

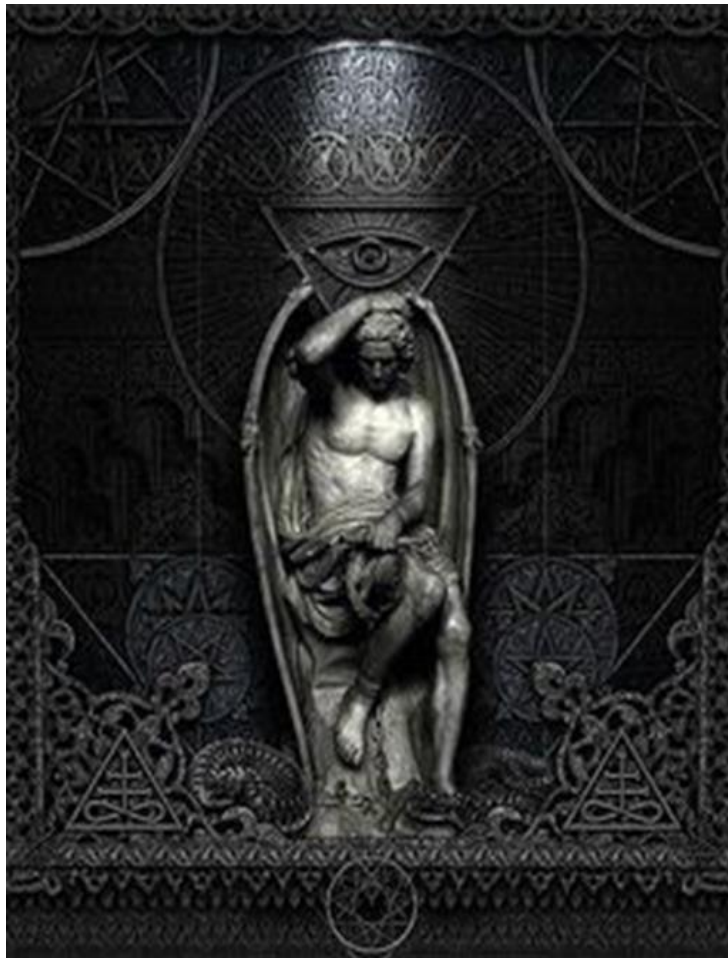
Reading Homework

The Origins of Evil

Although Francis Ford Coppola answers the question, “Why does Dracula become a vampire?”, he does not clearly explain how it is possible for Dracula to do so. All we know is that he renounces God and calls on the “powers of darkness” to help him take revenge. What are these “powers of darkness”? Understanding what this is all about is extremely important for our study of the horror film moving forward. First, let us understand the background to Dracula’s religion and the god he is renouncing.

The Old Testament of the Bible, which is held in common by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, begins with The Book Of Genesis, which states that “in the beginning there was nothing (darkness) until God spoke (or thought, or imagined) “light” and the Universe began (something like the Big Bang Theory). God then created Heaven and the Angels in Heaven. Angels are “beings of pure spirit” (perhaps “spirit” is like energy).

Lucifer, The Most Beautiful Angel



One of these angels, Lucifer, the most beautiful of the angels, becomes so filled with pride in his own beauty that he tells the other angels that he, not God, should rule in heaven.



and he leads a rebellion against God. One-third of the angels side with Lucifer, but two-thirds side with God. Lucifer and his angels are defeated and “cast out of heaven” and fall into hell (a place of “dark fire”).



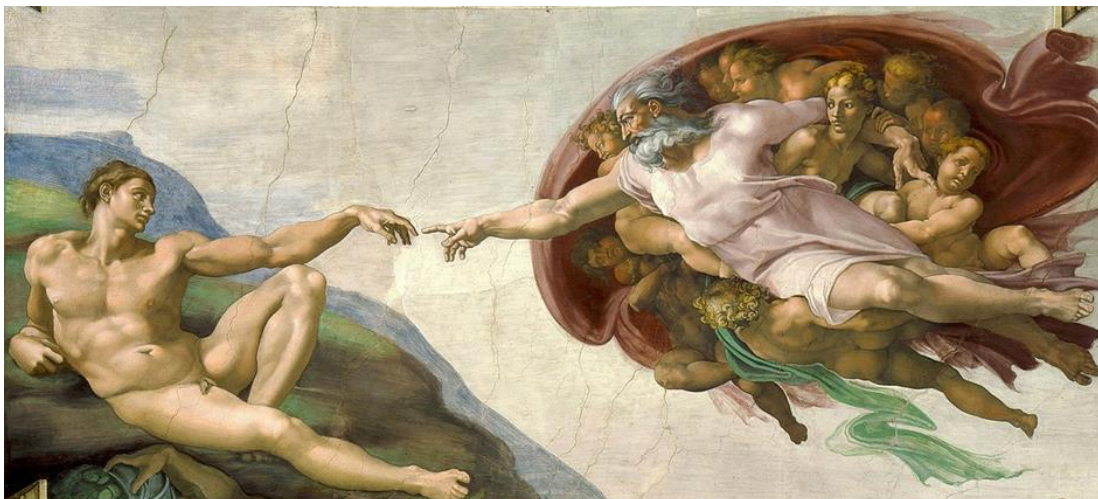


However, according to the poet John Milton, after his fall into hell Lucifer looks up to heaven and says “I would rather rule in hell than serve in heaven!”. The angels who fell into hell become what we call “devils” and they serve their new master, Lucifer, who, as the king of hell is known as Satan. Satan is not finished fighting God. (Of course, this is only one simplified version of the story)



What about the Earth and Humans?

When God separated the light from the dark, he created the Earth. He then created the animals (creatures of “body”, but not “spirit”) and finally God created the first human, “Adam”, whom he makes “in his own image” (so God looks like a human being).



Humans are neither angels (beings of pure spirit) nor animals (creatures of body). Humans are made of both body and spirit (which we call the human “soul”).

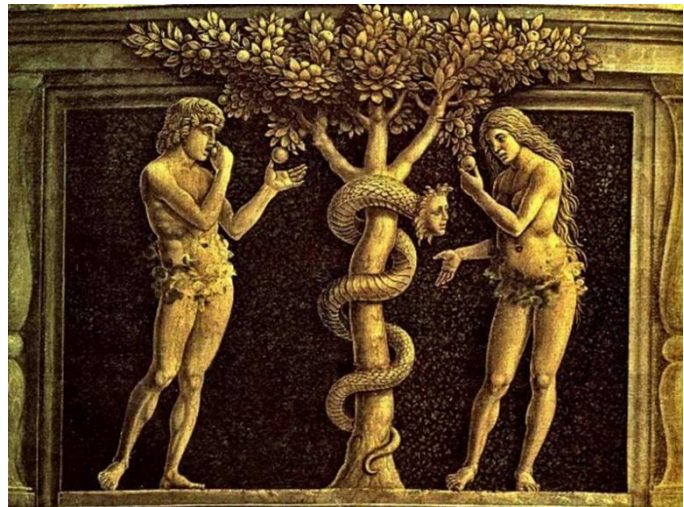
God places Adam in an earthly paradise called the Garden of Eden.

God also makes a companion for Adam, Eve (woman).



God tells Adam and Eve that in the Garden of Eden they are completely safe because no animal will harm them and they will never become sick or grow old. They are free to do anything they wish and are invited to eat any of the fruits in the garden except one. God points to a particular tree and tells them they must never eat the fruit from that tree. It is the forbidden fruit.

One day, while Eve is walking by the tree that has the forbidden fruit, she hears a voice calling to her. It is the snake. The snake calls to her from the tree and says, “Eve, why don't you eat this fruit?” Eve replies that God told her she must not eat that fruit. However, the snake tells her that if she eats the fruit she will “become like God”. The snake did not actually lie, he deceived her. Eve does become like God, but in only one way, by eating the fruit she gains knowledge. This is the knowledge of life and death (usually also interpreted as the knowledge of her own sexuality). She then gives the fruit to Adam to eat and he also gains the knowledge, which is also called “the knowledge of good and evil”.



When God discovers that Adam and Eve disobeyed him, he punishes them by forcing them out of the Garden of Eden. God tells them that they will now have to work and that they will someday grow old and sick and eventually die. One interpretation of this story would be that eating the fruit of knowledge is symbolic of Adam and Eve leaving childhood and becoming adults. Adults must work to live and they know that eventually they must die.

God, however, still considers humans to be his children and despite condemning them to die he tells them that only their bodies will die, but their souls (spirit) cannot die. If humans will obey God's laws while they live on Earth their souls (spirit) will return to heaven when

they die. However, if they disobey God's laws (commit evil acts) their souls will go to Hell where Satan will punish them forever.

The snake who deceived Eve was, of course, Satan himself (who can take any form). He tricked Adam and Eve into disobeying God so that they would be cast out of the Garden of Eden and have to face the struggle of (adult) life. Although humans know God's laws, life is often hard and it is tempting to take "the easy way". To steal, to kill, to make war can all seem like the easier way to get what we need or want. But when we do these things, we are making the choice to be evil, to do what Satan wants us to do instead of what God wants us to do. When we choose evil, we endanger our souls, (although it is also possible to gain forgiveness from God if one sincerely repents doing evil). Thus, humans are constantly tempted to do evil, but ultimately will be punished if they do.

What About Dracula?

Dracula, by renouncing God and calling on the powers of darkness, has (of course) committed the ultimate act of disobedience to God and his soul will go to hell. I think that is what we see happen at the end of the excerpt I showed you of Bram Stoker's Dracula. He screams and we see him sinking into the fire.

But a vampire is "nosferatu" (un-dead). His soul may be in hell, but his undead body stills walks the Earth and Dracula has the super-natural powers of the vampire. As a vampire Dracula is much stronger and faster than any human being. He sees, hears and smells better than any human. He also has the power to transform himself into a bat or wolf or even a mist. He can sometimes control the minds of weak people. He cannot be harmed by ordinary weapons. But he also has weaknesses. He cannot endure daylight or look on the cross or enter a church. He is also unable to see his own reflection (this is because his soul has left his body). The only way he can truly be destroyed is by having a wooden stake driven through his heart (an echo of impalement) and/or having his head cut off.



All of this is part of our common understanding of vampires from reading novels and watching movies (or in the case of Professor Tarlofsky, occasionally having drinks with them).