

IV. THE CREATION AND FALL

WE have now seen the right road in its simplest elements. Our entry into life is at one end: heaven is at the other: death lies between. To understand the map we need a knowledge of the purpose of life and a knowledge of the laws to be obeyed; to put our understanding to fruitful use—that is, to attain the end for which we are made—we need the Supernatural Life.

These three things would be necessary, given a supernatural destiny, in any condition of the human race. And all of them must come as a free gift of God or not at all. For us, then, the question simply is: How does God give these gifts—the Life and the twofold Truth—to man here and now? The answer to this question is the actual road of to-day—life as it must actually be lived by ourselves. But we cannot understand the strange, winding, arduous, almost incomprehensible road of to-day unless we realize that it is not the first road God laid down for us: that in the beginning there was a simpler, less puzzling road; and that by sin man dynamited it; or from another point of view man so damaged himself by sin that he could no longer walk it. A study of the first road and its ruin will make the road of to-day considerably more comprehensible.

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From the first man, Adam, we all are sprung; in him the whole human race was incorporated, since there is no one of us that does not come from him; he was the whole human race when God made him. He gave him, along with many other gifts, the three things necessary. He gave him the twofold Truth—the knowledge, that is, of the purpose of the human race and of the laws by which it must be governed if it is to avoid disaster. He gave him the Supernatural Life. Adam, then, had the natural life that made him man—the union of spiritual soul and material body which constituted his nature as man, without which he would not have been man: and this natural life he had in a state of perfection, all his powers and faculties rightly ordered, body subordinate to soul, soul ruled by reason. He also had the Supernatural Life—the life above nature—that whereby he would be able to live the life of Heaven hereafter, whereby even in this life his whole soul was “supernaturalized,” capable of a relationship with God altogether higher and holier than anything that could take its rise in man’s merely natural endowments. The highest and holiest point of this relationship and the very condition of the Supernatural Life was for Adam, as it is for all men, the union of the soul to God by love. And while he had the Supernatural Life, God also exempted his nature from the law of death—from the separation of soul and body which is the natural termination of man’s life on this earth.

Now Adam is not to be thought of simply as an individual: he *was* the human race. God, then—in the very beginning, and, so to speak, as a matter of course—had conferred upon the human race the three gifts necessary. For Adam the simplest elements of the road of human life were two, not three—his entry into life was at one end and Heaven was at the other: death did not lie in between. That, simply and directly, was God's scheme: man had knowledge of the end of his existence, knowledge of the laws by which he might attain the end, the Supernatural Life which put the end within his power. And man wrecked the scheme. Adam sinned, rebelled against God; and thereby lost the Supernatural Life, for this life cannot exist where the love of God is not, and love of God cannot exist where there is rebellion against Him.

Scripture represents the sinful action as the eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree. There is some mystery here. But two things about it we know. The first is that it was a sin of disobedience to God. The second is that the devil played a part in it. It has already been said that among the creatures of God were certain purely spiritual beings, the angels; and that these angels had the same purpose as man—to attain to Heaven—and like man they had a period of testing. Some succeeded and are now in Heaven. Some failed in the test, chose their own will rather than God's, and so lost Heaven eternally. In the affairs of the human race angels good and bad

are mysteriously concerned. The good angels exercise a certain guardianship over men: the fallen angels—devils—are concerned to lead men into sin and so cause them to fail to reach Heaven. The devil, then, tempted man to commit his first sin.

It is important to understand Adam's new condition. He had lost the Supernatural Life: he retained the natural life or the union of body and soul; the soul retained the natural powers of intellect and will. Supernaturally he was dead, for the loss of life is death; naturally he still lived. But even his nature did not emerge from the disaster unimpaired: it lost the privilege of exemption from death; henceforth man must pass through the gateway of death to reach his eternal destiny. More serious still was that man's nature lost its *direction*. Adam had sinned because he had chosen his own will instead of God's—he had swung his nature out of its true Godward direction, and had introduced war into the very inmost part of his nature, into the union of body and spirit—body warring against spirit, spirit torn by war in its own powers.

Thus then stood Adam, the *individual* man—the Supernatural Life lost, the natural life impaired because given a wrong direction; but still knowing the purpose of his being and the laws set by God for the governance of his life. But Adam was also, by God's dispensation, the *representative* man, and the effect of this original catastrophe upon the whole human race is measureless. As a mere physical con-

sequence the nature he had to hand on to his descendants was an impaired nature, strongly attracted to sin. Worse than that: the right relationship between God and the human race was broken and Heaven was closed to men.

In him the race lost the Supernatural Life: so that men thereafter (with one glorious exception) entered this world with the natural life of soul and body (so much was necessary that they should be of the human race), but without the Supernatural Life, which but for Adam's fall they would have had. This is what we call Original Sin: which is thus to be thought of not as a wrong done by us personally, not as corruption of the soul in its essence, but as the absence of that Life which makes us sons of God and will hereafter open Heaven to us.*

Thus then through the spoiling of God's plan one of the three elementary things was lost—and lost instantly.

The other two were not lost so quickly. Adam we may assume, passed on his knowledge of God's purpose and God's laws to his children and they to their children. But as the slow centuries passed and men became farther removed in time and space from the first revelation, that happened to it which must always happen to a tradition of men unguarded by God: error crept into it, passion distorted it

* The exception referred to earlier in the paragraph was Mary, the Mother of Christ. From the first moment of her existence in her mother's womb, her soul possessed the Supernatural Life. This is called technically her Immaculate Conception.

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violently and self-interest less violently, but no less certainly; mere forgetfulness was deadlier than all. The nature of man still bore witness to God's purpose and God's law—but a witness that grew ever fainter; the fragments remained of the first revelation—but ever more broken and shapeless; the little company of the Chosen People clung to certain fundamental truths—the oneness of God, for instance, and the certainty of a Saviour to come—but only under pressure of endless reminders from God and with heaven knows how much weariness and backsliding. And there came a time when the whole of the threefold gift almost seemed to have perished from the earth. The Life man had lost in one great catastrophe; the Truth man had frittered away. Men were born into the world without the Supernatural Life: with a nature hopelessly at war within itself. They could still, from the universe about them, reason to the existence of God. But even in this their reasoning was accompanied by a horde of errors, and they could have no certain knowledge of God's purpose or God's law. Chaos was upon them: their foot was upon a road whose end they did not know—a road which could only be travelled with aids which they did not possess and could not for themselves obtain.

And, be it repeated, Heaven was closed to man. This is something different from having lost the Supernatural Life. For an individual might, by God's grace, regain the Supernatural Life: and yet because he was a member of a fallen *race*, he could

not enter Heaven. Man is not simply an individual, he is a member of a community. And while the only great human community in existence was Fallen Humanity—to which as a race Heaven was closed—the individual, however holy, was debarred from Heaven. Not till the right relation between God and the Human Race was re-established (as God had promised Adam it would one day be) could the individual member of the race enter Heaven. There was no question of course of a holy man being *eternally* debarred from Heaven. But till Heaven was re-opened he must be in a place of waiting.*

At last God did for man what man could not do for himself: He made the threefold restoration and so built a new road for the human race; but consider what man had by his own act become, and it will be small wonder if the new road lacks some of the simplicity of the old. The first road had been planned for man as he came, all perfect from the hand of God; the second had to be planned for man as he was, with the wounds and stains that were upon him after countless ages of bearing the assaults of the world, the temptations of the devil, the warfare within himself. For the first road God had made man; for the building of the second road God *became* man.

* This place is referred to in various terms. Our Lord spoke of it as "Abraham's bosom" (in the parable of Dives and Lazarus), and "Paradise" (in His promise to the Good Thief). St. Peter calls it "prison" (I. Pet. iii., 19), theologians "Limbo," and in the English version of the Apostles' Creed it is called "hell."

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Discussion Aids

Is the difficult road of life that we travel today the first road God had laid down for us? What happened to the first road God had made for the human race? How are we all related to the first man, Adam? What two great gifts (among others) did God give to Adam? Study and discuss this point carefully. What happened to God's first plan for the human race? Discuss especially the supernatural life in relation to the disaster of the fall of man. Discuss the nature of the disaster and the part played in it by a fallen angel. What was Adam's condition (and the condition therefore of the human race) after his disobedience in his natural life? In his supernatural life? Discuss the consequences of Adam's sin to the human race. Define Original Sin. Define the Immaculate Conception. Trace carefully the fate of God's revelation in the hands of the Chosen People. Why Limbo? Under what other names is Limbo known? Did God make a second road by which the human race might reach heaven? Compare it with the first.

Practice: Consider the social solidarity of the human family and the effect upon it for weal or woe of every act of your own.