

EVANGELION  
The Power of God

Fr. Deacon Ezra

**Chapter 3**  
**LUNCH IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN**

St. Elijah Orthodox Church  
15000 N. May Ave  
Oklahoma City, OK

© Fr Deacon Ezra 2015

## CHAPTER 3

## LUNCH IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

*INVITED TO LUNCH*

The third chapter of Genesis contains the story of the serpent's conversation with Eve in which the serpent, like a waiter, suggests to Eve that she try something not on the daily menu.

According to him today's special was something prepared especially for her and Adam from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

When asked whether she had been told by God not to eat from any of the trees in the garden, Eve corrected the serpent. They could eat from all the trees except the one in the center of the garden because it would cause them to die if they ate from it.

Eve had not been formed separate from Adam when God had told Adam not to eat from this particular tree. So how did Eve know she could not eat from this tree? Obviously Adam had told her. They were a team living by the same set of values. Eve was part of an Us with Adam. But the serpent scoffs. "You won't die. God knows you will become like him if you eat from it." Seen from this new perspective the fruit looked particularly tasty and exquisite. Eve accepted the invitation to lunch. She ate of the fruit. Adam, who had finally arrived for their lunch date, walked up as Eve took that first bite. Hmmm—she rolled her eyes in delight—and held out the fruit toward Adam for him to sample. He ate.

Here's a husband and wife meeting for a lunch date. The husband arrives late. The waiter has already suggested an appetizer while she waits for him. She has just taken the first bite when he

arrives. She holds out a bite for him. How many times this scene is repeated in the movie *Julie & Julia*?

This scene in the garden is a human scene. It is the way husbands and wives share food. But this was no ordinary piece of fruit the serpent served them. The cosmos was turned inside out. Everything changed before their eyes, and they knew they were naked.

Their shock of being naked might have been like that scene in the movie *The Proposal* when Ryan Reynolds's character, Andrew, has undressed to take a shower not knowing Sandra Bullock's character, Margaret, can't find her towel after taking her shower. They bump into each other, and in a panic shout, "Naked! Why are you naked! You're so naked!"

Did you know we are the only species that knows we're naked? Dogs don't. Cats don't. Animals at the zoo don't. We've been naked ever since Adam and Eve had lunch together that day.

God normally visited Adam and Eve in the garden in the cool of the day. But Adam and Eve were nowhere in sight. What's wrong here? Adam, where are you? Adam and Eve came out of hiding.

God asks them a very simple question. Did you eat of the tree that I told you not to? This is a simple question. It only has two possible answers—yes—or—no. Adam and Eve never answer God's question.

Adam blames God for giving him such a lousy wife that would give him forbidden fruit. Taking her cue from Adam, Eve blames the serpent for having invited her to lunch in the first place. The whole scene is so painfully human. This is the way we act.

As we have done before, let me share with you some comments made by various Fathers of the Church.

### THE REPLY GOD SOUGHT

Novatian (235-258), *On the Trinity*<sup>1</sup>

The fact that God searches for [Adam] does not proceed from any ignorance on the part of God, but it manifests man's hope of a future discovery and salvation in Christ.

John Chrysostom (344-407), *Homilies on Genesis*<sup>2</sup>

You see, since he was not unaware of the truth when he asked them but rather knew, and knew very well, he shows consideration for their limitations so as to demonstrate his own loving kindness, and he invites them to make admission of their faults.

Ephrem the Syrian (306-373), *Commentary on Genesis*<sup>3</sup>

Instead of confessing what he had done, which would have helped him, he related what had been done to him, which did not help him at all...Adam again failed to confess his folly and blamed the woman.

---

<sup>1</sup> Novatian, *On the Trinity*, Fathers of the Church: The New Translation, 67:25.

<sup>2</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, J. P. Migne, ed. Patrologia Graeca, 166 vols. Paris: Migne, 1857-1886.

<sup>3</sup> Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis*, Fathers of the Church: The New Translation, 91:117.

Ephrem the Syrian (306-373), *Commentary on Genesis*<sup>4</sup>

If Adam and Eve had sought to repent after they had transgressed the commandment, even though they would not have regained that which they had possessed before their transgression of the commandment, they would have escaped from the curses that were decreed upon the earth and upon them.

Symeon the New Theologian (942-1022), *Discourses*<sup>5</sup>

Do you see, dear friend, how patient God is? For when he said, “Adam, where are you?” and when Adam did not at once confess his sin but said, “I heard your voice, O Lord, and realized that I am naked and hid myself,” God was not angered, nor did he immediately turn away. Rather, he gave him the opportunity of a second reply and said, “Who told you that you are naked? Unless you ate of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat.”

Consider how profound is the words of God’s wisdom. He says, “Why do you say that you are naked but hide your sin? Do you really think I see only your body but do not see your heart and your thoughts?”...It is as though [God] said, “Do you really think that you can hide from me? Do you imagine that I do not know what you have done? Will you not say, ‘I have sinned?’ Say, O scoundrel, ‘Yes, it is true, Master, I have transgressed your command. I am fallen ... I am greatly at fault for... disobeying your word. Have mercy upon me!’”

But he does not humble himself, he does not bend. The neck of his heart is like a sinew of iron! Had he said this he might have stayed in paradise. By this one word he might have spared himself the whole cycle of evils without number that he endured by his expulsion....

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 91:114-115.

<sup>5</sup> Symeon the New Theologian, *Discourses*, Translated by C. J. DeCatanzaro, Classics of Western Spirituality: A Library of Great Spiritual Masters (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1980), 95-96.

Ephrem the Syrian (306-373), *Commentary on Genesis*<sup>6</sup>

Since Adam did not wish to confess his folly, God came next to question Eve and said to her, “What is this that you have done?” Eve, too, instead of making supplication with her tears and bearing the fault herself so that mercy might take hold of both her and her husband, responded by saying not, “The serpent counseled or seduced me” but “The serpent deceived me and I ate.”

When the two of them had been questioned and were both found to be wanting in remorse or true contrition, God went down to the serpent not to make inquiry but to render punishment. For where there is opportunity for repentance, it would be right to inquire, but to one who is a stranger to repentance, judgment is fitting.

Symeon the New Theologian (942-1022), *Discourses*<sup>7</sup>

When God had left Adam, he came to Eve. He wanted to show her that she too would be cast out, if she was unwilling to repent. So he said, “What is it that you have done?” so that at least she might be able to say, “I have sinned.” Why else did God need to speak these words to her, unless indeed to enable her to say, “In my folly, O Master, I, a lowly wretch, have done this, and have disobeyed you. Have mercy on me!”

But she did not say this. What did she say? “The serpent beguiled me.” How senseless! So you have spoken with the serpent, who speaks against your Master? Him you have preferred to God who made you. You have valued his advice more highly and held it to be truer than the commandment of your Master! So, too, when Eve was unable to say, “I have sinned,” both were cast out from the place of enjoyment. They were banished from paradise and from God.

Dorotheus of Gaza (c. 525), *Spiritual Instruction*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis*, Fathers of the Church: The New Translation, 91:118.

<sup>7</sup> Symeon the New Theologian, *Discourses*, Translated by C. J. DeCatanzaro, Classics of Western Spirituality: A Library of Great Spiritual Masters (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1980), 97.

<sup>8</sup> Dorotheus of Gaza, *Spiritual Instruction*, Edited by J. P. Migne. (Patrologiae Cursus Completus; Series Graeca, vol. 88, 1860), 33:82-83.

Again, after Adam had done wrong God gave him a chance to repent and be forgiven, and yet he kept on being stiff-necked and unrepentant. For God came to him and said, “Adam, where are you?” instead of saying, “From what glory are you come to this? Are you not ashamed? Why did you sin? Why did you go astray?—as if urging him sharply to say, “Forgive me!”

But there was no sign of humility. There was no change of heart but rather the contrary. He replied, “The wife that you gave me”—mark you, not “my wife”—deceived me. “The wife that *you* gave me,” as if to say, “this disaster *you* placed on my head.” So it is my brethren, when a man has not the guts to accuse himself, he does not scruple to accuse God himself.

Then God came to Eve and said to her, “Why did you not keep the command I gave you?” as if saying, “If you would only say, ‘Forgive me,’ to humble your soul and be forgiven.” And again, not a word! No “forgive me.” She only answered, “The serpent deceived me!—as if to say, the serpent did wrong, what concern is that to me?”

What are you doing you wretches? Kneel in repentance, acknowledge your fault, take pity on your nakedness. But neither the one nor the other stooped to self-accusation, no trace of humility was found in either of them.

And now look and consider how this was only an anticipation of our own state! See how many and great the evils it has brought on us—this self-justification, this holding fast to our own will, this obstinacy in being our own guide.

#### *CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL—WESTERN VERSION*

	<u>Image</u>	<u>Likeness</u>
The West	COMPLETE	COMPLETE

The West understands the creation of mankind differently than the East. For the West both the Image and Likeness of God were completed and finished in Adam and Eve. In the Western understanding the Fall of Man totally smashed, shattered and destroyed both the Image and Likeness of Man.

	<u>Image</u>	<u>Likeness</u>
The West	SMASHED	SMASHED

### *THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN*

According to Augustine, all descendants of Adam & Eve inherited their guilt. At birth all humans are born guilty and are going to hell to pay for Adam & Eve's sin. This doctrine was invented by Augustine in the West in the 400s. Original Sin is a doctrine of the Catholic Church, and in the 1500s Luther and John Calvin made it the foundation of the Protestant Reformation and Protestant theology.

Liberal Protestant churches may now reject Original Sin along with everything else they reject.

But Original Sin is a key doctrine of Western Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant.

Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin and punishment in Hell are deeply embedded in the fabric of Western culture. They are so pervasively embedded that they are part of the cultural "givens" of Western culture.

It is almost impossible for a Westerner to think of Christianity without automatically assuming Original Sin and going to Hell. In order to understand the difference between Eastern

Christianity and Western Christianity it is necessary to clarify that difference by making explicit the specific content of Original Sin and Hell so easily taken for granted in the West.

#### *A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF AUGUSTINE'S THEOLOGY*

Seth Farber wrote an excellent overview of Augustine's theory of Original Sin and its historical development in Western Christianity. The following excerpts are from *The Reign of Augustine* by Seth Farber.<sup>9</sup>

*Augustine asserts that all human beings bear the guilt for Adam's original sin.*

*Without any scriptural basis other than a mistranslation of Romans 5:12, Augustine insisted that "all men are understood to have sinned in that first man, because all men were in him when he sinned."<sup>10</sup>*

*Thus, according to Augustine, due to Adam's sin every person belongs to a "mass of perdition, to a massa damnata, to a "unity of negativity," as Paul Tillich put it.<sup>11</sup>*

*Augustine wrote, "The damned lump of humanity was lying prostrate, Nay, was wallowing in evil, was falling headlong from one wickedness to another, and joined to the faction of the angels who had sinned, it was paying the most righteous penalty of its impious treason."<sup>12</sup>*

*Baptism was necessary to acquit human beings of their crime. Thus Augustine argued that infants who did not receive baptism would be condemned to suffer the torments of eternal punishment in hell.*

---

<sup>9</sup> Seth Farber, "The Reign of Augustine," in *The Christian Activist*. March, 1999. The article was excerpted from Seth Farber, *Eternal Day* (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, Volume One, 299.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought* (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1968), 128.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in N.P. Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin*.

*He wrote that no one is to be born of Adam and Eve was “less a sinner than they were. Such was the greatness of the guilt that the punishment so impaired human nature that what was originally a penal condition for the first parents who sinned became a natural consequence in all of their descendants.”<sup>13</sup>*

*Not only do human beings bear the legal liability for Adam’s sin, but they also suffer from it as a kind of inherited disease transmitted by Adam. The semen itself, Augustine argued, “already shackled by the bond of death,” transmits the damage incurred by sin. Everyone arising as he does from a condemned stock, is from the first necessarily evil and carnal through Adam.”<sup>14</sup>*

*Because it was transmitted by natural propagation, “original sin was as universal and inevitable as life itself.”<sup>15</sup> Thus Augustine writes, “The infant is bad: though little he is already a great sinner.”<sup>16</sup>*

*In Augustine’s view, human beings thus suffer from original sin in a two-fold sense: First, they suffer from a hereditary moral disease first acquired by Adam and since then transmitted to posterity.*

*Second, and more importantly, human beings suffer from original sin in the sense of guilt—of an inherited legal liability to judicial punishment for Adam’s sin, for the sin of humanity in Adam. It is the guilt that human beings have incurred as a result of that sin. It is this legal guilt that is removed immediately by the act of baptism, and it is for this reason that infants who die without baptism, according to Augustine, must suffer eternal punishment in hell.*

*The sin of Adam—and of humanity through him—was such a grievous offense against God’s justice that all human beings deserve to suffer eternal punishment.*

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>14</sup> Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, 114.

<sup>15</sup> As Jaroslav Pelikan paraphrases Augustine, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, Volume One, 300.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of Western Guilt Culture, 13<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 269.

*But because of God's infinite mercy, a small predestined elect will be saved. Through no merit of their own, by the sacrament of baptism they will be acquitted of the crime of original sin and spared the eternal pains of hell.*

### *AUGUSTINIANISM*

This original doctrine of Original Sin created by Augustine was accepted and built upon by others in the West. The expansion of thought based on Augustine is known as Augustinianism.

Again, here is Seth Farber's discussion.<sup>17</sup>

*It may be helpful to summarize the salient philosophical premises of Augustinianism. First, Augustinianism posits that human beings at present are lacking in intrinsic worth and have lost the capacity to freely choose between good and evil.*

*Second, the situation was not what was originally intended. Human beings were created worthy: They were innocent and good. They deserved God's love. But then a dramatic event occurred—in Augustine's version, Adam's sin destroyed the pristine plenitude of being, bringing tragedy in its wake. The paradise that man inhabited was transformed into a Hell; man was transformed from a godlike being into a vile wretch.*

*Third, mankind is now divided into two groups: an elect destined by God to be rescued from its plight and restored to its original condition ... and the masses doomed to eternal torment in Hell.*

*Fourth, the transcendence of God is emphasized to the highest degree and stands in marked contrast to the depravity of human beings. This is the core premise of Augustinianism and has had an enduring effect upon Christianity and culture: There is an unbridgeable ontological abyss between God and humanity. ... There is no longer a kinship between man and God, no affinity, no similarity that could provide a basis for communion.*

---

<sup>17</sup> Seth Farber, "The Reign of Augustine."

*Fifth, Augustinian theorists' writings reveal that they are personally burdened by a disturbing sense of sin, guilt, and unworthiness. They are preoccupied with the question of how to relieve their sense of ontological deficiency. This preoccupation led both Augustine and Luther to misread Paul and to filter the Pauline text through "the dilemma of the introspective conscience of the West."<sup>18</sup>*

*Sixth, the preoccupation with sin, guilt, and unworthiness leads to an individualistic vision of salvation antithetical to the Christian vision of a new social and economic order where the estrangement between human beings, and between human beings and God, is overcome. The Christian vision is eclipsed, and the individual becomes preoccupied with recovering his sense of self-esteem and seeking reassurance that he will be spared the punishment of eternal torment in hell.*

#### **MARTIN LUTHER**

Augustine's (354-430 A.D.) greatest work, *The City of God*, was written after the sack of the city of Rome in 410 and before his death in 430. *The City of God* gave birth to Western Christianity and to what became the Roman Catholic Church. Over a thousand years later Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564) protested the abandonment or modification of the initial roots of Roman Catholic theology based on the newer theological innovations of Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274).

In their protest against the Catholic Church Luther and Calvin reasserted the theology based on Augustine. Their protest became the Protestant Reformation—and Augustine's theology became the foundation of Protestant theology.

---

<sup>18</sup> Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Christians* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976), 83.

Seth Farber has this to say about Luther.<sup>19</sup>

*Both Luther and Calvin were staunch admirers of Augustine, believing that his legacy had been besmirched by the Catholic Church. Their theologies were consequently based on a reassertion of Augustinian anthropology.*

*It is well known that Luther's apostasy from Roman Catholicism and his development of the concept of justification by faith" was the denouement of his unsuccessful struggle as an Augustinian monk to attain to a sense of sinlessness, in which he could be assured that he had attained the favor of God. Despite all the austerities Luther imposed upon himself, he was ultimately left with a sense of his own depravity. From this he deduced that man was inherently depraved and as a result could do nothing by his own works to earn the forgiveness of God.*

*Like Augustine, Luther believed that man incurred both the guilt for Adam's sin in paradise and the disease of that sin as it was passed on through the act of procreation. He wrote, "I am a sinner, not because I have committed adultery not because I have had Uriah murdered, but I have committed adultery and murder because I was born, indeed conceived and formed in the womb, as a sinner...So we are not sinners because we commit this or that sin, but we commit them because we are sinners first. That is, a bad tree and a bad seed also bring forth bad fruits, and from a bad root only a bad tree can grow." The image of God that Adam had borne in his soul was replaced by "the image of the devil."<sup>20</sup>*

*This entailed a "corruption of the whole nature and of all the powers of man...a corruption which infects the mind, intellect, heart and will."<sup>21</sup>*

*But even worse than the corruption of sin itself is the wrath of God that it incurred, bringing as it did the curse of God and the punishment of death. Since God was eternal and omnipotent, "His*

---

<sup>19</sup> Seth Farber, "The Reign of Augustine."

<sup>20</sup> Luther cited in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Reformation of the Church and Dogma, 1300-1700*, Volume 4, 132.

<sup>21</sup> N.P. Williams, *The Idea of the Fall and of Original Sin*, 249.

*fury or wrath toward self-satisfied sinners is also immeasurable and infinite.*<sup>22</sup> *This divine “justice” created “horrible torments of the heart and fury of conscience.”*<sup>23</sup> *In these torments or “terrors of the conscience that feels God’s wrath against our sins and looks for forgiveness of sins and deliverance from sin,”*<sup>24</sup> *it was worse than useless to lay claim to merit by doing good deeds in an attempt to win God’s favor.*

### JOHN CALVIN AND TOTAL DEPRAVITY

John Calvin’s theology is often summarized by the acronym—TULIP—with the letters coming from the five points of Calvinism—**T**otal depravity, **U**nmerited favor, **L**imited atonement, **I**rrresistible grace, and **P**erseverance of the saints. In Calvinism, Augustine’s lack of free will becomes dominant. Mankind is totally depraved and condemned to Hell—God in His mercy will choose some at random to be saved—but He will not save everyone. Those chosen to be saved have no choice but to received salvation—and once chosen—no one can ever become unsaved.

Following his discussion of Luther, Seth Farber presents his summary of John Calvin’s teachings.<sup>25</sup>

*Like Augustine and Luther, Calvin believed that man’s nature was altered and irreparably damaged by original sin. He stated, “Infants bring their own damnation with them from their mothers’ wombs; the moment they are born, their natures are odious and abominable to*

---

<sup>22</sup> Luther cited in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Reformation of the Church and Dogma, 1300-1700*, Volume 4, 132.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>25</sup> Seth Farber, “The Reign of Augustine.”

God.”<sup>26</sup> *Self-knowledge leads to self-contempt, which for Calvin is the true way to God. “Self-knowledge progresses most when one is crushed and abashed by one’s own calamity, poverty, nudity and ignominy, for there is no danger that man can go too far in abasing himself.”*<sup>27</sup> *In the process of self-abasement man stands to discover “in God what is missing in himself.”*<sup>28</sup>

Calvin wrote, “As a result of the Fall there is an impassable gulf between humanity and God which only God can bridge. How could man help himself when by the shameful Fall he was degraded to death and Hell, sullied with so many stains, fetid with his corruption and wholly in the power of the curse?”<sup>29</sup> *Man is not only born guilty in God’s sight, but he is tainted by the semen from which he descended.*

Calvin wrote, “Therefore all of us, who have descended from impure seed, are born infected with the contagion of sin. In fact, before we saw the light of this life we were soiled and spotted in God’s sight.”<sup>30</sup>

All of creation has been deformed by original sin. “No matter where we look, high or low, we can see only a curse that, spreading over all creatures and embracing the earth and the sky, ought to burden our souls with horrible despair.”<sup>31</sup> According to Calvin, as a result of original sin human beings no longer possess the capacity to do good.

### *PENAL THEORY OF ATONEMENT*<sup>32</sup>

Although the sacrificial theory of atonement was first articulated only in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, by Anselm of Canterbury, and reformulated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Evangelical Christian Charles Hodge, Anselm’s explanation for the atonement was based on a traditional Augustinian

<sup>26</sup> Cited by N.P. Williams, *The Idea of the Fall and of Original Sin*, 432.

<sup>27</sup> Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of Western Guilt Culture: 13<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, 29.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>29</sup> Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), 112.

<sup>30</sup> Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of Western Guilt Culture: 13<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, 499.

<sup>31</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>32</sup> Seth Farber, “The Reign of Augustine.”

*concept of God. This concept of salvation was yet another example of Augustine's corrupting influence on Christianity.*

*Since sin is an offense to the "honor" of God, God has to punish people or have them offer "satisfaction" to make amends for the offenses committed. In order to satisfy God's justice, Christ agreed to die on the cross in substitute for sinful human beings. Christ's death is an act of obedience that outweighs humanity's sinful acts and therefore merited God's reward. Since Christ did not need God's reward, He passed it on to humanity, thus allowing God to forgive us for our sins.<sup>33</sup>*

*In Hodge's version God is a prosecutor or a judge who is satisfied only when the punishment rightly deserved by mankind has been discharged.*

*[Even Protestant theologians] Clark Pinnock and Robert Brow argue that this theory has been a major obstacle to the understanding of Christianity: "It demotes the resurrection from its central place and changes the cross from scandal to abstract theory. It makes things sound as if God wanted Jesus to die<sup>34</sup> ... Surely not. Jesus is God's beloved Son, the Father and the Son are not divided or in opposition... Before the cross happened, God loved sinners and wanted to save them. The cross did not purchase love for sinners. It is we, not God, who need to be changed in attitude."<sup>35</sup>*

We are still discussing the understanding in the West of the consequences of the Fall. We have examined Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin—and have looked at the development of his thought in Augustinianism that was vigorously embraced by both Luther and Calvin—and became the foundation of Protestant and Evangelical theologies.

---

<sup>33</sup> Cited in William A. Scott, *Historical Protestantism: An Historical Introduction to Protestant Theory*, 51-52.

<sup>34</sup> Note: did you notice the use of a Broken Trinity in the passage cited above from Pinnock and Brow. They discussed the theory of Atonement in terms of Jesus versus God. Even though they eventually speak of the Father and the Son—notice their conclusion—*God* has always loved sinners—*Jesus* dying on the cross was not necessary to purchase love. This is a broken Trinity where God = Father and Jesus = Son of God, i.e., Jesus is not God but only the Son of God.

<sup>35</sup> Clark Pinnock and Robert Brow, *Unbounded Love* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 102-103.

*ORIGINAL SIN AND THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION*

Having explored the Protestant understanding of the Fall, let us turn our attention to the Roman Catholic understanding. Hilda Graf, a Roman Catholic scholar, states that three main factors that shaped Western Christianity were absent in the East—“the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, which played such a decisive part in the controversy about the Immaculate Conception; an illiterate and often still semi-barbarian laity; and scholasticism.”<sup>36</sup>

While Catholic theology underwent modifications by Thomas Aquinas and others, Augustine’s doctrine of Original Sin remained a foundation in the Roman Catholic Church through the Renaissance until today. The doctrine of Original Sin ran into a dead end in the 1800s. If everyone at birth is born condemned and going to hell—and if Christ was fully God and fully man—then how did Christ avoid being born with Original Sin in his humanity?

Protestantism got around this by agreeing with Calvin that Original Sin was passed through the semen. Since no semen was involved in Christ’s conception—Christ was born without Original Sin. The Roman Catholic Church took a different approach.

In 1854 Pope Pius IX introduced the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. The Immaculate Conception does not refer to Christ’s conception by the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation—the doctrine of Immaculate Conception refers to the conception of the Virgin Mary in her mother, Anna’s womb. Notice in the citation below—from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*—the references to Original Sin and the need to *exclude* Original Sin from Mary.

---

<sup>36</sup> Cited in Clark Carlton, *The Truth: What Every Roman Catholic Should Know About the Orthodox Church* (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 1997), 152.

In the Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* of 8 December 1854, Pius IX pronounced and defined that the Blessed Virgin Mary “in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved exempt for all stain of original sin.” The subject of this immunity from original sin is the person of Mary... Mary was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin at the first moment of her animation, and sanctifying grace was given to her before sin could have taken effect in her soul. The formal active essence of original sin was not removed from her soul, as it is *removed* from others by baptism; it was *excluded*, it never was simultaneously with the exclusion of sin. The state of original sanctity, innocence, and justice, as opposed to original sin, was conferred upon her, by which gift every stain and fault, all depraved emotions, passions, and debilities, essentially pertaining in her soul to original sin, were excluded.<sup>37</sup>

#### *SUMMARY OF WESTERN VIEW OF THE FALL*

Augustine is the father of Western Christianity in both its Catholic and Protestant forms. His doctrine of Original Sin undergirds both Catholic and Protestant theologies and provides the basic understanding of God and man, good and evil in Western culture. In Augustine’s view: Man was created perfect, complete and good. He failed. He sinned. Both the image and likeness of God within him were destroyed. Man has lost all value and all self-worth. At birth we are a mass of damnation—vipers in diapers—condemned to burn in hell.

In Augustine’s original version—baptism saved us by washing away Original Sin. Our own sins were removed by other means—repentance, confession, and penance.

---

<sup>37</sup> Cited in Clark Carlton, *The Truth: What Every Roman Catholic Should Know About the Orthodox Church* (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 1997), 149-150.

In the Reformation the Swiss reformers argued all sacraments of the Catholic Church were corrupt—even baptism. Therefore everyone had to be baptized again to remove original sin. Since those choosing to be re-baptized were no longer infants but believers—it was not long before believer’s baptism replaced infant baptism. Only those old enough to repent and ask for baptism were baptized. The Baptists and later the evangelicals severed the original tie between baptism and the removal of original sin. It was the act of believing—repenting and asking to be forgiven—that saved you—not baptism itself.

Baptizing infants was simple. Convincing adults was harder. A story emphasizing the danger of sinners was needed.

Jonathon Edwards said humans are sinners in the hands of an angry God.<sup>38</sup> Like a volcano of pent up fury—God is ready to pour out his wrath—his hell fire and damnation—upon us in a massive eruption of rage. But in steps Jesus—intervening like a loving son protecting his mother from the rages of a drunken husband—in steps Jesus between us and his angry Father. He takes our beating—and we are saved.

#### *AN EASTERN COMMENT ON THE WESTERN VIEW*

We in the Eastern Church shake our heads in dismay at Western Christianity. At the very least the West not only has a Broken Trinity but a Trinity that is a Dysfunctional Family with an explosive angry Father full of fury and an obedient Son that protects humanity by taking the Father’s wrath upon himself.

---

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Edwards first delivered his most famous sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* at Enfield, Connecticut, on July 8, 1741.

To put it simply, the Eastern Church does not believe in Original Sin. Nor does the Eastern Church believe in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary; and does not believe in Substitutionary Atonement.

What then does the Eastern Church believe?

*CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL—EASTERN VERSION*

	<u>Image</u>	<u>Likeness</u>
The East	COMPLETE	PROCESS

The East understands the creation of mankind differently than the West. For the East—only the Image of God was completed and finished in Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were created with Likeness-ability—the ability to become like whomever they spend time with. As Adam and Eve spent time walking with God in the cool of the evening day after day and year after year—they would step by step become like God. They would be changed from glory into glory. Becoming like God was therefore a process—a becoming.

In the Fall of Man the image of God was not destroyed in Adam and Eve. All humanity continues to carry within each of us the image of God. Every person possesses self-worth because they carry within themselves the image of God. We are not a mass of damnation. We were not born a viper in diapers. We are not odious to God. Nor were we odious to our parents when we were born.

In the Fall the process of likeness—of becoming like those with whom we associate—the process remains intact. What is now missing is our relationship with God. The relationship between God and mankind was broken. After the Fall we can no longer become like God because we no longer have a relationship with God. Mankind no longer walks with God in the cool of the evening. Mankind has separated itself from God.

*NO STRINGS ATTACHED?*

The relationship between God and mankind has been broken. The Fall did not break this relationship. Adam freely chose to break the relationship. It is this broken relationship that is meant by the Fall. The Fall is what creation looks like without God. The Fall is what mankind looks like without God. “The Fall of man—and for that matter, sin—is not to be understood as bringing about something new (there is no *creative* power in evil), but as *revealing and actualizing the limitations and potential dangers inherent in creature-hood, if creation is left to itself.*”<sup>39</sup>

Think of a kite cutting the string of the one who flies it in order for the kite to be free to fly on its own. The disaster that now befalls the kite is not created by the kite’s decision to cut the string. Nor is the disaster created by the one who created the kite as punishment for the kite. The disaster reveals that the kite is not free to do whatever it chooses. There is a limitation inbuilt in being a kite.

---

<sup>39</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NJ: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 101-102. Emphasis is in the original.

The kite, in choosing and claiming to exist independently, in choosing to exist without reference to the one who holds the string, has made itself a god unto itself. The disaster that happens reveals the truth that the kite was never intended to exist as its own god. The kite prefers the freedom of not being tied or attached or not being in relationship via the string with its owner—to having an orderly and disaster free “flying” because of having a relationship via the string with its owner.

In terms of the kite, the Fall reveals our refusal to acknowledge our existence is dependent on having a relationship with God.<sup>40</sup> Like the kite we demand our freedom and cut the string. And we crash and burn, again and again. This is the Fall. This is what living with no strings attached looks like.

### *PARADISE LOST*

In *These Things We Believe: The Orthodox Defense of Reasonable Christian Faith*<sup>41</sup> I discussed the historical memory embedded in the story of Adam and Eve. I suggested then that the historical realities present in the story of Adam and Eve were separate from any religious understandings attached to that story. In that work I focused on the historical realities. I wish now to focus on the religious understanding of their story from an Eastern Orthodox—Eastern Christian perspective.

Orthodox Christianity uses the Greek version of the Old Testament—*The Septuagint*—which predates by over a thousand years the Hebrew version upon which the Protestant Old Testament

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>41</sup> Fr. Deacon Ezra, *These Things We Believe: The Orthodox Defense of Reasonable Christian Faith* (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 2008).

is based. *The Septuagint* “calls the Garden of Eden ‘Paradise’ (paradeisos) after the ancient Persian *pairidaeza* meaning ‘enclosed parkland.’”<sup>42</sup>

The term *paradise* appears twenty-six times in the Old Testament—thirteen times in the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 and 3—and another thirteen times scattered throughout the Old Testament.<sup>43</sup> Each of these references uses the term *paradise* with the larger sense of a park land, orchard or a lush cultivated area.

There is another term in Greek—*kepos*—that means a cultivated garden or vegetable garden. The term *kepos* is found thirty-two times in the *Septuagint* and four times in the New Testament. The terms *paradise* and *kepos* are not synonyms. However, most English Bibles translate both terms with the single English term—garden.

The term *paradise* is never found in an English translation of the Old Testament. But the term *paradise* is found three times in the Greek New Testament and is transliterated as *paradise* all three times in our English Bibles.

The first time is in Christ’s conversation with Dismas—the good thief who was crucified along with another thief with Christ. The one thief mocked Christ—

“Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other answered, and rebuking him said, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of

---

<sup>42</sup> David Rohl, “The Road to Paradise” published in the Express, Monday, February 8, 1999. Retrieved from [http://www.sightedmoon.com/?page\\_id=26](http://www.sightedmoon.com/?page_id=26) on 11/28/2011.

<sup>43</sup> The thirteen references outside of Genesis 2-3 are Gen 13:10; Num 24:6; 2 Chron 33:20; Neh 2:8; Song 4:13; Isaiah 1:30, 51:13; Jer 29:5; Ezek 28:13; 31:8,9; Joel 2:3.

condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”

And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!”

And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.”<sup>44</sup>

The second time it is St. Paul who uses the term *paradise*. He wrote to the Corinthians these words—

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, the third time the term *paradise* is used in the New Testament is found in the Book of Revelation—

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.<sup>46</sup>

Never in the New Testament do the translators translate the Greek *paradiso* as ‘garden.’

Instead of translating they transliterate—they write the Greek παραδεισος using our English alphabet—*paradeisos*—paradise. It is obvious that in the New Testament the term *paradise*

---

<sup>44</sup> Luke 23:39-43.

<sup>45</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:2-4.

<sup>46</sup> Revelation 2:7.

means more than a garden. The passage in the Book of Revelation makes a direct connection of the Christian Gospel with the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.

The use of the term *paradise* thirteen times in the story of Adam and Eve—and its use three times in the New Testament points to a much larger meaning of the term *paradise*. This larger meaning is lost in our English Bibles that do not use the term *paradise* in telling the story of Adam and Eve.<sup>47</sup> To understand what is lost in an English Bible, re-read Genesis 2 and 3 and use ‘paradise’ instead of ‘garden’ all thirteen times.<sup>48</sup>

The unity of the first Adam in the Old Testament and the Second Adam of the New Testament is lost when *paradeisos* is not translated with the same English word. It is Christ, the Second Adam, who rescues the First Adam from the living in death that he chose. Through Christ “Hades is despoiled, Adam is recalled from the dead, the curse is made void, Eve is set free, death is slain, and we are endowed with life.”<sup>49</sup>

Dismas—the penitent thief—asked to be remembered in Christ’s kingdom. Christ grants him the kingdom by granting him entrance into Paradise. The passage from the Book of Revelation points us to the unity of the kingdom of God and Paradise—by pointing us back to the tree of life within Paradise of God in Eden. In a reference to Dismas, the Crucifixion Service of Holy week

---

<sup>47</sup> The English translation follows Luther’s German translation that also fails to translate *paradeisos* as Paradise in Genesis 2 and 3.

<sup>48</sup> Gen 2:8, 9, 10, 15, 16; 3:2, 3, 8, 10, 23, 24 (the term ‘paradise’ is found twice in 3:2, 8).

<sup>49</sup> The Theotikion prior to the Great Doxology in the Orthros Service.

in the Orthodox Church declares, “The thief opened the locked gate of Eden with the key, ‘Remember me.’”<sup>50</sup>

The Paradise created for Adam and Eve was more than a lush physical garden. This understanding is lost in English translations that use ‘garden’ instead of *paradise*. Paradise was the kingdom of God. It was filled with both spiritual realities and physical realities. It contained both the visible and the invisible—only what is invisible today was visible then. God—the Undivided Trinity— $\alpha\omega\nu$ —Existing One—the Is—Source of all Existence—walked there in the cool of the evening. He who is Life—gave life and existence to all living things.

But Adam and Eve chose death. They broke their relationship with him who is life—who gives life and is the source of life—in whom we live and move and have our being.<sup>51</sup> They chose death. They chose to live in death. “This life, which most people today assume is natural,”<sup>52</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa (334-394 A.D.) called “a life in death.”<sup>53</sup>

We look like we are alive but we are living in death.<sup>54</sup> We no longer are living in life—we have chosen death—and we live in Hades: the realm of death. We are in fact the zombies—the living

---

<sup>50</sup> The Synaxarion of Holy Thursday Evening, Lines for the Penitent Thief. English translation is from *Greek Orthodox Holy Week & Easter Services*, compiled by Father George L. Papadeas, Protospesbyter, (Daytona Beach, FL: Patmos Press, 1991), 251.

<sup>51</sup> Acts 17:28.

<sup>52</sup> Seth Farber, “The Reign of Augustine,” in *The Christian Activist*.

<sup>53</sup> Gregory of Nyssa cited in Pannayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987), 47.

<sup>54</sup> Adam’s choice amounted to “exchanging life for death, and giving life to his own death for the whole temporal duration of the present age.” St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua to John*, 10.28 in *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library volume 29., Maximus the Confessor: On Difficulties in the Church Fathers, The Ambigua*, vol.1, edited and translated by Nicholas Constas (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 249.

dead—we see marching through our cities at Halloween. We are the crew of the pirate ships in the movie *Pirates of the Caribbean*. We are dead men walking.

The kingdom of God is no longer visible to us. We have become color blind—there are colors we no longer see. We no longer see the angels—we no longer hear them singing. Like whistles only dogs can hear—there are sounds we can no longer hear. We have lost our hearing. We have lost the kingdom of God. We are now blind to God's presence—we are now deaf to the sound of his voice. We cannot anymore walk with a God we cannot see—nor speak with a God we cannot hear.

We have lost Paradise—and are left with only a physical garden with its weeds. This is the Fall of Man—the great choice to live within death—we who once lived within life—now live within death. We who once lived in the midst of the invisible—now are trapped within the lifeless world of visible matter.

Think of yourself in a large magnificent room filled with the greatest works of art ever created. Everywhere you turn you are surrounded by such beauty it leaves you speechless. Now suppose you put on a blindfold. Now you can no longer see anything in the great room. You can still hear the sounds of other people in the room, but you cannot see them. Everything still exists, but you can't see it.

Now suppose you place plugs in your ears so that no sounds can be heard. Everything and everyone is still in the room. But now you are cut off from everything that is in the room.

That is what happened to Adam and Eve.<sup>55</sup> They chose death. They lived in life but they chose death. They became blind to the presence of the angels. They became deaf to the sound of God walking beside them. The angels were still there. God was still there. But they chose to live in the claustrophobic world of their own five senses.<sup>56</sup> They chose to live in death.

What we think is life, is really death. We are all walking dead men and women. We are walking skeletons. We are the living dead waiting our turn to be buried. We're all dead—we're either the walking dead or the buried dead. Either way, we're all dead.

#### *A FUNERAL FOR THE FALL OF MAN*

Having chosen death—mankind died. God placed the cherubim to guard the Tree of Life. Adam and Eve were left to live out their death. They had children who too would die. Did you know we are the only species that knows it is naked? We are also the only species with the ability to show emotion with tears?<sup>57</sup> We are also the only species that knows we are going to die. This is our knowledge of good and evil—we know we are naked—we know how to cry—and we know we will die. “But knowledge in itself does not make us like God.”<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua to John*, 10.28 in *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library volume 29*, *Maximus the Confessor: On Difficulties in the Church Fathers, The Ambigua*, vol.1, edited and translated by Nicholas Constas (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 247.

<sup>56</sup> St Maximus the Confessor, Prologue to the *Ad Thalassium* cited in footnote 2 in *Ad Thalassium* 61 in St Maximus the Confessor, *The Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, translated by Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 131-132.

<sup>57</sup> Daniel Coleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 2005), 15.

<sup>58</sup> Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers With God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 110.

We stand where Paradise once stood. It has vanished. It has become invisible. We no longer see the Kingdom of God. We no longer hear the angels. We no longer walk with God in the cool of the evening. We stand in Paradise and cannot see it or hear it. We have lost it all.

We now live in a world of Death. Already we anticipate our Funeral—singing our own funeral dirge as we make our way towards our own funeral.<sup>59</sup>

With St. John of Damascus (676-749 A.D.) we sing our Funeral Hymn—

What earthly sweetness remains unmixed with grief? What glory stands immutable on earth? All things are but feeble shadows, all things are most deluding dreams: yet one moment only, and Death shall supplant them all.<sup>60</sup>

Woe is me! What manner of ordeal doth the soul endure when it is parted from the body? Woe is me! how many then are its tears, and there is none to show compassion! Turning its eyes to the angels, it supplicates in vain; stretching out its hands to men, it finds none to aid.<sup>61</sup>

Thy creating command was my origin and my foundation: for it was thy pleasure to fashion me out of nature visible and invisible, a living creature. From the earth thou didst shape my body, and didst give me a soul by thy divine and quickening breath.<sup>62</sup>

When in the beginning, thou didst create man after thine own image and likeness, thou didst set him in Paradise to reign over thy creatures. But when, beguiled by the malice of the Devil, he tasted of the food, he became a transgressor of thy commandment....<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Oikos of the Orthodox Funeral Service.

<sup>60</sup> Tone 1, The Idiomela by John of Damascus of the Orthodox Funeral Service.

<sup>61</sup> Tone 2, The Idiomela by John of Damascus of the Orthodox Funeral Service.

<sup>62</sup> Tone 6, The Idiomela by John of Damascus of the Orthodox Funeral Service.

<sup>63</sup> Tone 7, The Idiomela by John of Damascus of the Orthodox Funeral Service.

I weep and I wail when I think upon death, and behold our beauty, fashioned after the image of God, lying in the tomb disfigured, dishonored, bereft of form. O marvel! What is this mystery which doth befall us? Why have we been given over to corruption, and why have we been wedded unto death? Truly as it has been written, by the command of God....<sup>64</sup>

We are naked. We are filled with sorrow. We weep and we wail when we think upon death—and remember what we have lost.

We are naked. We are filled with sorrow. We weep and we wail—we who once lived in life—now wedded to death.

We are naked. We are filled with sorrow. We weep and we wail—and with St. Paul we cry out—Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Tone 8, The Idiomela by John of Damascus of the Orthodox Funeral Service.

<sup>65</sup> Romans 7:24.