

HARTS STUDENT'S CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

CHAPTER XI

First article of the Creed (continued)

CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH: MAN.

Man

We have seen that, next to the Angels, the most perfect of all God's works was man, a being composed of a body and a soul, and endowed with reason and free-will: "*And God created man to His own image; to the image of God He created him*" (Gen. i. 27). "*And the Lord formed man of the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life; and man became a living soul*" (Gen. ii. 7). Man, moreover, received the additional blessing of lordship over all the other creatures upon earth, and was capable of knowing, loving, and serving his Creator.

Adam and Eve

God sent a deep sleep upon Adam, the first man, and, while he was asleep, took one of his ribs and built it into a woman, whom He gave to Adam to be his companion and helpmate. On seeing her, Adam exclaimed: "*This now is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;*" and God blessed them and thus instituted the ordinance of matrimony, which our Lord later raised to the dignity of a Sacrament. "*And Adam called the name of his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living*" (Gen. iii. 20). Adam and Eve, the first parents of the whole human race, were, like the Angels, created in a state of innocence, grace, and happiness, and enriched with most excellent gifts, destined as they were to know, love, and serve God on earth, and, in company with the Angels, to glorify Him and to be happy with Him forever in heaven.

Original Justice

The greatest and most excellent gift of God to man was that of creating him in the state of original justice, or sanctifying grace. Together with sanctifying grace Adam also received the *sonship* of God, or the right to an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. But these gifts were gratuitous gifts of God, and supernatural, being in no way, like our natural gifts, essential attributes of man's nature. God further exempted man from all infirmities of body and soul, and even death itself, to which ills he became subject only by rebelling against his Creator.

Destiny of Man

Thus gifted with special graces and privileges, our first parents were placed in a Paradise of pleasure, a garden abounding with delights, which God prepared for their abode. Here they were to remain in happiness and innocence until, without suffering death, they were to be transported to the heavenly Paradise where they were to reign with God for all eternity.

The Trial

Yet Adam and Eve soon lost their innocence by transgressing a simple command which God imposed upon them for the trial of their obedience: "*Of every tree of Paradise thou shalt eat: but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death*" (Gen. ii. 16, 17). Had Adam continued faithful to God, he would have transmitted to the whole human race not only his natural, but also his supernatural gifts; his children would have been born in the state of innocence, and, like himself, would have been happy and immortal, enjoying freedom from sickness and pain, and destined in due time to be translated to a happier Paradise.

The Fall

Through want of faith in God's word, Adam, at the solicitation of Eve, who had been deceived by the devil in the guise of a serpent, disobeyed God's command, and instead of enjoying greater happiness and of being like God, which the devil had promised, both he and Eve at once experienced a hitherto unknown sense of shame and degradation, and a desire to shun God's presence. In this way they accomplished not only their own ruin, but that of their descendants as well: "*By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned*" (Rom. v. 12).

Man's Punishment

Their punishment was swift and sure, yet tempered with mercy. They were at once driven from Paradise, and deprived of those gratuitous gifts and graces with which we have seen them endowed. With the loss of original justice they lost their innocence and happiness; their minds were darkened, and they became prone to evil. Toil and sickness and pain were to be their lot during life, and then they were to suffer death: "*Cursed is the earth in thy work,*" God said to Adam. "*In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken ; for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return*" (Gen. iii. 16-19). This, moreover, was to be the lot of all their descendants; for those supernatural endowments which God had bestowed upon them were now taken away, and could not be transmitted to their offspring. Thus was the whole human race plunged into the greatest misery: "*God created man incorruptible . . . but by the envy of the devil death came into the world*" (Wis. ii. 23, 24).

Original Sin

Sin, with its fatal consequences, was to pass from Adam to all mankind, and all who are born into the world come with its fatal stain upon their souls: "*By one man sin entered into this world . . . in whom all have sinned.*" This sin is called *Original Sin*, and differs from Actual Sin in this, that it does not arise from any act of ours, but is inherited by us from Adam, who was the origin and head of all mankind: "*We were all by nature children of wrath*"(Eph. ii. 3).

The promise of a Redeemer

But God's mercy in the punishment of the sin of our first parents was as perfect as His justice, which demanded a satisfaction adequate to the sin. No creature, however, least of all fallen man, was capable of making such atonement. Yet instead of destroying him utterly and at once, as He had a perfect right to do, God left him time for repentance, and even promised him a Redeemer through whose merits he might recover his lost innocence and his title to the kingdom of heaven. And as after the Fall no man could be saved except through the merits of our Saviour, so, even before His coming on earth, all who were saved were saved through faith in the Redeemer to come, and by uniting their actions with His merits and atonement.