no truth in him, not vice versa (*Civ. Dei*, XI, 14). The devil had the opportunity to continuously stay within the truth, but his own pride prevented him from doing so, St. Augustine claims. In a similar fashion, all moral agents possess the possibility to be better, but it depends on their dedication to the right choices.

The Manichean idea according to which the verse „The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning" (*John*, 3:8), means that the devil had been created with a sinful nature (considering that he sinned from the beginning), is incorrect according to St. Augustine, who underlines that if sin was natural, it could not be sin (XI, 14). Attacking Mani, St. Augustine claims that the sin antedates the evil, and that is causes it, so it is a chronological-causal relation of this kind. According to Mani, the evil causes the sin, and each of them is a manifestation of the power of darkness. Matter is not evil according to St. Augustine, contrary to the Manichean and the gnostic ideas, for evil means destruction, not substance.[15] If matter is

[13] Undoubtedly, St. Augustine would not mean artificial fertilization by this.

[14] See inWilson2018, pp. 93, 127, 140, 146, 231–33,279–280.If this is the case, though, it seems contrary to the divine command for people to be fruitful and multiply on earth, or it is consistent with such a command, but implies that God would purposefully want for sin to be proliferated and death to be caused.

[15] St. Augustine wants to illustrate that the evil is not substance, but an incongruence hostile to substance. Some things are harmful, but not evil: if the poison in the scorpion's sting would be evil in itself, then the scorpion would suffer from it the most. What we consider evil is actually an incompatibility of the elements between them, and should not even be called „evil". The assumption is that if something is really and fully evil, then if would be harmful forever and to everyone (*De moribus Manichaeorum*/*Mor. Man*., 8). The universality of evil would mean also a universal harmfulness, which would lead to an absurd.

evil, then it must be universally evil (towards everything and everyone); in this sense the elements would also always be evil. This stance seems anti-gnostic (the evil demiurge who creates the material world). Still, the question about how satan joins the sons of God when they present themselves in front of the Lord (*Job*, 2:1) arises, as well as the question about him having complex metaphysical conversations with God. If he had rebelled from the very beginning, then it is not clear how he still managed to maintain his role under God's rule. St. Augustine wonders how the Manicheans could not recognize the nature of the devil from *Isaiah*, 14 and *Ezekiel*, 28, passages in which it is satan's fall that is being elaborately described, and not some createdness of sinful nature (*Civ. Dei*, XI,15). Acting by one's own free will, the devil rebelled and fell. St. Augustine identifies the devil with „How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations?" (from *Isaiah*, 14:12). Like some other early Christian authors (Origen, Tertullian, etc), St. Augustine also includes *Ezekiel*, 28:13, claiming that satan was (the one) in Eden, and every precious stone adorned him.[16]

The angelic (non)blessedness

According to St. Augustine, there are two sets of angelic beings, good ones and bad ones, but they were all initially created (in) light (*Civ. Dei*, XI,11-13). Some angels turned from the light and lost their blessed and wise life. They still manage to keep some reason, but it is a life of darkened folly, which, as St. Augustine predicts, will be the cause of the undoing of these evil angels. All angels have reason and wisdom, which would mean that according to this criterion, their angelic nature is on the same level in terms of cognition and wisdom. Still, he does not think that out of all the creatures of equal wisdom and an eternal place in the celestial hierarchy, one part would rebel against God, and one part would remain stable in their loyalty to Him. Out of good angels no devil can be created, he claims (XI,13). It is interesting that in chapter 11, when he analyzes the evil angels, he does not explain anything about their function within humanity or in any other area.

When St. Augustine wonders whether the angels who fell had some part in the blessedness, in which the holy angels had rejoiced since the time of their creation, he claims that the spirits that are considered angelic have never and in no fashion been darkness, as ever since they were created, they were created as light. Nevertheless, they were not created so that they can exist and live in whatever manner, but were instead illumined so that they can live wisely and blessedly. Some of them, St. Augustine writes, turned from the light and could

[16]According to the text in *Ezekiel*, satan was blameless in one part of his existence, considering that he formulates that he was perfect in his paths, from the day he was born, until lawlessness (or wickedness) was found in him.

not entirely reach this wise and blessed life which is eternal and accompanied by an assured confidence in its eternity.

St. Augustine further wonders about how it can be determined to which extent these angels participated in the (divine) wisdom before their fall. It can hardly be claimed that they participated equally to those who are through this wisdom truly and fully blessed, resting upon the true certainty of the eternal happiness, because, if they had participated equally in this knowledge, the evil angels would have remained eternally blessed as did the good ones, as they would have been equally expectant of this eternal bliss. St. Augustine adds that not everything that is eternal is blessed, of course (for example, the fire of hell is eternal), but nevertheless, no life can be truly and perfectly blessed unless it is eternal. The life of these angels who rebelled was not blessed, for it was doomed to end, which means it could not have been eternal (regardless whether they knew this or not). St. Augustine determines that in one case it was fear, and in another case, it was ignorance that prevented these angels from being blessed (*Civ. Dei*, XI, 11).

St. Augustine analyzes whether of all the angels created together in a unique state of happiness, those who fell were unaware of their imminent fall, taking into account that those who stayed loyal only got the confirmation for their devoted perseverance after the destruction of the fallen ones. It is clear, St. Augustine writes, that the blessedness which is desired by an intelligent creature comes from the combination of uninterrupted enjoyment in the immutable good (which is God), and the certainty or the firm conviction of the eternal existence in that enjoyment. This is something in which we piously believe concerning the angels of light, but we can demand ourselves whether the fallen angels, who forsook this light due to their own selves, did not enjoy the blessedness even before they transgressed. And yet, if their life was of a certain duration before they fell, St. Augustine allows for a blessedness of some kind, but this could not be blessedness accompanied by foresight, he adds. Or, it seems difficult to believe that when the angels were created, some were created with ignorance either about their pious endurance or their fall, and others were perfectly convinced of the eternity of their happiness. It is hard to believe, St. Augustine explains, that they were not created on an equal level from the very beginning.

Then he rhetorically asks about which Christian would not know that no new devil will ever rise among the good angels, as he would know that the current devil will not return to the brotherhood of the good angels. For this he refers to Scripture, where he finds the promise for the saints and the faithful that they shall be equal to the angels of God, and that, as righteous, they will go away to eternal life (*Matthew*, 25:46). St. Augustine continues with his analysis: if we are certain that we shall not fall from eternal happiness, and angels are not certain of it, it follows that we, the people, are not their equals, but rather better than them, which makes us superior to them. But the truth of the Gospel does not deceive, he adds, which means that we shall be equal to the angels, which means that they, too, must be certain about their eternal blessedness. The evil

angels cannot be sure about this, for their own blessedness was only temporary. From this it can be understood that, initially, the angels were not on an equal level and identical in their characteristics, or, if they were equal, the good angels were convinced of the infinity of their blessedness after the fall of the evil ones. In any case, people should strive to be better than what they are, regardless of some hypothetical competition with other beings.

Unless, St. Augustine continues his argumentation, the words of God about the devil, that he had been a murderer since the beginning, and that he does not dwell in the truth (*John*, 8:44) are to be understood in the sense that not only was he a murderer since the beginning of the human race, when man, who the devil could murder through deception was created, but that he did not dwell in the truth since the beginning of his own creation, which would mean that he was never blessed along with the holy angels, refused to obey his Creator, and proudly rose in his own power, which would make him both deceived and a deceiver. The Kingdom of the Almighty cannot be avoided, St. Augustine continues, and so those who shall not piously submit to the things as they are, proudly pretend and mock themselves by fabricating some state of the things which do not even exist. In this sense, what the Apostle John says becomes clear, St. Augustine explains – the devil sinned the beginning (*John*, 3:8); which means that since the time of his creation he refused the justice in which only those piously submitted to God's will can rejoice.

Whoever shares this opinion, they actually disagree with the heretic Manicheans, and with any other pestilent sect that assumes that the devil had taken from some hostile principle a nature specific to himself. These people are so fooled by this wrong and sinful thinking, that, although they accept the authority of the Gospels, do not notice that God never said that the devil was naturally a stranger to truth, but that he did not dwell in it, by which he meant that the devil fell from the truth, in which, if he had stayed to dwell and to participate, would have remained in eternal bliss with the holy angels (*Civ. Dei*, XI, 13).[17]

It is obvious that the question about the foreknowledge of the devil about his fall is important to St. Augustine. He elaborates this by his argumentation around the devil as a murderer since the beginning (throughout *Civ. Dei*, XI). As it was already mentioned – the perfect blessedness of the angels entails an uninterrupted enjoyment of God's grace, and a certain knowledge, devoid of doubt and error, that such an enjoyment is to be experienced forever. Otherwise,

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[17] It is not clear whether (he thinks that) the devil had a foreknowledge of his (inevitable) fall. Apart from *Civ. Dei*, XI, 13, St. Augustine wonders about the level of foreknowledge possessed by the devil elsewhere. See, for instance, *De Genesi ad litteram*/*Gen. litt*., 11, 17,22; 11, 25,33; *De correptione et gratia*/*De corrept*., 10,27;*Enchiridion de fide spe et caritate*/*Ench*.

In the *Letters* (*Ep*., 73, 3,7) it seems that St. Augustine thinks that the devil knew about his fall (he still asks Hieronymus about his opinion), and after *Civ. Dei* XI, 11, in *Enchiridion* he claims that the devil did not have an inkling that he was yet to fall. On the devil's foreknowledge according to St. Augustine, King 2012, pp. 271–273.

the blessedness of the angels would be lesser than that of the people, who are promised eternal bliss (under certain conditions), which does not correspond with the promise that the people would be equal to the angels in the resurrection (*Matthew*, 22:30).

A complete, undisturbed happiness is only possible through the knowledge that it will not be lost (by falling from it).[18] Still, the dialectical awareness of St. Augustine must always be kept in mind: the foreknowledge is connected to the blessed love towards God – a result of the perfection of the angels – the angelic possibilities for knowledge cannot be available to whomever who has willingly thrown away such love, thus becoming incomplete. The idea is that the devil cannot have a true angelic foreknowledge, which would see things in the manner in which they are being seen by God (although this is hard to conceive in the limited human terms), for such a foreknowledge would require an immaculate and eternal desire for God, which the devil rejects (C*iv. Dei*, XI,13).

Thus, the devil could not possess a foreknowledge for his own fall, nor, according to the same reasoning, could the demons ever enjoy the perfect blessedness of the angels, because only an eternal life can be perfectly blessed, and the life of the wicked angels comes to its end, which makes it neither eternal, nor blessed (C*iv. Dei*. XI,11). The rejection of the perfect angelic constancy would mean that it was never even possessed – it is the case of rejecting something that was never possessed in the first place, which would mean that it could never be truly rejected.[19] Despite this, it cannot be conceived that the demons did not enjoy any type of blessedness before they fell (XI,13), or the fall would not be dramatic or even relevant in the slightest.

The angels were placed in the same (measure and position of) goodness during their creation – the good ones stayed according to their free will, and the evil ones fell according to their free will. It can be assumed, besides this, that the good angels received a certain knowledge about the infinity of their happiness as a reward for their dedicated love towards God, but after the other angels had already fallen (*Ench*,. 9,28; *Correpт*., 10,27, TeSelle 1968, p. 125). Saint Augustine claims that the angels became aware of their blessedness after the fall of the demons; that the angels were fully and utterly blessed from the beginning of their existence; but that there is a time between the creation and the fall for one part of the angels (the demons) in which they enjoyed the happiness (albeit to a lesser

[18] As Wiebe summarizes, the rejection of a kind of a further fall of the angels would not be external, but intrinsic to the nature of the angelic blessedness (apud Reed 2005, p. 73).

[19] Maybe it should be claimed, as King summarizes in St. Augustine's name, that no angel knew about the future status (of things) right at the very moment of creation, which is the moment when it can exercise its free will: those angels who kept their will loyal to God were rewarded with an eternal happiness and a knowledge about their eternal happiness, and those who did not, were cursed. At the moment of their creation, and even after that, the good angels were certain of their (full) happiness, unlike the wicked angels, for they turned their backs to the gift of eternal bliss, thus losing it, before they could even receive it (King 2012, pp. 272–273).

extent), and were without fault and deficiency (*Correpт*., 10,27). In this sense a bit of a confusion arises: if the angels were already perfect in (the moment of) their creation, how is it that the demons (the apostate angels) were yet to fall, so that the good and loyal ones were to become absolutely perfect, possessing the intended eternal bliss? Either it all happened at the same time, or there are two phases to the existence and the knowledge of the different angels.[20]

St. Augustine does not claim that the perfection of the one group of angels and the fall of the other group happened simultaneously at the time of creation. The devil sinned from the beginning, and in this stance from *John*, 8:44[21] St. Augustine does not see a reason for dispute (*Civ. Dei*,XI,13).[22] He mentionsthat this interpretation is not Manichean, and rejects it by referring to *Ezekiel*, according to whom the devil was adorned with all the precious gemstones, prepared on the day he was born (28:13), and perfect in his ways, since the day he was created (28:15, *Civ. Dei*, XI.15). Following *Ezekiel*, this was until lawlessness (wickedness) was found in the devil, which leaves time for a period before having committed the sin. Therefore, Jesus' statement from John that the devil was a murderer from the beginning means that he sinned not from the beginning of his existence, but from the beginning of his willingly, intentionally chosen sin. God had made the angels good, but having a foreknowledge for the transgression of the devil, God anticipated the uses he could have of the group of the apostates (*Civ. Dei*, XI,17). Hence, the separation of the blessed angels from the wicked ones during the separation of the day and the night on the first day from *Genesis*, 1, does not denote the fall itself, but rather the separation or distinction between the pure and light angels, from the fallen, wicked ones, thanks to the divine foreknowledge about the fall (*Civ. Dei*, XI,19).

In this text the use of the concept of the fall of the angels in the explanation of the freedom of choice, the intentionality of transgression, the (non) blessedness of angels, and the need to act morally right in the fight against evil according to St. Augustine were shown. His ideas on the fall of the angels are not directly linked with the conception concerning the collaboration with the nefarious forces of evil (the devil), on whose grounds the violent reckoning against the perceived evil during the Middle Ages was constructed, but they do offer an insight into the understanding of the origin of evil as the result of free will, and of the importance of the pious submission to God.

[20]If the blessed angels can know their eternal undisturbed constancy only after the fall of the others, and if the blessed ones are perfect at the moment of creation, then the fall of the angels must be simultaneous with the creation (see inWiebe2021,p. 76).

[21]In these verses the devil is defined as a murderer from the beginning. He has nothing to do with the truth, for there is no truth in him, and on top of that, he is shown as a liar and the father of lies.

[22]Besides, when he analyses the created equality, or rather the cognitive, if not the moral equity between the angels and the demons, St. Augustine also claims that the devil is a murderer who does not dwell in, and has nothing to do with the truth (see*Gn. litt*., 11, 16,21; 11, 23,30).

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