

Association of Hebrew Catholics Lecture Series
The Mystery of Israel and the Church

Fall 2011 – Series 9

Man Elevated to Share in the Divine Life

Talk #2

Original Justice and Original Sin



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Note: *This document contains the unedited text of Dr. Feingold's talk. It will eventually undergo final editing for inclusion in the series of books being published by The Miriam Press under the series title: "The Mystery of Israel and the Church". If you find errors of any type, please send your observations to lfeingold@hebrewcatholic.org*

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Original Justice and Original Sin

The Existence of Original Sin

One of the most important truths about man contained in God's Revelation is that of original justice and original sin. Without a correct understanding of this doctrine, it would be impossible to understand either the difficult condition in which man finds himself in this valley of tears, or the necessity of the Incarnation of Christ to redeem fallen man.

Man finds himself in this world in a paradoxical condition: subject to suffering, death, and discord, but naturally aspiring to eternal life, peace, and the fullness of love. He finds in himself the conflict of two often opposing tendencies: his sense appetites (concupiscible and irascible appetites), on the one hand, and the noble tendencies of his will, on the other. Our concupiscible appetite, for example, is naturally ordered to sensible goods, prior to reason's deliberation. Thus my sensible appetite can be attracted to someone who is not my spouse, or to steak on a Friday in Lent, contrary to my rational appetite. Or my irascible appetite can be inclined to anger, even when my reason sees that I should forgive an offense. In this conflict, the impulses of the sense appetite often win out over the voice of reason, bringing further misery upon us.

Man dimly perceives that he is made in the image and likeness of God, but also perceives himself, without Christ, to be abandoned in this world and separated from the Father, as if he were an orphan. Man finds in himself both an innate greatness and a congenital misery.

The doctrine of original sin sheds great light on this paradox, for it shows us that the misery in which man now finds himself is not God's first intention for us, but is the fruit of the breaking of the original covenant between God and the father of all men, Adam.

The existence of original sin is a revealed truth and a mystery. However, it is interesting to ask whether reason alone, looking at man's situation in the world, could surmise the truth of original sin. *Gaudium et spes* 13 touches on this question, showing how human experience of man's existence in the world confirms the teaching of Revelation concerning original sin:

Examining his heart, man finds that he has inclinations toward evil too, and is engulfed by manifold ills which cannot come from his good Creator. Often refusing to acknowledge God as his beginning, man has disrupted also his proper relationship to his own ultimate goal as well as his whole relationship toward himself and others and all created things.

Therefore man is split within himself. As a result, all of human life, whether individual or collective, shows itself to be a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between

light and darkness. Indeed, man finds that by himself he is incapable of battling the assaults of evil successfully, so that everyone feels as though he is bound by chains. But the Lord Himself came to free and strengthen man, renewing him inwardly and casting out that "prince of this world" (John 12:31) who held him in the bondage of sin. For sin has diminished man, blocking his path to fulfillment.

The call to grandeur and the depths of misery, both of which are a part of human experience, find their ultimate and simultaneous explanation in the light of this revelation.

Cardinal Newman, the great nineteenth-century convert, speaks in even stronger terms of original sin as something that could be surmised by reason alone, judging from man's condition in the world and his tragic history. Not only is this Catholic doctrine not an affront to our experience, but it provides a necessary explanation for the goodness of God, given our experience of evil! It is the other side of the coin of our being made in the image and likeness of God. If one of these two doctrines be denied or forgotten, then the other becomes literally impossible to believe:

Starting then with the being of a God..., I look out of myself into the world of men, and there I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress. The world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth, of which my whole being is so full... The sight of the world is nothing else than the prophet's scroll, full of 'lamentations, and mourning, and woe.'

What shall be said to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact? I can only answer, that either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from His presence. Did I see a boy of good make and mind, with the tokens on him of a refined nature, cast upon the world without provision, unable to say whence he came, his birth-place or his family connections, I should conclude that there was some mystery connected with his history, and that he was one, of whom, from one cause or other, his parents were ashamed. Thus only should I be able to account for the contrast between the promise and the condition of his being. *And so I argue about the world—if there be a God, since there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity.* It is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator. This is a fact, a fact as true as the fact of its existence; and *thus the doctrine of what is theologically called original sin becomes to me almost as certain as that the world exists, and as the existence of God.*¹

St. Thomas Aquinas likewise holds that the fact of original sin could be surmised as probable by reason alone, judging from the tragedy of the human condition. In *SCG IV*, ch. 52, he writes:

¹ John Henry Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua* (London: J M Dent, 1993), 275-276 (my italics).

There are apparent in mankind certain probable signs of original sin . . . as we can argue culpability from penalty. Now the human race generally suffers various penalties, corporal and spiritual. Among corporal penalties the chief is death, to which all the others lead up, as hunger, thirst, and the like. Among spiritual penalties the chief is the weak hold that reason takes of man, so that man with difficulty arrives at the knowledge of truth, easily falls into error, and cannot altogether subdue his bestial appetites, but often has his mind clouded by them.

Some one may say that these defects, corporal and spiritual, are not penal, but natural. . . . But looking at the thing rightly, and supposing divine providence. . . . we may form a fairly probable conjecture that God, in uniting the higher nature of the soul to the lower nature of the body, had the intention that the former should control the latter; and further intended to remove, by His special and supernatural providence, any impediment to such control arising out of any defect of nature. Thus, as the rational soul is of a higher nature than the body, it might be supposed that such would be the terms of the union of the soul with the body, that nothing could possibly be in the body contrary to the soul whereby the body lives; and in like manner, as reason in man is associated with sensitive appetite and other sensitive powers, it might be expected that reason would not be hampered by those sensitive powers, but rather would rule them.

In accordance with these natural anticipations, we lay it down, according to the doctrine of faith, that the original constitution of man was such that, so long as his reason was subject to God, his lower faculties served him without demur, and no bodily impediment could stand in the way of his body obeying him, God and His grace supplying whatever was wanting in nature to the achievement of this result. But when his reason turned away from God, his lower powers revolted from reason; and his body became subject to passions contrary to the [rational] life that is by the soul. Thus then, though it may be admitted that these defects are natural, if we look at human nature on its lower side; nevertheless, if we consider divine providence and the dignity of the higher portion of human nature, we have a fairly probable ground for arguing that these defects are penal. Thus we may gather the inference that the human race must have been infected with some sin from its first origin.²

Pascal also thinks that the doctrine of original sin can be surmised from a consideration of man's natural nobility:

Man's greatness is so obvious that it can even be deduced from his wretchedness, for what is nature in animals we call wretchedness in man, thus recognizing that, if his nature is today like that of the animals, he must have fallen from some better state which was once his own.³

² Translation (slightly modified) from *An Annotated Translation (With some Abridgement) of the Summa Contra Gentiles of Saint Thomas Aquinas* by Joseph Rickaby, S.J. (London: Burns and Oates, 1905).

³ Pascal, *Pensées*, Section I, VI, n. 117, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (New York: Penguin Classics, 1966), p. 59.

Original Justice

The Biblical narration of the creation of Adam and Eve reveals to us that they were not created in the situation in which we find ourselves today. This is alluded to briefly in Gen 2:25: "And the man and his wife were both *naked, and they were not ashamed.*" This contrasts with Gen 3:7-8: "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they *knew that they were naked*; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife *hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God* among the trees of the garden."

Man's situation in the world very dramatically changed in consequence of the first and original sin. Adam and Eve were created in a state of holiness and well-being which was lost as a result of their sin. This original state of holiness is spoken of in theology as "original justice." Let us reconstruct its fundamental components.

Adam and Eve in the Garden were the recipients of an original covenant with God. Gratuitous gifts were given to them over and above human nature, and a condition was laid down for the continuance of those gifts. The condition is given in Gen 2:16-17: "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." A commandment was given to Adam and Eve so that they would acknowledge their dependence on God as creatures through obedience. From this commandment we also infer that immortality was a gift of the covenant that would be lost by disobedience.

We can see from Genesis 3:8-10 that Adam and Eve enjoyed an original friendship with God, which was lost through the original sin. This intimacy is revealed through the metaphorical image of walking with God in the Garden in the "cool of the day," when friends and lovers generally walk together. We should not think that God was physically walking in His divine nature, for the divine nature is purely spiritual. Nor can we think that God was already incarnate and walking with a human body, for that was to come much later. Therefore this walking with God in the Garden is a metaphorical image of friendship with God, a friendship interrupted by the original sin. The sign of its loss is the hiding of Adam and Eve from God rather than walking with Him:

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

This intimacy with God was the highest gift received by Adam and Eve. This was a gift above human nature, for

human nature, like any created nature, is infinitely below God. To walk with God in intimate friendship cannot belong to man by nature, but only by an absolutely gratuitous gift immeasurably ennobling and elevating human nature. Not even an angel could naturally have friendship with God, because friendship implies a certain equality, which no creature can naturally have with God. If someone were to state that this equality were simply man's natural state, they would be overlooking one of the most fundamental truths of philosophy and theology: the infinite distance that naturally separates the Creator from His creatures.

Theology refers to this original gift of intimacy with God by the name of sanctifying grace. It is called grace because it is an absolutely free gift that exceeds the nature or natural due of any creature. It is called sanctifying grace because intimacy with God presupposes a condition of sanctity by which God gives to the creature a share of His own holiness so that the creature can enter into communion with God.

This gift of sanctifying grace would have been accompanied by the three theological virtues—faith, hope, and charity—which flow from sanctifying grace. Without faith, hope, and charity, it is impossible to walk in friendship with God. These three virtues are supernatural because they elevate our actions to a divine level. Faith elevates us by giving us a share in the divine knowledge through receiving His revelation. Clearly Adam and Eve had some kind of faith for they believed that He gave them a primordial commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil lest they die. They must also have had hope to have still greater union with God, for they could not yet see Him face to face as in the beatific vision. For if they did actually see God in the beatific vision in Eden, then Eve could never have believed the Satan's false testimony about God, for Satan implied that God wanted to keep them down and thus didn't love them and will their true good. If they had seen God face to face, Eve would have immediately seen that this temptation was a lie. Finally, they must have had supernatural charity to walk in friendship with God, for charity is essentially love of friendship with God, and love of neighbor for God's sake.

In addition to faith, hope, and charity, they would also have received the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and the infused cardinal virtues, for all of these gifts are a consequence of sanctifying grace and aid us to maintain intimacy with God.

All of these gifts of intimacy with God are referred to as *supernatural*, which means that they transcend the level of any created nature, being proportionate only to God. Or to put it another way, they are supernatural in that their purpose is to mysteriously bridge the infinite gap between God and any creature so that man could enter into communion with God.

In addition to supernatural gifts, we can see from Genesis 2–3 that Adam and Eve were also the recipients of other gifts above human nature, which the theological tradition speaks of as preternatural gifts. The word *praeter* in Latin means “beyond.” “Preternatural” thus means “beyond nature.” This word is used in theology to signify perfections that are above the limits of human nature, but nevertheless do not imply a participation in the life of God, and thus are not said to be grace or “supernatural.” The preternatural gifts are proper to angelic nature, giving Adam and Eve four angelic privileges (which would have been transferred to their offspring): immortality,⁴ immunity from suffering, infused knowledge,⁵ and immunity from the onslaught of the disordered passions of the sense appetites. This last preternatural gift is known as *integrity*.

The gift of integrity can be seen in the fact that Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed.⁶ Their nakedness before the Fall caused no disordered concupiscence that could lead them to see the other as a mere *object* of gratification (instead of as a *person*), which would cause their partner to feel shame. Thus theologians deduce that their lack of shame shows that they had been given the gift of interior freedom from the constraint of passion and instinctual movement, a dominion of the spiritual faculties over the body and its passions. Their love could then express itself with the donation of their whole person, both spiritual and physical.

This gift of integrity involved a freedom from the disordered inclinations of the triple concupiscence that marks human life after the Fall, described for us in 1 Jn 2:16: “For all that is in the world, the *lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life*, is not of the Father but is of the world.” The lack of the gift of integrity is referred to as *concupiscence*. Concupiscence signifies the natural tendency of man's sense appetites to be attracted by sensible objects even when these are contrary to the order of reason, thus creating a state of conflict within man.

Original justice thus entailed a manifold gift of supernatural and preternatural harmony: harmony between man and God through grace, and the inner harmony of the human person through the gift of integrity, from which resulted “the harmony between man and woman, and finally the harmony between the first couple and all creation.”⁷ The harmony between man and creation can be seen in the fact that human work would not have included the aspect of toil and the “sweat of the brow” (Gen 3:19).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 377, goes on to state that

4 The gift of immortality can be gathered from the punishment of death attached to disobedience.

5 Infused knowledge is evident in the fact that Adam and Eve had some elevated knowledge of their Creator and His will.

6 See Gen 2:25.

7 CCC 376.

the “mastery” over the world that God offered man from the beginning was realized above all within man himself: *mastery of self*. The first man was unimpaired and ordered in his whole being because he was free from the triple concupiscence that subjugates him to the pleasures of the senses, covetousness for earthly goods, and self-assertion, contrary to the dictates of reason.

In summary, Adam and Eve were created as recipients of a threefold gift. They were bearers of (a) the life of human nature, (b) preternatural gifts perfecting nature by raising it in some respects to an angelic level, and (c) sanctifying grace elevating them into a share in the divine life. All three gifts were gratuitous. Existence in a particular created nature is always gratuitous and utterly unmerited. No one can lay claim to being called out of nothingness. However, on top of the gift of existence in human nature, Adam and Eve were recipients of two higher gratuitous gifts. The highest gift of all was the supernatural elevation to a sharing in God’s divine life and friendship through sanctifying grace, and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

Martin Luther and much of the Protestant tradition make an error in this regard by viewing the condition of Adam and Eve in Eden as purely natural. With regard to Adam’s original state, Luther wrote:

It was not a gift that came from outside, separate from the nature of man. Rather it was truly natural, such that it was part of Adam’s nature to love God, believe in God, acknowledge God, etc. These things were as natural in Adam as that our eyes receive light.⁸

With all due respect, that cannot be true. For it would imply that Adam was naturally divine, which Luther himself did not intend to assert. A created nature that is finite cannot naturally enjoy an equality of God so as to be naturally on intimate terms with God. That can only be a gift infinitely above any creature’s nature. Luther has confused nature and grace in the man’s original state, attributing to nature what ought to be attributed to grace to show its double gratuitousness. God did not have to create us as human beings, and so creation is a free gift. However, even after He has created us human beings, He did not have to freely bring us into intimate friendship with Himself, for that is above what any creature, including the angels, can achieve or claim by nature.

Luther’s confusion regarding nature and grace in Eden was followed by the Jansenist heresy, which likewise held that the original justice of Adam and Eve in Eden simply belonged to human nature and was not a free gift above nature.

The fact that friendship with God was above nature, even in Eden, does not imply that man’s nature was not good in the original creation. It was good, but grace is im-

⁸ In Genesis, ch. 3; *Works*, edit. Wittenberg, 1555 (Latin), vol. vi., leaf 42, page 2.

measurably higher than any created nature, for it belongs to the divine order. Thus sanctifying grace divinizes those who receive it, as the Eastern Fathers loved to proclaim.

The Original Sin: In What Did It Consist?

Let us look now at the nature of the original sin of Eve and Adam. What was the motive behind Eve’s disobedience?

John Paul II gave a profound interpretation of the nature of the original sin in his encyclical of 1986, *Dominum et vivificantem*, on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. In the second part of this encyclical he makes a brief analysis of the nature of the original sin of Adam and its paradigmatic value as a deliberate rejection of the truth of God’s Word and the goodness of His Law as an expression of His loving Providence. He writes: “This original disobedience presupposes a rejection, or at least a turning away from the truth contained in the Word of God, who creates the world. . . . He is the Word who is also the eternal law, the source of every law which regulates the world and especially human acts.”⁹

The original sin, and every sin, is a rejection of the Word of God, the Logos, who is also God’s eternal law. The original sin, and every sin, is thus a rejection of Christ, the Logos, and a disbelief in the Logos as Eternal Law. John Paul II writes:

The rejection expresses itself in practice as ‘disobedience,’ in an act committed as an effect of the temptation which comes from the ‘father of lies.’ Therefore, at the root of human sin is the lie which is a radical rejection of the truth contained in the Word of the Father, through whom is expressed the loving omnipotence of the Creator.¹⁰

In *Dominum et vivificantem* 36, John Paul II further develops the notion of the original sin as a refusal to respect the limitation of the human condition as a creature, subject to the eternal law of God. This law is a law of love, leading man to realize his beatitude through the perfection of his personality in perfect self-giving to neighbor and to God. The devil inspires man with a suspicion against the goodness of God and the gift of the eternal wisdom manifested in the law of God. The Pope writes:

The “image of God,” consisting in rationality and freedom, expresses the greatness and dignity of the human subject, who is a person. But this personal subject is also always a creature: in his existence and essence he depends on the Creator. According to the Book of Genesis, “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” was to express and constantly remind man of the “limit” impassable for a created being. God’s prohibition is to be understood in this sense: the Creator forbids man and woman to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The words of the enticement, that is to say the temptation, as formulated in

⁹ John Paul II, *Dominum et vivificantem* 33.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

the sacred text, are an inducement to transgress this prohibition—that is to say, to go beyond that “limit”: “When you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God [“like gods”], knowing good and evil.”

“Disobedience” means precisely going beyond that limit, which remains impassable to the will and the freedom of man as a created being. For God the Creator is the one definitive source of the moral order in the world created by him. Man cannot decide by himself what is good and what is evil—cannot “know good and evil, like God.” In the created world God indeed remains the first and sovereign source *for deciding about good and evil*, through the intimate truth of being, which is the reflection of *the Word*, the eternal Son, consubstantial with the Father.

John Paul II then proceeds to connect the eternal law with the gift of conscience, of which it is a reflection. Conscience must always make reference to God and His Law. If we seek to make it autonomous it will disintegrate. This is the greatest drama of contemporary man. The Pope puts his finger here on the most crucial aspect of our contemporary situation:

To man, created to the image of God, the Holy Spirit gives the gift of *conscience*, so that in this conscience the image may faithfully reflect its model, which is both Wisdom and eternal Law, the source of the moral order in man and in the world. “Disobedience,” as the original dimension of sin, means the *rejection of this source*, through man’s claim to become an independent and exclusive source for deciding about good and evil. The Spirit who “searches the depths of God,” and who at the same time is for man the light of conscience and the source of the moral order, knows in all its fullness this dimension of the sin inscribed in the mystery of man’s beginning. And the Spirit does not cease “*convincing the world of it*” in connection with the Cross of Christ on Golgotha.¹¹

Human Sin Is a Turning Away from God and Involves Suspicion of God

In *Dominum et vivificantem* 37, John Paul II beautifully presents the classic theme that all sin involves two aspects: a turning away from God and a disordered conversion to oneself and to creaturely goods. This aversion from God corresponds also to an opening up to the temptation of the “father of lies.”

The nature of this temptation lies in a false understanding of both man and God. We have already seen that the falsehood about man consists in the denial of his creaturely status. At the same time the Tempter suggests a radical falsification of God, suggesting that God’s Law is not motivated by man’s true interest, but rather to maintain God’s own domination. God is accused of self-interest in imposing a moral law, from which man should liberate himself in order to become “like God.”

¹¹ Ibid., 36 (italics original).

For the truth about man becomes falsified: who man is and what are the impassable limits of his being and freedom. This “anti-truth” is possible because at the same time there is a complete falsification of the truth about who God is. God the Creator is placed in a state of suspicion, indeed of accusation, in the mind of the creature. For the first time in human history there appears the perverse “genius of suspicion.” He seeks to “falsify” Good itself; the absolute Good, which precisely in the work of creation has manifested itself as the Good which gives in an inexpressible way: as bonum diffusivum sui, as creative love.¹²

John Paul II remarks that this primordial temptation has become the foundation of Marxism and other atheistic ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

Man will be inclined to see in God primarily a limitation of himself, and not the source of his own freedom and the fullness of good. We see this confirmed in the modern age, when the atheistic ideologies seek to root out religion on the grounds that religion causes the radical “alienation” of man, as if man were dispossessed of his own humanity when, accepting the idea of God, he attributes to God what belongs to man, and exclusively to man! Hence a process of thought and historico-sociological practice in which the rejection of God has reached the point of declaring his “death.” An absurdity, both in concept and expression! But the ideology of the “death of God” is more a threat to man, as the Second Vatican Council indicates when it analyzes the question of the “independence of earthly affairs” and writes: “For without the Creator the creature would disappear...when God is forgotten the creature itself grows unintelligible.” The ideology of the “death of God” easily demonstrates in its effects that on the “theoretical and practical” levels it is the ideology of the “death of man.”¹³

John Paul returned to this theme in *Veritatis splendor* 35, in which he speaks of the original sin of Adam and Eve as the archetype of the root problem of much of contemporary moral theology. John Paul II interprets the commandment not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil as a symbol for the limits of the creativity of human conscience. Knowledge of good and evil, in the sense of objectively determining good and evil, is reserved to the eternal law of God. Human reason can grasp a part of the truth about good and evil contained in the eternal law, but it cannot seek to put itself over the eternal law, as if it were completely autonomous in ethical decision making in human affairs.¹⁴

¹² Ibid., 37 (italics original).

¹³ Ibid., 38.

¹⁴ See VS 40: “Nevertheless, the autonomy of reason cannot mean that reason itself creates values and moral norms. Were this autonomy to imply a denial of the participation of the practical reason in the wisdom of the divine Creator and Lawgiver, or were it to suggest a freedom which creates moral norms, on the basis of historical contingencies or the diversity of societies and cultures, this sort of alleged autonomy would contradict the Church’s teaching on the truth about man. It would be the death of true freedom: ‘But of the tree of the knowledge of good and

The Consequences of Original Sin: Loss of Original Justice

What were the consequences of the original sin for Adam and Eve and all their posterity? To put it simply, Adam and Eve lost for themselves and all their descendants the ability to transmit to their offspring the inestimable gifts that they had received over and above the limits of human nature.

The greatest loss was the state of friendship with God in which they had been created. This friendship can be understood from the intimacy with which they walked with God in the Garden of Eden, from which intimacy they were expelled after the sin. The state of friendship with God is made possible by sanctifying grace, which is a sharing in the divine life,¹⁵ and the greatest of the gifts received by Adam and Eve. Its loss is thus the most substantial penalty incurred by original sin. Sanctifying grace carries with it a host of other supernatural gifts that adorn the soul, all of which are lost together with sanctifying grace. These gifts include faith, hope, and charity; the infused supernatural moral virtues; and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, Adam and Eve lost the preternatural gifts with which they had been created: immortality, immunity from suffering, infused knowledge, and integrity (immunity from disordered passion).

Adam and Eve, however, did not just lose these gifts for themselves, but also for the human race. Why should this be? Why should you and I be punished for the sin of Adam? It is hard for us, imbued with an individualistic outlook, to grasp the solidarity of the human race manifested in Genesis 1-3, and the role of the headship of Adam.

To grasp this solidarity, it is useful to reflect on the difference between men and angels. Angels were created entirely out of nothing by God, in a complete and full state, with a nature that is not discursive, fully realizing their essence in the first instant of their creation. Thus it is fitting that each individual angel had his own trial, in which his rise or fall depended on himself alone and his free moral choice. Men, on the contrary, are created with the participation of our parents, endowed with minds that come into the world as blank slates, and utterly dependent on others for education and care. The human being thus receives his endowment of humanity and culture not only from God, but also from his parents who pass his bodily life on to him, and from his society. Human life involves receiving an endowment that one has not earned, and which is received through fallible human mediation.

The other side of this dependence with which we come into the world is the awesome responsibility parents have for those whom they bring into the world. The faculty of

evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die' (Gen 2:17)."

¹⁵ See CCC 375, 1997; LG 2; 2 Pt 1:4.

human procreation makes us sharers or participants in God's plan of creation. As mentioned above, participation in God's creative power gives glory to God by manifesting or mirroring His goodness outside of Himself. However, this awesome participation in the passing on of God's gifts also implies an overwhelming *kingly responsibility*, involving the duty of right governance or headship. If God's gifts are passed on through the kingly mediation of a creature, this means that God's gifts can be interrupted through the failure of the creature to cooperate worthily with God's initiative.

Ultimately all moral responsibility carries with it the possibility of wreaking havoc through abuse of that responsibility, not only to oneself but also to others. This fearful capacity is of the very essence of created responsibility, which involves the obligation/vocation to preserve a trust that has been received for the sake of others, for the sake of the common good.

Nevertheless, moral responsibility is itself a great good, despite its immense potential for abuse. It is an inestimable good in that it makes possible a unique and free sharing in God's own kingship or providence exercised over those very creatures that God has willed for their own sake. Through moral responsibility the creature is elevated to share in the distribution of God's gifts to His beloved creatures.

In the case of Adam and Eve, their privilege of being the first human couple entailed an immense privilege of kingly mediation. They had been given human nature adorned with supernatural and preternatural gifts as a sacred endowment or trust to pass on to all the future members of the human race. This privilege necessarily contained an awe-inspiring responsibility to be faithful to their trust of being God's agents in the passing on, not only of His natural, but also of His supernatural gifts. This kingly trust was violated by their seeking to make themselves morally autonomous, capable of deciding good and evil for themselves without responsibility towards God and His law, making themselves as gods. The claim of moral autonomy includes the lack of recognition of oneself as the recipient of an utterly gratuitous endowment.

In brief, by failing to recognize God as their head, they lost their own headship over the human race with regard to the supernatural and preternatural endowment that God had wished to give us. Through a disordered pride seeking moral autonomy, Adam and Eve justly lost their supernatural and preternatural gifts, and Adam was thus unable to pass on to all of his posterity what he had already lost. As we know through sad experience, all of human history is deeply marked by this loss. The failure of a kingly responsibility has engendered the loss of a kingdom of original justice, and the appearance of the kingdom of the "ruler of this world" (see Jn 14:30): mystical Babylon.

Nevertheless, Adam and Eve retained their natural gifts of human nature, which they were able to pass on to all humanity. Thus Adam retained a natural headship over the human race, while forfeiting his supernatural headship, to be taken up in the fullness of time by Christ.

It is important to observe that the natural gifts of human nature, by which we are constituted as rational animals, were not diminished by the Fall, which deprived us only of what went beyond nature: supernatural and preternatural gifts. *Our nature was not essentially corrupted, but stripped of supernatural and preternatural gifts.*