

A Case of Invisible Angels

by Michael Finley

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"Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." - Genesis 3

As we wade into the wetlands of the future, it might be wise to remember why we go forward -- why there even is a future. The origins of this notion are embedded in our most ancient stories.

Most cultures -- not all, but most -- conceive of there once having been an age of gods, followed by an age of heroes, followed by our age of ordinary men and women.

Evolution may be visible in the fossil record. But in the human imagination, we want the pattern to be devolution, a cosmic grace. Because that explains more than why we lack tails. It tells who we are, and what our world means.

In the monotheistic tradition, humankind was created to be like God -- immortal, intelligent, without sin (taking on the prerogatives of God) but with the free will to sin.

This golden age is a powerful preoccupation -- the good old days before pain and death. Our only hope of attaining anything like it again, we tell ourselves, is in the future. Dying and going to heaven is one way to get there, but few of us are in a hurry to do that. By far the preferred method is leveraging technology to remake the fallen world into a new Eden.

When Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden, they knew nothing and had nothing. Imagine their desolation, having to overcome everything: Hunger. Ignorance. Disease. Powerlessness. Isolation.

To survive they fashioned a toolbox of ambitious technologies: Agriculture. Literacy. Medicine. Mechanics. Networks.

Oddly, our sin was overstepping, wanting to be like gods -- and our expiation for that sin was more overstepping, outfitting ourselves with godly technology.

A single human being today, fully networked and plugged in, has 10,000 times the power and reach of Adam the instant he crossed Eden's threshold and the lights dimmed.

So which is right, evolution or devolution? It's hard to doubt the fossil record, which suggests we descended less from angelic beings but from something analogous to *e coli*. (Maybe *that's* the dust we were fashioned from?)

Or maybe scientists and creationists are both correct, and the clay comprising us is the residue of a universe bursting into being -- literal stardust -- a trillion millennia ago.

Maybe, with the *Weekly World News* reports sighting Noah's ark on Mount Ararat, or the broken tablets in a cave at Qurun, the Cherubim are still stationed at the gates of Eden, flames still jetting from their swords. We could go there now, by plane and bus, and verify their vigil.

But somehow -- because something about us makes paradise ring even truer than science -- we would be unable to see them.

Christian futurist Michael Finley was recently named one of 28 “Wizards of the Wired World” by the *Financial Times*.