

Excerpts from Augustine's *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*

CHAPTER 18

The beatitude of man before the fall.

. . . man was happy in Paradise before he sinned, although he was uncertain about his future fall. He was happy in this hope of reward, the promised transformation of the body; and his hope was such that there was no tribulation for patience to endure in combat. He was not filled with vain presumption, like a fool being certain about the uncertain, but he was strong in faith and hope. Before possessing that life where he would be unquestionably certain of his own eternal life, he could *rejoice*, as Scripture says, with *trembling* (Ps. 2:11), and with this rejoicing he could be happy much more abundantly in Paradise than are the saints here on earth, and less completely than the saints and the angels beyond the heavens in life eternal, but none the less enjoying a happiness that is real.

CHAPTER 42

Did Adam believe the words spoken through the serpent? How was he tempted to sin?

There is a more serious problem to be considered. If Adam was a spiritual man. . . how could he have believed what was said through the serpent, namely, that God forbade them to eat of the fruit of that one tree because He knew that if they did they would be gods in their knowledge of good and evil? As if the Creator would grudge so great a good to His creatures! It is surely strange if a man endowed with a spiritual mind could have believed this. . .

. . . Perhaps the woman had not yet received the gift of the knowledge of God, but under the direction of her husband she was to acquire it gradually. . . Can we imagine that Solomon, a man of incredible wisdom, believed that there was any advantage in the worship of idols? But he was unable to resist the love of women drawing him into this evil. . . so it was in the case of Adam. . .

. . . According to St. Paul, a seduction in the proper sense occurs when one is persuaded to accept as true what in reality is false; for instance, that God forbade Adam and Eve to touch the tree because he knew that if they touched it they would be like gods, as if He who made men grudged them divinity. But even if the man was moved by a spirit of pride, which could not have been hidden from God, who searches the

heart, and if he was tempted by a desire to seek a new experience, when he saw that the woman after eating the fruit was not dead, I do not think that Adam, if he was endowed with a spiritual mind, could have possibly believed that God had forbidden them to eat the fruit of the tree out of envy.

But enough of these speculations. Adam and Eve were induced to commit this sin in accordance with the way in which such persons can be tempted. . .

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Excerpts from Irenaeus's *Against Heresies*

CHAPTER XI.

And how do the Scriptures testify of Him, unless all things had ever been revealed and shown to believers by one and the same God through the Word. . . for the purpose of bringing man to perfection? For He formed him for growth and increase, as the Scripture says, 'Increase and multiply' (Gen. 1:28).

And in this respect God differs from man, that God indeed makes, but man is made; and truly, He who makes is always the same; but that which is made must receive both beginning, and middle, and addition, and increase. God is also truly perfect in all things. . . but man receives advancement and increase toward God.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Why man was not made perfect from the beginning.

If, however, anyone say, 'What then? Could not God have exhibited man as perfect from beginning?' let him know that, inasmuch as God is indeed always the same as respects to Himself, all things are possible to Him. But created things must be inferior to Him who created them, from the very fact of their later origin. . . Because, as these

things are of later date, so they are infantile; so are they unaccustomed to, and unexercised in, perfect discipline. For as it is certainly in the power of a mother to give strong food to her infant, but she does not do so, as the child is not yet able to receive more substantial nourishment; so also it was possible for God Himself to have made man perfect from the first, but man could not receive this [perfection], being as yet an infant.

. . . It was for this reason that the Son of God, although He was perfect, passed through the state of infancy in common with the rest of mankind, partaking of it thus not for His own benefit, but for that of the infantile stage of man's existence, in order that man might be able to receive Him.

. . . man, a created and organized being, is rendered after the image and likeness of the uncreated God, the Father planning everything well and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing [what is made], but man making progress day by day, and ascending toward the perfect, that is, approximating to the uncreated One. For the Uncreated is perfect, that is, God. Now it was necessary that man in the first instance should be created; and having been created, should receive growth; and having received growth, should be strengthened; and having been strengthened, should abound; and having abounded, should recover [from the disease of sin]; and having recovered, should be glorified; and being glorified, should see his Lord. For God is He who is yet to be seen, and the beholding of God is productive of immortality...

For it was necessary, at first, that nature should be exhibited; then, after that, that what was mortal should be conquered and swallowed up by immortality, and the corruptible by incorruptibility, and that made should be made after the image and likeness of God, having received the knowledge of good and evil.

Irenaeus of Lyons, St. "Against Heresies." <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.txt>.
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