

## “Rise Up, My Love, My Fair One”

**John Gray:** Two days ago, February 12<sup>th</sup>, a new lunar year began, according to the Chinese calendar. A lunar year consists of 12 lunar months, approximately 354 days in all, and it’s linked to the repeating 12-year Chinese Zodiac cycle. This lunar new year marks the transition from a year of the rat to a year of the ox—the latter a sign that symbolizes strength, respect and fairness. Sounds good to me! The world would certainly benefit from strength, respect and fairness. Happy New Year.

If we’re news-media watchers and listeners, as most Westerners are, the daily deluge of information is incessant, predominantly negative, usually incomplete, and all too often of questionable veracity. Most people habitually react to what they see and hear, constantly voting internally and occasionally externally—“like/don’t like,” “agree/disagree”—and having their feelings riled or assuaged by their own reactions. Recent events in American politics and in so many other places in the world have demonstrated this, live and in color! So many people the world around are up in arms emotionally if not literally.

Centuries ago, some wise words of an altogether different character were penned: “Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things... and the God of peace shall be with you.” [Philippians 4:8-9]

I read these words as far more than good advice. And they’re not at all pollyannaish to me. I looked up *Pollyanna* to be reminded she was the lead character in a series of children’s fiction novels in the past century. Pollyanna is a person characterized by irrepressible optimism and the tendency to find good in everything and everyone. But thinking on things that are honest, pure, etcetera, is more than optimism, of hoping for the best, of looking on the bright side of things.

Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, virtuous: think on these things. This is how our minds and hearts are designed to be used. This is what our wonderful hearts and minds are for. When we play host to “these things” and not to the sullied and unclean, whatever resonates with those qualities of divine spirit has room to grow and prosper in us and in our lives.

It isn’t that we’re to withdraw from the world and pay no attention to what’s going on. We’re here to be *in* the world, after all. But we can, and must, attend wisely. “Beloved, believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” [1John 4:1]

What does *try the spirits* mean? Today, here, we might say “listen for the tone of life.” Does what we’re hearing, seeing, or feeling carry that true tone? If not, it’s not worth much time and attention, in my book.

Speaking of books, I’ve been asked a few times why I quote from the Bible sometimes and don’t just say what I have to say in my own words. I could offer a long-winded explanation, I suppose, but the gist of the answer is in what the quoted words carry. The entire Bible or other sacred texts don’t qualify by any means, but verses worth quoting are of timeless substance, rich and resonant with the tone of life. And they’ve lasted these many years because they are *living*. They’re not old and outdated but ever new and so very now. They sing in my heart.

There is great beauty and wonder in the world, so much that sings in pure tones. This, to me, is by far the predominant state of affairs. The off-tone world produced and sustained by self-centered human beings is like a small cyst within the immense magnificence of being. To a person existing solely in this aberrant and pretty crazy state, the cyst seems big—the whole world of personal experience is going on inside it, after all. In such case it’s rarely recognized or acknowledged—except in belief or hope or theory, maybe—that anything else exists.

Thankfully there are many people who perceive and are moved by the tone of life. In some, it breaks the surface of consciousness sufficiently to become a lived reality of heaven on earth. For many, many more people, their hearts sing along mostly unconsciously.

Within the cyst, the world is experienced through and by a false identity. All sorts of ill spirits inhabit this world, working mischief and malice in human affairs. At its worst it’s downright diabolical. As much as people might like to believe otherwise, the origin and the cause of this state is not something external to ourselves; it is not being inflicted on humanity by some nefarious outside source.

If you’re old enough you may remember the late American comic and TV performer, Flip Wilson, who achieved fame several decades ago with his signature gag line, *the devil made me do it!* Audiences found it hilarious. Wilson portrayed characters who got themselves into situations where things went wrong and then they blamed the devil for their plight. Humor works when the joke is close to home and people easily relate to it. It’s relieving and funny, for a few moments anyway, to escape responsibility by blaming someone or something else for all the bad stuff that happens. Good people point fingers at imagined sources of evil somewhere else, outside themselves. Many humanly created belief systems provide convenient culprits. There are devils all over the place, and *they* are the perpetrators of all the hell on earth.

The serpent in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil may be the oldest reference, way back in the book of Genesis. We remember the allegory of the serpent talking Eve into getting

involved with the fruit of that tree, and Eve in turn convincing Adam that he should, too. Contrary to reputation, the serpent wasn't really a bad guy, you know. What the serpent represents *belongs* in the tree of the creative process as a sensible aspect of the means by which invisible spirit is translated into expression in denser levels of form. However, Eve and Adam, the feeling realm and consciousness of identity, do not belong there and have no business or need to go there. That's what went wrong; it's called the *fall* in the Bible. It wasn't the serpent who fell. It was Adam and Eve falling into involvement with factors and processes where they didn't belong, rather than maintain a focus of divine presence. As a consequence, their connection with God, with the tone of life, began to be lost. After that and because of that, all hell broke loose. Adam and Eve represent the collective mind and heart of humankind.

In addition to the serpent, other scapegoats put in an appearance in religious and other belief systems in more historical times. I made a list. There is, of course, *Satan*, a word that means "adversary." And there is *the beast*, described as "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." [Rev. 17:8] How's that for a reference to something illusory? "...was, and is not," and yet *seems* to be—unreal! Other terms for devil include the *dragon* in Revelation, the *accuser of our brethren*, the *maker of iniquity*, the *deceiver*, the *evil one*, the *fugitive* (which is an escapee, a wanderer), the *prince of darkness*, and demons with names like *Belial* and *Beelzebub*. The devil is called *Samael* in the Jewish Talmud. In the Quran the devil is *Aduw Allāh*, "enemy of God," and *Shaitan* and *Iblis*. In Islamic tradition, *Shaitan* refers to forces of evil including the devil *Iblis*. Referencing the Encyclopedia Britannica, "*Shaitan* is also linked to human psychological nature, appearing in dreams, causing anger and interrupting the mental preparation for prayer... The principle of *Shaitan* is a symbol of spiritual impurity, representing humans' own deficits in contrast to a 'true Muslim' who is free from anger, lust and other devilish desires." This description comes closer to ringing right than some sneering character with horns and a tail.

Are the devil and Satan active in the man-made world? Well, let's ask ourselves: Do we see any slandering, accusing, opposing, judging or deceiving going on? Is that all coming from somewhere else? Of course not. It's all inside that cyst.

The root of the word *devil* means slanderer. *Slander* is defined as "a malicious, false, and defamatory statement or report." I think of *devil* as if it were a contraction of *do evil*. That's not the etymological root of the word, but it reminds me that *devil* is a behavior and not an entity.

The word *Satan* means adversary. Anything that acts to impede the expression of the true you is satanic. In the book of Job there's reference to a time when the sons and daughters of God came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan came also among them. In the New Testament there's the story of what is called the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. "And Jesus

answered and said unto him, ‘Get thee behind me Satan!’” [Luke 4:8] I note that neither Job nor Jesus tried to kill the adversary. Job questioned Satan as to what he’d been up to, and Satan replied he’d been “going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it” [Job 1:7] —like the fugitive from the law he was and is. Jesus rebuked Satan, “Get thee behind me.” This put this behavior in its place, where it was then no longer the adversary, vying for control, but can be transmuted by response and obedience to the tone of divine presence into Lucifer, the light bearer. As this occurs internally for you and me, “the accuser of our brethren is cast down.” [Rev. 12:10]

Let’s turn our attention back to things of good report. But instead of my reading another relevant Bible passage, let’s listen to a musical version. These are well-known spirit-drenched verses from Song of Solomon.

### [Rise up my love my fair one](#)

“My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.” [Song of Solomon 2:10-13]

Rise up. It is our consciousness that rises; our feet stay on the ground. Rising up doesn’t mean leaving; it means being more fully here. The beloved within speaks to “my love, my fair one”— to my mind and heart—and says, “rise up.” This same message is contained in words of the psalm, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up... and the King of glory shall come in.” [Psalm 24:7] The seat of experienced spiritual identity rises, is lifted up. Our understanding, symbolized by our feet, stays firmly on the ground and our awareness ascends to accommodate heaven. We stand and walk, upright. We are angels on earth.

In the rising up, our minds and hearts are cleansed, purified and restored. Response to the command *rise up* comes first; the making new of heart and mind occurs as a result of that. It is clearer to me than ever that purification is not a matter of dealing with the impure, trying to face it, to fight it, or to somehow scrub it out. No, that’s diving down where we don’t belong. There’s nothing to be gained and all to be lost by going into that bottomless pit. That’s the *fall* again.

Things come up to be seen and met in us all the time, for sure. But let’s let them *come up to us*. On their way up they’re cleansed and purified, or they’re cast out. Let the creative process do the

sorting! Let's not be deceived into getting upset or doing battle with an adversary or thinking we have to fix things. That's not what our hearts and minds are for; they're not designed to be battlegrounds. Rise up and come away and stay away from all that, and be in the holy realm where all is already forever pure.

Then, behold I make all things new! Life is not difficult; it's wondrous and truly magical. The God of peace *is* with us.

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**Pre-Service Music**

*May It Be* – from The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring

Composed by Enya & Roma Ryan and performed by Enya