

“Sister Anne” (Mary K.) Farran -- <https://houseofmaryomd.org>  
An improved “chapter” version is in preparation for a book publication.

Good evening everyone!  
Greetings to our audio and YouTube listeners!

Last week, while walking through the Garden in which the Original Couple did not commit the Original Sin, we saw that their immediate future of a long life on earth, for themselves and for their children, was a blessing given to prepare for a very different life in heaven. Each day was an opportunity to increase one’s capacity for fully entering into the blissful, eternal exchanges among the Three Divine Persons. But if one could advance in virtue, then there has to be the possibility that one could fail to advance by neglecting or rejecting opportunities. Perhaps it is even possible to sin in the Garden of Innocence.

We keep asking more and more questions about the ideal original state of mankind because the New Eve indicates that we are fast approaching a time of a new earth, a new creation spoken of by the prophets of the Old Testament and in the Book of Revelation. She tells us that we are called to help her establish this new creation, and that She has a key role in it. But if we ask about sin and free will in the Original state of an unfallen world, we have to define more precisely the difference in our present “fallen” condition. Christians have always believed, from the days of St. Paul, that when the First Couple fell into sin, something happened to human nature. We are somehow corrupted and born with a tendency to sin that did not exist before the Fall. As we mentioned last week, the theological terminology for this fallen condition generally goes by the name “concupiscence.”

But no one has defined this precisely to explain to us the extent of this corruption. Evidently we retain some capacity for doing good or we could not respond enough to do the good work of believing in the Gospel [cf Jn 6:29]. But even after receiving baptism and being cleansed of Original Sin and all our personal sins, we supposedly are not fully restored because we are somehow left with concupiscence, this corrupting tendency to sin.

And what about the people who never get the opportunity to hear the Gospel and receive baptism? Do they pass through their lives utterly corrupt and incapable of doing anything pleasing to God? Nonsense. History bears witness to many deeds of great love and even heroism among peoples of other religions. Just think how many millions of people lived before Christ, besides vast continents today that do not know Him. Surely, God did not create people He didn’t love. But what does St. Paul mean when he said:

*We [Israelites] were by nature “children of wrath,” like the rest of mankind [Eph 2:3].*

Martin Luther and John Calvin were not pulling their extreme position regarding “children of wrath” out of a hat. In my studies I came across amazing texts from very ancient Christian sources. I apologize that I didn’t copy down the proper references which were usually citations of other publications. At that stage in my life I was just studying to increase my own understanding, without imagining that I’d be sharing my findings to a worldwide audience. I jotted down that one early author said: “The sin of Adam has almost entirely *spoiled and soured* us.” A footnote asserted that St. John Chrysostom used even stronger language in the fourth century but it didn’t give quotations. But here is a quote from the Second Council of Orange that met in AD 529 (possibly this is canon 22) “We have in us *nothing but lies and sin!*”

Why would God be intensely angry with all the descendants of the rebellious Adam and Eve? How can their sin perpetrated hundreds of years in the past, be our fault? Yahweh himself rebuked the Israelites for insinuating that very thing:

*What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As I live, says the Lord Yahweh, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins shall die [Ezek 18:1-4].*

So what does St. Paul mean when he said that “by nature” we are worthy of wrath?

*You once walked following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these [demons] we all once lived in the CONCUPISCENCE OF OUR FLESH, following the desires of body and mind [Eph 2:2-3].*

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Let’s address three important points regarding “children of wrath:”

**1) According to Jesus, nobody, and he means nobody, can do any good work apart from Him.**

And that would have to include the work of believing in Him.

*Apart from me you can do nothing [Jn 15:5].*

This certainly makes sense if He is divine, and all things (including us)

*were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made [Jn 1:3].*

The state of man before Original Sin or after is irrelevant in regard to our Creator because, before we can believe in Him or perform a good work, we depend on our Creator for our existence.

*He is before all things, and in him all things hold together [Col 1:17].*

**2) The entire Christian edifice rests on the conviction that Jesus obediently died on the Cross**

to redeem mankind from the Original disobedience of the first parents.

*We are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised [2 Cor 5:14-15].*

Just as we bear no personal blame for the first sin, likewise we can take no personal credit for Christ’s deed of reparation. If we fell with the Original human son of God, and we rise with the New Divine Son of God through baptism, this *impersonal* doctrine only makes sense if we understand ourselves as belonging to the body of mankind. Human beings are definitely social animals. I’ve been a member of a variety of organizations during my life. To be a member I have to agree to abide by the decisions of the head of the body, whether that person is appointed by a committee or elected by the majority, whether the chosen member is the humblest volunteer Girl Scout leader or a world-class tyrant like Hitler. If my employer announces a new policy then it affects me as employee. If the president of my country declares war, that means I am at war, even if I disagree with that decision.

Whatever the head decides, the members have to either turn in their documents and go away--or--go along with the decision. But some membership is physically documented in our bodies. This is our situation in regard to our first parents. Because all mitochondrial DNA is passed from mother to offspring without recombination, all the mitochondrial DNA in human beings on this planet is directly received from one original woman, although some mutations have occurred over generations in the germ cell. *Nature Magazine* published those findings on January 1st, 1987, and dubbed the woman “Mitochondrial Eve.” Thirty years have passed and no scientist has been able to refute the data, or revive the Darwinian hypothesis that the human race descended from multiple original couples, who evolved from different apes. We all belong to one same body of humanity.

And we all belong to our particular mutated ethnic mutation group. I remember reading an article in a Smithsonian Institute periodical back in the 1980s. Scientists were always wondering how much of human behavior is genetically determined and how much is environmentally stimulated. They tracked down sets of identical twins who were separated at birth. One pair of females were even raised in different countries and did not even know of one another. These scientists arranged to fly one over to let them meet one another in person. The lady waiting on the tarmac was dressed very elegantly with much jewelry. As she waved to the incoming plane, eleven rings sparkled from her fingers, two rings on certain fingers. When her twin sister appeared at the plane’s open door, she was dressed very elegantly with much jewelry. She waved at her sister. Eleven rings sparkled from her fingers, two rings on the same fingers. I have four sisters. My youngest sister always takes special care for her appearance. My family teases her that if there was a fire, she wouldn’t run out of the house until she had donned at least three pieces of jewelry. Our genetic makeup determines a lot of who we are. I remember briefly another example in that same magazine. To male infants were separated at birth. When they were introduced to each other as adults, both were living in suburbs with similar jobs. There were some details about their wives which I’ve forgotten, but the stunning thing that remained with me was their hobbies. One twin made miniature rocking chairs. The other liked to make miniature picnic tables. Pure coincidence? Obviously, we are genetically preprogrammed with certain tendencies.

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I can't drop out of my membership that gives me white skin and freckles and short legs. My family has an unusual number of people like me who love to collate and organize large quantities of data. One of my brothers oversees the largest dental website in the world. My youngest brother is a university CEO overseeing everything from campus events to coordinating all the computer programs used by faculty and students. My father was intimidated by computers but without even using a pencil, just doing the calculations in his head, he worked as a food broker to keep track of multiple silos filled with products from something like thirty-seven grocery stores in several cities. He refused to throw expired food into dumpsters, but went to the trouble to find needy families who could benefit. That's a nice talent, but hardly anyone in my family tree is artistically gifted. Too bad for me when I'd love to design my own greeting card for some special occasion. I can't drop out and join someone else's family tree. I could become *legally* adopted by some charitable family of budding Michelangelos, but a certain amount of documentation remains in my very body, in the color of my eyes.

Besides this natural membership, to which we instinctively render obedience to our genetic ancestors because we have these natural tendencies to excel in one thing or another--there is the natural membership in our immediate families. After my parents got married, they decided to settle down in Wichita, Kansas to raise their children in the heartland of the USA. I had no vote to be born in Moscow or London or Hawaii or in some exotic place. Whether we wanted to or not, my siblings and I were obliged to grow up speaking English with a Kansas accent, learning the culture of our nation and growing up among relatives where I could hardly help hearing my parents express their political and religious views. All this was *forced* upon me before I was legally old enough, or smart enough, to make my own decisions, or live on my own. Was God unjust to give such enormous, radical authority to young parents? What's the alternative? Should each baby be handed over to a committee or to a state authority? To be raised in a nuclear family is really the absolute ideal way to guarantee that a child will acquire a well-rounded education. Family life teaches far more than books or schools, and does very much to prepare us for making responsible decisions when we finally reach adulthood. I can't make a decision about something if I know absolutely nothing about it, or if I can't even talk or read because I had to wait until I turned eighteen to choose my language. That would be ridiculous. And even if my parents used their authority to baptize me a Christian or dedicate me to Mohammed, they were not violating my human rights. They were contributing to my fuller understanding of something so that I could know it from the inside out, thus giving me greater tools to evaluate it when I reached an age of maturity.

So, the answer is 'yes' to the second point: the Christian conviction is quite reasonable to adhere to a doctrine in which the First Parents had the authority to a make a decision which would affect all of their descendants.

### 3) *But what exactly did we inherit from Adam and Eve to make us “children of wrath”?*

The classic passage for Catholics is from the 16th century Council of Trent, Article II on the Sacraments, specifically the section on Baptism:

God hates nothing in the *regenerated* because there is no condemnation for those truly buried with Christ by means of baptism into death (cf Rom. 6:4), who do not walk according to the flesh, but putting off the old man and putting on the new man which created according to God (Eph 4:22ff, Col. 3:9f), are made innocent, without stain, pure, no longer hateful, but beloved sons of God, heirs, indeed, of God and joint heirs with Christ so that absolutely nothing delays their entrance into heaven. It is the mind of this Council, and it professes, that *concupiscence*, or “the tendency to sin,” remains in the baptized; but since it is left to provide a test, it has no power to injure those who do not consent and who, by the grace of Christ Jesus, manfully resist.

Luther had said that baptismal grace is only like a garment that covers our fallen nature, which underneath remains corrupt and hateful to God and incapable of doing good. The learned priests assembled at the city of Trent tried to provide a Catholic response, stating that baptism renews a person, and our nature is now re-created and no longer hateful. The Council cites Ephesians chapter 4 which talks about our new nature and our holiness, and it cites Colossians chapter 3 which asserts that we have “put off our old nature.” However it's not worth quoting those passages here because, having said that, the Council goes on to maintain that our renewed nature remains somehow marred by this thing called concupiscence.

The bottom line is that the Council of Trent didn't settle the question. It didn't convince any Protestants on this point, and

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while Catholics themselves were happy to be told that human nature is regenerated in Baptism, nevertheless, we are left confused because we are *also* told that our nature is apparently still somewhat corrupt, or incomplete, or wounded or something, because we still have concupiscence, the “tendency to sin.” I would *love* to tell you that everything got resolved with the new Catechism of the Catholic Church issued during the reign of Pope St. John Paul, but this is far from the case. The whole question remains obscure:

CCC 1264 Certain temporal consequences of sin remain in the baptized, such as suffering, illness, death, and such frailties inherent in life as weaknesses of character, and so on, as well as an inclination to sin that Tradition calls concupiscence, or metaphorically, “the tinder for sin” (*formes peccati*); since concupiscence “is for us to wrestle with, it cannot harm those who do not consent, but manfully resist it by the grace of Jesus Christ.” [Council of Trent (1546): DS 1515] St. Paul had said: *an athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules* [2 Tim 2:5].

I’ve invested years of my life going down this rabbit hole. I was motivated partly because I have Protestant siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles and many friends whom I dearly love. Separation among good, religious people is painful, tearfully painful. Why must we be separated into different churches when we praise God? Why are we divided by our different understandings regarding parts of the inspired Word of God? I was also motivated to keep searching because I felt a need to understand the unique, anomalous status of the New Eve, the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was preserved from the stain of sin so that she could give birth to the Savior. If it’s not too vain for a lone scripture scholar, a woman without a college degree, who briefly attended a few semesters in three universities but quickly headed off as a teenager to enter a convent, I would like to proceed right now to offer you listeners a solution to this problem.

*First of all*, many theological discussions fail to begin by distinguishing whether their topic concerns the “Body of Mankind,” or the “Mystical Body of Christ”, namely the Church, or particular individuals who might happen to belong to one of the larger bodies. The real reason that they don’t take time to distinguish between these entities, is because in many circumstances, membership overlaps. So it gets quite complicated. But for these scholars to march into territory where angels fear to tread is as precarious as lumping all “automobile tires” together and then proceed to offer detailed recommendations as if they would apply equally for every model in every road, and load condition. I will return to this problem of generic membership in a moment.

*Secondly*, some theological discussions freely apply their own peculiar meaning to a word, without acknowledging that the word appears in several other places in Scripture, possibly in different contexts. It’s not fair scholarship to compartmentalize the meaning of a word. Words are common property. What does “concupiscence” mean?

In common English, concupiscence refers specifically to “*sensual desire*,” in such a way that the word may be equivalently interchanged with the English word with strong sexual connotations, namely, lust. This is not the case for the Latin or the Greek. *Concupere* and *epithumia* both mean “strong desire.” Of course, sensual desire is usually strong, and this often leads to sin, and of the thirty-seven times that the Greek word occurs in the New Testament, concupiscence is not usually a happy word. Listen to St. James:

*When lust <concupiscence> has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death* [1:15].

In the Bible, concupiscence refers primarily to a strong desire because we feel the lack of something. This lack tempts us to pursue anything that might fill this empty place in our hearts. But if Adam and Eve had found perfect satisfaction in the Garden, why were they able to feel a strong desire to eat the forbidden fruit? They were probably surrounded by 10,000 fruit trees! They weren’t lacking any food. As for sex it was not forbidden, just the opposite. God urged them to cling to one another. What did they lack in the Garden? They wanted to be like God. Was this an evil desire? Not at all. Godhood, as participation in the divine nature is not evil, but the ultimate good, and Jesus Christ would bring us precisely this very gift. But it was a disordered desire for the first couple because they proudly grasped at, as if they had a right to it. This was the opposite behavior of the New Adam:

*who, though he was [naturally] in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself. . . He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on [the tree of] the Cross* [Php 2:6-8]

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Having strong desires can be quite virtuous. Jesus and St. Paul were both concupiscent!

*With desire <concupiscence> have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer!* [Lk 22:15]

*I am hard pressed between the two. My desire <concupiscence> is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account* [Php 1:23-24].

*But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire <concupiscence>* [1Th 2:17].

***To fail to be concupiscent is nauseating to God.***

*Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth!* [Re 3:16]

If the Original couple, in a state of grace, could experience concupiscence before the Fall, and if the perfect Son of God Himself felt concupiscence, how can we say it's a new problem and a disorder, even transforming all humanity into a subject of God's wrath? Let's return to what we said about failing to distinguish between bodily membership. Individually, personally, we apparently have the same concupiscent human nature before and after the Fall. But the body of humanity, to which we all belong, is definitely marred by the Fall. That body fell, and the Fall was worse than that of Humpty Dumpty. Every fragment is still a genuine eggshell. The nature of eggshell didn't change in the fall. Some of us were lucky to get picked up and raised up and restored to our place on the wall, but the body hasn't yet been put back together again. Mary, in her apparitions, gives us a strong hope that this happy day is coming. But for the moment, we who are individual members and raised to the wall, are still affected by the noise in the street and the temptations passing by, because we are still one body with humanity, still broken members of that fragmented Humpty Dumpty. We can individually fall off that wall again, as many passages in the New Testament warn us. I won't cite them all right now.

St. Peter also suggests that the bad concupiscence experienced by the baptized is something in the body of humanity because many members of the body are still in the “world,” that is, not raised up and set apart for Christ:

*By these (exceeding great and precious promises) you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust <concupiscence>* [2Pt 1:4].

Could this also solve the riddle of the threat in the Garden that the couple would “die the death, the very day you eat thereof”? When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit they did *not* die *that day*. They died several hundred years later. If you think it through, immortality, unending life on earth could not have been in the Original plan. In our meditations we have shown that eternal life, not mere immortal life, was God's original strong desire, his concupiscence, for his people.

The transition from earth to heaven would require the cessation of earthly life, whether or not the body stopped breathing. St. John of the Cross says that ecstasy means “to go out of one's state.” In the mystical life it refers to a blissful experience of the soul which momentarily leaves the body to be more closely united to God. If mankind had been born in a state of Original Innocence, every departure to heaven would have been a public cause of celebration and rejoicing, not mourned as a sad loss. Every year when we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of Jesus into heaven, I marvel at Luke's remark that, having seen Jesus go away to his Father, the Apostles went off *rejoicing*. What? They weren't sad to see Him go away? No, the Gospel testifies that they were happy for Him. They were confident that they too would experience that happiness in due time and be reunited to Him.

*He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands He blessed them. While He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy* (literally: mega joy) [Lk 24:50-52]

But Original Sin de-normalized this happy mode of transition. One reason that God gives in Genesis for eventually limiting the lifespan of human beings was because they were indulging in so much crime that, in modern parlance, He wanted to protect the innocent by setting a limit to the Mafia connections which only get stronger over generations. That “day of sin”

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in the Garden, death entered the world because from that day, the body of humanity died. The life of a united society was snuffed out. Now we were writhing fragments. We could not gather in joy to gently exhale a member, as it were, when that member had reached maturity and was burning with excited concupiscence to be united to God. Henceforth the departure of a member is a source of darkness and confusion, difficulty and mourning. It will take a new day, a great day for humanity as a whole to be delivered from this curse of “death” with mourning. The Apocalypse promises that it’s coming soon:

*These demonic spirits, performing signs, go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty [Re 16:14]*

*The great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it? [Re 6:17]*

*He will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away [Re 21:4].*

*I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God [Re 19:1].*

As I conclude this talk, I seem to have approached the question of “fallen nature” from several different angles. I hope I’ve managed to convey the idea that nature refers to the social body of humanity. Because of the Fall, we now live outside the garden. Married life is now stressed by the new factor that it’s necessary to make a living, besides raise children. We live among criminals so we spend a lot of our time devising ways to protect our property and our earnings. We live in general darkness about the truth of a loving Father because the serpent spread the lie that God and his Providence can’t be trusted. Pope St. John Paul described our present era as a “culture of death.” Never before has death been a value: contraception, abortion, assisted suicide, euthanasia. Whole nations have engaged in genocide. In my other talks I speak of Mary’s many messages that give us hope that this body of humanity will be healed and we will arrive at a new era which will be a “culture of life!”

There is another passage that affirms that our present fallen nature has to do with the body of humanity and not to our human nature. Some people imagine that before the Fall, our bodies would have been insensitive to pain. But if they were insensitive to pain, they’d be insensitive to pleasure. Yahweh Himself affirms in the Garden that pain was possible.

*To the woman he said, “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire <concupiscence> shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” [Gn 3:16].*

He didn’t say: “From now on, it’s going to hurt to give birth.” No, that’s not what the text says. Rather “from now on, you will hurt *more* because the original pain will be *multiplied*.” Does this mean that in the Garden of Innocence, when bodies were sound and youthful and immortal, it was physically painful to go through labor? The text doesn’t state that. In fact, it’s highly improbable that labor was originally painful. Countless YouTubes show that animals don’t suffer very much. Cats are so calm that they purr when kittens are born. Even today some women suffer very little during labor. Unfortunately, that’s not the norm. Undoubtedly, generations of mutations have contributed to painful factors like narrower pelvises, and the need to earn a living, like sitting for hours to grind corn or type data into a computer which doesn’t let women naturally exercise certain muscles regularly.

But even in the Garden of Innocence, moral pain was possible. Every child brings a certain amount of anxiety? Will the child choose the right path? Will the child rebel? What, is sin possible in the Garden of Innocence? Won’t the first sin ruin everything? No, only the first parents had the authority to commit a sin that would affect all the offspring. Individual children can only commit individual sin. Every sin can cause a certain amount of sorrow for those in the vicinity, but it’s a localized infection in a member of a great body. It’s not a systemic disease.

We’ll continue with our walk through the beautiful Garden of Innocence next week.

Thank you!

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