"Originally Speaking"
Sermon for 24 April 2016
Genesis 1:26-31; 2:8-9, 15-17

This week as I pondered the beginnings of man, originally speaking, I was excited to learn, or to relearn some things. Here's what I recovered: the man was originally perfect. That is, when man was created in the image of God, no flaws were designed into the man. He was of one, constant and uniform frame of spirit: undivided, non-conflicted. He held to one straight, clear, unambiguous and even course of perfect obedience—as suitable to one in a perfect relationship to God. *Not one thought, nor faculty was defective, or disordered—all his impulses were under the Spirit's sovereign control.* His obedience was instant and entire. . .all completion according to the Father's will. No clutter, no distraction, no loose ends. Why? Because his perfect mind had perfect knowledge of God (His character, person and will), *he was in complete compliance in all ways, both spiritually and actually.* All his appetites and powers stood in a most appropriate and pleasing subordination. ***Adam was entirely other-centered in his creation (originally speaking) <u>because that is what it means to be in the "image" of God!</u>*** And from that high place, that high standing, we have all subsequently declined. By sin we have ceased to be what we originally were.

Eden is the place where this perfection of God's creation was placed. The point of Eden is not geographical it is theological. Eden was a perfect place **planted** by God **in the east.** (2.8) for man, **a living creature.** (2.7) Man's assignment was **to work** and **to keep the garden** and, in this setting, man's diet was exclusively vegetarian. And it was in this place, in these conditions that man first worshipped, or, as implied above, held complete, open communion with God—fearlessly communicating and performing his duties. Pure, true worship transpired in Eden without the mediation of ritual and altar, priest of sacrifice. It focused on the one true God and apart from this unified worship there were no other forms of worship. *Monotheism was it!* That original experience is the primal form of worship; it was one in the beginning and that experience of unity is universal—all men everywhere have the same original worship experience as their origin. The degradation, and diversification of religion, is an unfortunate but inescapable consequence of the fall. True worship begins in the pre-apostate state of man.

Language is presented as a created condition. We are made language capable because language is a divine institution. To be in the image of God is to be able to converse with God (a talking God was all there was!) and, eventually, with one another. Indeed, immediately after the dietary instructions (including the prohibition of eating the fruit **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil** (2.17)), comes the creation of woman, or Eve, who was formed out of the same stuff of which Adam consisted. So, our original parentage, was Adam (one parent/ one flesh) and out of him was fashioned **a helpmeet** which explains why we all share the same DNA. **Male and female created He them.** (1.27; 2.22) It is as Adam declared: **This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, <u>because she was taken out of Man.</u>** (2.23)

"Man, by the apostasy, is become a most disordered and rebellious creature, opposing His Maker, and the *First Cause,* by self-dependence; as the *Chief Good,* by self-love; as the *Highest Lord,* by self-will; and as the *Last End,* by self-seeking. ***So, let's reiterate: man was created in the image of God as a perfect, other-centered being.*** Then, ***by the Apostasy***, everything changed. Self-dependence, self-love and self-will replaced all that was proper and original to the perfections of man as created by God in the beginning. Apostasy is a noun meaning: the abandonment or renunciation of a religious or political belief.

> Apostasy means to fall away from the truth. Therefore, an apostate is someone who has once believed and then rejected the truth of God. Apostasy is a rebellion against God because it is a rebellion against truth. In the Old Testament, God warned the Jewish people about their idolatry and their lack of trust in Him. In the New Testament, the epistles warn us about not falling away from the truth. Apostasy is a very real and dangerous threat.
>
> Matt Slick, 2008
> (carm.org/apostasy-christian-church)

Because this is an unfamiliar use of the word "apostasy" I want to clarify that what I am alluding to is more generally known as "the Fall." The end times Apostasy (as opposed to the Fall) comes from the appearance of the Anti-Christ in the last days leading up to the final Judgment.

When Eve chose to disbelieve God (**for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die**—as spoken to Adam (2.17) prior to Eve's creation even!—) and chose to listen to the "serpent" (**Did God indeed say** "**You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?"** (3.1) **You shall not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.** (3.4-5), she abandoned the truth, mistrusted God and disobeyed. Surely that ranks as rebellion! By the way, the proper answer to the serpent would have been, "No, God did not say '**you shall not eat of any tree in the garden**,' He said**, 'You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.**" Eve was not accurate. And she added to the Scripture with her **neither shall you touch it**! Had she remembered precisely, and recited it and not interpolated (elaborating on the extent of the divine prohibition), the Serpent would have been answered *and found no toehold for his temptation!*

If being "other-centered" is native to our original condition, and self-dependence, self-love and self-will are the chief characteristics of our depraved, or fallen nature, we are in a position to state positively what the work of regeneration for our disordered souls must be! Yes, if we are regenerate, the saving work of Christ on the cross has reversed everything: a. Faith abolishes self-dependence; b. submission to the will of God counters self-love (the other-centeredness of our original life is restored front and center); and c. self-seeking is neutralized by self-denial (dying to self and living to God piece). Justification is instant, sanctification, however, is excruciatingly gradual. In other words our restoration is not instantaneous despite our altered standing.

In a curious way, when we affirm that we will be perfected only in heaven, we are acknowledging that perfect beings actually do require a perfect place to be. Adam and Eve had Eden, we shall attain heaven. In heaven we shall be fully unified, or integrated again—there and then, we shall be whole again. There our worship will be perfected, we will need no mediation, of person, item or ritual—the time and place for all of that will be past. Praise God!

Our challenge is to explore, sincerely and carefully, just where we are on our journey of faith, submission and self-denial and, crying out to God, seek remedy for all our deficiencies, lacks and digressions.

Amen