

### **The Origin of Sin, Part 3**

The last two weeks the bulletin article has taken up the Scriptural account of the fall of Adam & Eve, given in Genesis 3. We will continue with “The Fall” this week, starting with what happens after the tempter leaves Eve – The Result of the temptation.

#### **4. The Result**

Let us start with what Scripture says, after the conversation between Satan & Eve: “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate.”

Eve was alone to ponder the tree. But how does she “think,” is it with clear, objective reason? If so, it seems she would consider the fact that she is about to risk death, which is not found in this verse. If she were thinking clearly about what the devil had said (you will not die, you are independent of God), she might have wondered how she could account for her own existence if that were true. She might have consulted with her husband or with God. The conclusion from this verse seems to be that her internal disharmony has already occurred; the passions are no longer subjugated to reason, they have become disordered, no longer driving her towards God but actually away from Him. Greed and envy, stemming from pride, are now in charge. How quickly the passions (feelings, emotions, desires), once disordered, overwhelm and take control of us. Are we prepared for that? Ready to say: stop and wait? Let me think? Let me consult with the Lord and what He has revealed?

She does not consult either God or man because now she can be a god herself; she is ashamed of being naked, of her dependence – that’s for lowly creatures, not for her. You will be like gods. Ah, yes indeed. Before, God alone decided what was good, now Eve assumes that for herself. Does this not sound familiar today? She grasps at that which is not hers to have – first the decider of what is right and good and true, and secondly at that which God had forbidden.

Perhaps the greatest perplexity in the passage above is the shortness of it in regard to Adam’s sin. She gave it to him and he ate it – that’s it. Commentators are largely silent on this point. One suggestion is that Adam saw that Eve had eaten of the fruit and not died and therefore went along with it. How often do people get fooled by that one. God is patient, He gives us time to repent and His generosity is mistaken to mean: there are no consequences to evil actions. The truth is obvious, though – sooner or later evil acts catch up with us, as they did with Adam & Eve. The consequences were enormous. Maybe Adam simply wished to please his wife or did not wish to lose his helpmate; i.e., maybe he placed a created good over God. In any event, Adam too placed himself before God, acted on his own terms, and disobeyed. There are two great ironies here: 1) they were already “like God,” which they then lost and 2) in grasping at the Tree of Knowledge, they lost the Tree of Life.

The next thing that happens is God, like a good Father, calls out to Adam, who is trying to hide from God. Sound familiar? When God asks Adam why, he blamed Eve; when He asks Eve why, she blamed the serpent. They each blame someone else. The good teachers of the faith say that God was giving them a chance to go to Confession and they speculate that if Adam & Eve had done so, they would have been restored and would not have been put out of the Garden. They were not immediately put out of the Garden with a sentence of death, only after they refused to accept responsibility for what they have done and failed to do, only after they have refused to go to Confession. How often we fall into simply blaming someone else. The result is the same as it was for Adam & Eve: misery and death. Yet so many follow their example today: God offers mercy through the Sacrament of Confession, and we decline.

#### **5. Why did Satan Attack “The Woman” and not Adam?**

It is generally held in Catholic theology that if Adam had not sinned, even though Eve did, original sin would not have been transmitted to Adam’s descendants. Since Adam was the first created, he was like a fountainhead at the head of a river; he was the original source – all others came from him. Provided that the fountainhead was not polluted, the rest of the river would not be polluted, even if one branch was. A victory over Eve, then,

was indeed a victory for Satan but his real target would seem to have been Adam. It seems that Eve was *used* by Satan to get to Adam. Why? If Adam was the ultimate target, why not attack him directly?

There has been considerable speculation on this question. The most common speculation, amongst both the Church Fathers and some more recent Scripture scholars goes along the lines of: Eve was an easier target, maybe because she did not hear God directly (as Adam did) or maybe because she was seen as “weaker” in some sense. One of the most thought-provoking commentaries on this question might be that of Fr Jean Danielou, a French Jesuit priest and Cardinal of the Church, born in 1905. Danielou notes the power that woman has over man and that she makes use of this power in various ways, at times for good (e.g., Deborah), at other times for evil (e.g., Delilah). Eve was Adam’s helpmate in the previous chapter and then becomes his temptress. “This,” says Danielou, “is the mystery of woman, her particular mission in salvation history.” Woman plays a significant role in the introduction of sin into history, Danielou notes; eventually, of course, she will have an incomparable role in the history of grace.

Perhaps we can build on what Danielou has said, and even tie it together with the speculation that Eve was an easier target. Easier? Or would *more susceptible* be more precise? It is not unusual that a person’s greatest strength is also their greatest weakness. What is the strength of woman? In general – *in general*, not always – women tend to be more “open” than men. In a certain sense, this is reflected even physically, the relevance being that physical reality (which came from God) generally reflects spiritual reality (which also comes from God). This “openness” includes openness to life and to God. It is something good and even necessary and should not be shunned or condemned – by men or women; it is not something to be ashamed of. But *perhaps* it is that that openness also leaves one more susceptible to, i.e., more open to evil suggestion – hence the great strength also being a weakness. So how is that to be compensated for or protected or that dependency to be fulfilled?

Men *typically* have a stronger irascible appetite than women. The irascible appetite is meant to drive back or withstand evil or danger; anger, for example, “resides” in the irascible appetite. The irascible appetite is something created by God and, in its ordered form, serves not only a good purpose but a necessary one. The stronger irascible appetite of the man (a spiritual reality) is perhaps also reflected physically since the typically harder body of a man would usually be able to withstand a harder blow (again, physical reality reflecting spiritual reality lends some credence to the speculation since God is the Creator of both). At the same time, a strong irascible appetite can, perhaps, make one “less open,” even to the good things of God – hence, once again, the strength also being a sort of weakness.

So now we seem to have a conundrum: openness on the one hand which might be susceptible to evil, irascible on the other hand, which might tend to make one more “closed” even to good. What to do? It seems that man needs his “helpmate” (woman) to help him be open to goodness, and woman needs the man to protect that very openness, recognizing and driving back evil when it approaches. The two things seem to be complementary, they would seem to belong together. So what to do? Well maybe a simple solution is to just put the two of them together to work in unison, to the point that the two become one. And, in fact, that is (of course) exactly what God did. Is it so bad? We cannot be God – that is to say, we cannot be all things, or infinitely powerful, or all-knowing, we are dependent – because even God cannot create another God. We are not and cannot be, for example, self-existent or self-sufficient. That’s a plain and simple fact that cannot be overcome and to try to do so leads only to misery and death. Given that that’s the case, our Lord makes complementary people – one is not self-sufficient but others are there to help, to do what he may not be quite so good at. Is it so bad? Is there really a need to rebel against this, to insist that I be a god unto myself, something that is impossible? Please take some time to really think about the goodness of God’s creation and teach it to the young people. To fail to do so is to condemn ourselves and the young ones to misery.

God bless you,

Fr Kuhn.