Christianity, as a theistic religion, defines spirituality as obedience (i.e., hearing and doing) God’s Word/Will, not without discussion, dialogue and even debate. This process of hearing and doing implies a mental procedure known technically as discernment which ensures that it is genuinely God’s word/will that one hears and executes. The question discussed in this paper is who or what stands in the way of discernment. The general answer is “Satan” a rational creature, who goes by many other names. The Author asks whether it is necessary to have recourse to such an external agent and proposes an alternative explanation as a mere hypothesis, namely that the “serpent” mentioned in Genesis 3,1-24 need not refer to an agent outside the human person (such as Satan) but symbolizes human reason misled by greed or inordinate passion. This hypothesis avoids the contradiction between the belief in all-loving and all-powerful God on the one hand and an irredeemably wicked rational being either created by God or having an independent existence.

Keywords: Christian theology, serpent, devil, Satan.