

The hands of God

In Genesis 1:26, the Trinity said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness,” and the following verse declares: “And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him.” Chapter 3:8 states that Jehovah (the Son) was walking in the garden, and since Adam did not present himself, Jehovah called out to him: “Where are you?” We can infer that Jehovah was in the habit of walking and conversing with Adam in the garden. And if He walked, He had legs. But that was here on earth.

Now let us look at Genesis 28:11–13, when Jacob was fleeing from Esau. “And he came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and lay down in that place. 12 And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and indeed, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 And behold, Jehovah stood above it and said: ‘I am Jehovah...’” Once again, it was the Son, and if He “stood”, it was because He had feet and legs. To walk with Adam, He had to materialize, but here Jehovah was in Heaven. He made Himself visible, and in a form similar to ours.

Now let us look at Isaiah 6:1: “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, seated on a high and exalted throne.” (In verse 5, Isaiah calls Him “the LORD of Hosts.”) If He was “seated,” He had a body, likely similar to ours. In John 12:41, after quoting Isaiah 6:10, John wrote: “Isaiah said these things when he saw His glory and spoke concerning Him.” John was speaking of Jesus, so Isaiah saw Jesus—Jehovah the Son.

There are dozens of texts that mention the right hand of God. I will cite a few, just for the record. Psalm 48:10: “As is Your name, O God, so is Your praise to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is full of righteousness.” Psalm 110:1: “Jehovah said to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’” This verse is cited many times in the New Testament. Mark 16:19: “After the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at God’s right.” Acts 7:55-56: “But he, being full of Holy Spirit and looking intently into the heaven, he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on God’s right, and said, ‘Wow! I see the heavens opened and the Son of the Man standing at God’s right!’”

And there are many texts that speak of God’s face, eyes, ears, and mouth, but all of that has generally been explained as anthropomorphism—God using our physical capacities to help us understand His own actions. However, I find it difficult to apply this explanation to the passage found in 2 Chronicles 18:18–21 (which corresponds word-for-word to 1 Kings 22:19–22).

“Then *Micaiah* said: ‘Therefore, hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and His left. And the LORD said: “Who will persuade Ahab, king of Israel, to go up,

that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?” So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said: “I will persuade him.” The LORD said to him: “In what way?” So he said: “I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.” And *the LORD* said: “You shall persuade him and also prevail; go out and do so.””

This text has troubled many because God made use of a lie, given that lying belongs to Satan (John 8:44). Before offering an explanation, let us consider the left hand. Why does the text refer to God’s hands—the right and the left? What was the need for doing so? What relevance does this information hold for the account? We are dealing with an event that took place in Heaven, not on earth, yet it is presented as fact. Therefore, God possesses a right hand and a left hand. If God provided this information to Micaiah, He did so for a reason. Now, let us turn to the explanation.

I suggest that Matthew 25:31–34, 41, and 46 give us the necessary clue. Jesus was speaking.

³¹“When the Son of the Man comes in His glory,¹ and all the holy angels with Him,² then He will sit on His throne of glory. ³²And all the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another,³ just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³And the sheep He will place on His right, but the goats on His left. ³⁴Then the King will say to those on His right: ‘Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you at the foundation of the world.

⁴¹“Then He will also say to those on His left: ‘Go away from me, you accursed ones, into the eternal fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels.’⁴

⁴⁶And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

(Before going on, I want to comment on a few things within the text.)

Verse 34 makes it clear that the sheep are God’s servants, and they are on His right side. Verse 41 makes it clear that the goats are Satan’s servants, and they are on His left side. Returning to Micaiah, I conclude that Satan and his servants—other high-

¹ The Lord Jesus uses “the coming of the Son of the Man” to refer to both the Rapture and the Second Advent.

² Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit “holy” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). From Revelation 5:11 it appears that the holy angels are well over 100 million.

³ It is clear that the King is dealing with individuals here; nations are made up of people, and each person will be evaluated individually.

⁴ The Lake of fire was prepared for Lucifer (now Satan) and those angels that joined his rebellion (about a third of the angelic beings—Revelation 12:4). Human beings who side with Satan (there are various ways of doing that) will also share his destiny. The basic meaning of the word translated ‘angel’ is ‘messenger’; many human beings are Satan’s messengers.

ranking fallen angels (recall Job)—were on God’s left side, and it was one of them who volunteered to do the dirty work. But this is neither the only nor the first time that God has used Satan, or one of his servants.

We can begin with the case of Job.

1) Job: Job 1:6-8, 2:1-3.

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ So Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.’ Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?’”

Incidentally, ‘sons of God’ is a translation of the Hebrew phrase *‘bene haElohim’*, which, wherever it is used in the Old Testament, evidently refers to high-ranking angelic beings.

“Again, there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ So Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.’ Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and shuns evil? And he still holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.’”

It is clear that God took the initiative and instigated that dispute with Satan, even though God Himself said it was “without cause”: Job had done nothing to deserve what happened to him. Why God would do such a thing has intrigued and troubled God’s people ever since. I find the answer in Job’s own words: “I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You” (42:5).

By God’s own assessment, Job was the best "student" He had on the earth at that time. When you are the "best" in any field, you tend to stagnate. There is no one from whom you can learn in order to improve, you are at the top; it is up to others to learn from you. God saw that Job had the potential to grow—to ascend spiritually—yet he had stagnated because he was the "best". It was Job’s theology—his doctrinal "package"—that was hindering his growth. It was a "package" shared by his three friends. So God used Satan to crush that package. It was a terrible process, and while we tend to feel sorry for Job, God’s purpose was justified. Job grew; he ascended spiritually! God moved Job to a higher level of spiritual understanding by giving him a direct revelation of Himself. (The three friends, along with Elihu, shared in this

privilege. There is a principle here: what God teaches us, we should share with others.) And God gave him twice as much as he had before.

2) David: 2 Samuel 24:1, 1 Chronicles 21:1.

“Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say: ‘Go, number Israel and Judah.’”

“Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.”

So then, who was it—God or Satan? Since God is sovereign, He evidently used Satan, just as He did with Job. In the context, David told Joab to oversee the numbering, and Joab was not pleased. He knew it was a bad idea. “Nevertheless, the king’s word prevailed against Joab.” Since God’s purpose was to punish Israel, He gave David three options; he had to choose one of the three. He chose the third: three days of plague. The text states that God killed 70,000 men. Presumably, they were men who had rebelled against God and were having a negative influence on others.

3) Judas Iscariot: Luke 22:3–4, John 13:27, 30.

“Then Satan entered Judas (the one surnamed Iscariot), who was numbered among the Twelve. So he went off and conferred with the chief priests and officers about how he might betray Him to them.”

Note that Judas acted under satanic inspiration.

“And after the sop, then Satan entered into him. Then Jesus said to him: ‘What you are doing, do quickly!’ So having received the sop, immediately he went out. And it was night.”

As we know from verse two (John 13), Satan had already planted the idea in Judas’s mind/heart, but at this point he entered the man—Judas was not merely demonized; he was satanized! Satan evidently needed permission to do this, and the giving of the sop was the signal; Jesus gave him the green light. Satan obviously had to be there, in that Upper Room! (If he was in that Upper Room, why couldn’t he be in your church? Is there a Judas in your church?) I take it that Satan entered Judas to ensure that he would carry out the plan. Although it may have seemed to the disciples that Jesus was addressing Judas, I suspect that He was actually addressing Satan, since it was Satan who would now control the man’s thoughts. Jesus ordered him to proceed; that’s right—Jesus gave an order to Satan, and Satan obeyed.

In John 17:12, while praying to the Father, Jesus said: “I protected those whom You gave Me, and not one of them was lost, except the son of perdition, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” If the Scripture was being fulfilled, then it was part of God’s Plan. God used Satan to ensure that Judas played his part. In Hebrew usage (and Jesus, a Jew among Jews, was presumably speaking Hebrew here), a ‘son’ of something is characterized by that something; thus, a “son of perdition” is

characterized by perdition. The Scripture in question would be part of the Old Testament, and therefore written long before the person was born. (I have not been able to locate a clear text to this effect, though there are some indirect ones.)

4) The Beast: Revelation 13:5-8.

“⁵And he was given a mouth speaking great things, that is, blasphemy; and he was given authority to make war forty-two months. ⁶So he opened that mouth of his in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, those who dwell in Heaven.¹ ⁷And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given him over every tribe and language and ethnic nation. ⁸All who dwell on the earth will do obeisance to him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world.”

Incidentally, 1 Peter 1:20 makes it clear that this indeed took place before the creation of the world. God knew what would happen before He created the human race—the terrible price He Himself would have to pay—yet He created it anyway.

I understand that in verses 5 and 7 it is God who grants the authority; it is part of the Plan. The authority to overcome the saints must come from God. In fact, everything the Antichrist does will be under God’s authority.

Those are some of the instances where God took the initiative and actively used the enemy. God is Sovereign over all things and permits evil in the world. So why does He do that? He uses evil to punish evil, but He also uses evil to restrain evil. Why don't wicked people do even more evil than they already do? Because they fear the consequences; if there is more than one organized crime group in a given city, each one inhibits the crime perpetrated by the other. I address this subject elsewhere.

But to return to the purpose of this study, when the Trinity said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Genesis 1:26), could this have included the body? For a long time, I maintained that the ‘image’ was limited to the spirit, including the soul, but not the body. However, what has been presented above leads me to reconsider the matter. Consider 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.” Incidentally, I understand the grammatical structure of this phrase in the Greek—“the spirit and the soul and the body”—as defining the trichotomous nature of the human being.

I admit that I find it difficult to imagine complete sanctification of the body in this life. Of course, once glorified the body will be perfect; but what about here, in this life?

¹ Compare 1 Corinthians 3:16. We are the ‘temple’ of God; those who dwell in Heaven are His tabernacle.

On the other hand, will we achieve complete sanctification of the spirit and soul in this life? Yet, that is the goal we must keep in mind. And as for the body, if it is part of the 'image', we must respect it and treat it well. By extension, every human being must be respected as a bearer of that 'image,' no matter how much Satan has debased it.

And don't forget 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you? Therefore glorify God in your body."

But the earlier question remains: why does God allow any kind of evil? I offer the following possible explanation. While the Sovereign Creator walked this earth in the body of Jesus, He declared that the Father "is seeking" people who will worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23–24). Perhaps here we have a window into the reason why God created a race like ours—people made in His image with the capacity to **choose**. God "is seeking" something, which implies that He does not have it—at least not automatically, or in sufficient quantity. I understand that He desires to be appreciated for who He is; but for such appreciation to be meaningful, it cannot come from robots—it must be voluntary. So He created a type of being with that capacity, but in doing so He had to run the risk that such beings would choose not to appreciate Him!

Unfortunately, the majority of human beings make the negative choice, and that negative choice brings about all manner of negative consequences. **Attention, please!** For God's purpose in creating such a race not to be thwarted, both He and we must live with the consequences of our choices. God must allow the consequences of our evil choices! The consequences of sin are a two-way street: we spend our lives being victimized by the consequences of other people's sins and victimizing them with the consequences of our own. (I may complain that I receive far more than I give, but that does not change the fact.)

Since the time of Adam, human beings have been born with an inclination toward sin; consequently, choosing to cherish God is not automatic, not in the slightest, nor is it easy. Thus, no one can accuse God of 'buying votes'—He seems to have done exactly the opposite. If a human being, contrary to his natural inclination, chooses to cherish God, then He receives what He is seeking. "In spirit and in truth" must mean that it cannot be feigned or coerced; not merely physical, nor merely emotional (although both the body and emotions can be involved). Please see Matthew 23:8–10. [read]