

THE LIBERTY OF THE FIRST CHILDREN OF GOD

by Jean-Marcel GAUDREAU

To try and imagine humanity as it was in its beginnings is not easy, such a long time have we been – and continue to be – so far from the material and spiritual conditions that prevailed at the time of its creation. That is why, at the outset, we set about reshaping in our mind the images we had associated with the more concrete aspects of the formation of the first man, making ourselves aware, first of all, of the supernatural origins of the material framework within which he evolved. The next step will now permit us to proceed further in the continuation of our reflections, this time by dealing with the more subtle aspects of the psychic and spiritual dimensions of this formation.

To begin with, let us place Adam within the milieu of the sublime life that was given him, the Garden of Eden which constituted, along with him, a summit, relative to the various elements of the created universe, and, in striving to rid ourselves, as best we can, of all the century-old sources of distortions that could bias our thinking, let us try to imagine in what manner those very first moments of the first human created by God were lived.

THE PURITY OF THE FIRST REGARD

In the first place, let us bear in mind that Adam was a perfect being:

“None of you can imagine how perfect the first creature was. Only We [the three Divine Persons], in the eternal present which is our eternity, can see the perfection of the regal work of our creative Intelligence.”¹

So the first man had no weakness or imperfection that could have distorted his thinking or twisted his judgment.

“... Adam and Eve had received every-

thing. More than that, they had in them no hereditary defect. They had only the perfection of having been formed by God’s hand, by God’s *Thought*. By His thought, and by it alone, God had ordered the clay to take shape according to His design, and the molecules of the clay, inert and deaf matter, had obeyed. Everything obeys God’s command... Anything could have been asked of Adam and Eve.... Everything was to be asked and *exacted* of them.”²

Thus, being totally virgin, created like his future companion in a milieu that was just as virgin, the first human bore in himself none of the residue deriving from any experience whatsoever, nor did he possess all those filters we inherit from our culture and which, while very often claiming to instruct us on life, have only obscured the regard we give it.

“As a natural creature Adam enjoyed what he saw: the beauty of the virgin world only just born of God’s creative power. He enjoyed all that lay within his power: his empire over all inferior creatures. God had arranged all things so that man might be well served. From the sun down to the tiniest insect, everything had been conceived so that everything might be a delight to him.”³

Consequently, the animals, the plants and all the natural expanses that he observed were neither objects of science, subjects of a political nature, economic goods nor cultural realities in the sense that we understand them today. The regard that Adam cast upon the new world was a pure and untainted regard. He was thus able to draw from these things that which the Creator had put in them, without wreaking any deformations in them. The

lion, the gazelle, the rose, the jasper revealed themselves to him such as they truly were; he could grasp them in the fulness of their essence, receiving from them the totality of what God had willed to place in them. So, strength, gentleness, beauty, brilliance, all of these touched the first human in his body, heart and soul, nourishing capabilities for admiration and appreciation totally living and unalterable, that had not as yet undergone the scarring of the Sin nor that of the civilization that was to be a consequence of it.

In addition, thanks to the virginity of his regard and the purity of his appreciation Adam certainly enjoyed that “joy” that filled the universe, and those “smiles” from which God had made His Creation with the aid of His divine Spouse:

“When with inviolable law He closed the abyss under the vault, when He fixed firm the celestial vault and He suspended there the sources of water, when He assigned the sea its boundaries and He ordered the water not to pass its limit, when He laid down the foundations of the earth, I was by His side arranging everything. I was always joyfully at play in His presence, I played in the universe.

“Yes, Mother, with Whom God, Im-mense, Sublime, Virgin, Uncreated was pregnant and carried You like a most sweet burden, rejoicing at feeling You stir within Him, when with Your smiles He created the Universe!”⁴

But where, today, is that joy and where are those smiles that God put in His Work? Alas! the artificial environments we have created for ourselves have been so deprived of them that, in order to find what is left of them, we are condemned to seeking

them in those places to which we have confined them – faunal reserves, zoological parks, ecological paths and other such places in which they are presently almost exclusively confined –, or to trying to imbue ourselves with them by scrutinizing the animal documentaries that pass across our screens. And we still must have the capability of recovering, even though imperfectly and temporarily, that regard of a child that, in other times, brought us to smile when we saw for the first time a zebra, an elephant or a giraffe.⁵ Tropical fish with globular eyes and a trumpet-like snout, or any other creatures of a bizarre allure, are all forms that evolutionism tried to explain through reductive mechanisms that reduced them to simple functional necessities supposedly imposed by the imperatives of survival, whereas all the loving imagination of which they give proof clearly reveals to the regard of the purified soul that this Work has been thought out and that its aims far surpass the simple attributes that would flow from a purely adaptive mechanism.⁶

RECOGNIZING GOD'S LOVE

But let us go even further. These capabilities of appreciation and marveling admiration exhibited by the first human in his contemplation of Creation had in them nothing of that banal astonishment we sometimes feel when our senses and understanding, ever avid for strong sensations, are momentarily satisfied by the sudden appearance of some striking novelty or by the discovery of some new curiosity of nature that we are quick to forget.

Adam's regard did not rest merely on the surface of things, with the result of retaining and drinking in, as we more often than not do, only the delights emanating from their exterior radiance. He possessed a power of penetration that, moreover, is difficult for us to imagine in our present condition. In effect, all of his physical and psychic powers were placed primarily at the service of the life of the spirit that his Creator had breathed into him, for the peremptory demands of the self-sufficient, centralizing self, that was to take form after the Fall, had not as yet uprooted him from the spiritual center God had given him and in the intimacy of which He awaited him in order to communicate with him. Consequently, like the life of his flesh that was not yet dominated by his senses, the psychic life of the first man had not yet turned in upon itself by reason of the monopoly of a tyrannical ego that would falsify his perception of the world by inciting him to cast upon it a regard purely egocentric and superficial. That is why the regard he directed upon Creation, and the interpretations that followed upon it did not incessantly bring him back to the experience he had of himself, but, on the contrary, essentially led him to have the "experience of God" whose presence they revealed to him. Yes, everything spoke to him of God.

"Man who lives on earth cannot see God as He is. Neither could Man-Adam himself, who had just been created and was rich in all manner of gifts, see God such as He is. Everything made him think of God. Everything spoke to him of God. Everything drew him to God."⁷

"Yes, the earth, this verdant flowery earth, the fruit swelling on trees, the proliferating birds, the winds blowing clouds, the sun that for centuries and millennia has risen unerringly, everything speaks of God, everything explains God, everything reveals and discovers God."⁸

Thus, as Father Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange points out: "The first man, who had been created in 'the state of original holiness and justice', was a contemplative

who conversed familiarly with God, as is recounted in the first chapters of Genesis. His soul nourished itself on, above all else, divine things, 'a little less than the angels' (Ps 8:6); it was in the light of God that he considered all things, and he obeyed the Lord."⁹

Far from the special efforts at recollection most of us have to make in order to place ourselves in the presence of God and to become impregnated with the witness emanating from His Creation, the spiritual soul of Adam, created free, living and fully open to Grace, made it possible for him to cast an interior regard over the divine Works without any difficulty. Thus he was able to perceive clearly and spontaneously, in Creation, the Being who was manifesting Himself therein.

Consequently, Adam was not lost "on the outside", there where the great Augustine deplored having too long searched¹⁰ and where the Fall subsequently precipitated us in the wake of the first man. He already possessed that "intus", that is to say, that interior regard which the holy son of Saint Monica belatedly discovered and which, favoring as it did an opening to the inwardness of things, permitted him, as it were, to grasp instinctively the presence of his Creator, along with all that the Latter felt for him.

For this reason, all that Adam contemplated revealed to him the love God bore him, and incited him to love God in return:

"Man was tenderly loved and totally wrapped in gifts that helped him to love."¹¹

"Adam knew a great deal about God's love for him. He knew it by intuition, but above all by Grace which made him capable of it through elevating him to the supernatural order. Everything spoke to him of the divine love round about him and within him."¹²

"As a supernatural creature he enjoyed – and there was in that a very sweet ecstasy of the reason – an understanding of the Essence of God, which is Love. He enjoyed the relations of love between the Immense who gave Himself and His creature who loved Him in a state of adoration."¹³

THE VOCATION OF ADAM'S "SELF"

Moreover, this love for God, towards which Adam's soul tended with all its physical and psychic powers, did not threaten the first man with annihilation by pulling him out of himself, like those cyclones that draw up everything into them in their passage, and as might be suggested by opinions generated by the cult of self that currently prevails in our civilization and according to which any giving of self to the service of another is, in a sort of way, tantamount to signing one's own death warrant. On the contrary, it acted as a "universal pole", at once living and unifying, that permitted him – and would have gone on permitting him had it not been for the Sin – to always and increasingly find his unity and truth in living "through", "with" and "in" that divine love for which he had been created and in the likeness of which he was destined to live and radiate.

If, in order to illustrate this state, we borrow the terminology to which Maurice Zundel frequently had recourse, we could possibly affirm that, since the Fall had not as yet definitively established the existence of the "self-absorbed self" of Adam, the Life that had been placed in him presented itself much more as the germ of an "altruistic self" that nourished itself on the gift-love it found in its Creator and based on which it prepared itself to rise in order to live, with God and with his neighbor, a relationship that would have been woven of "pure inwardness".

Illustrating concretely the antipodes

represented by these two poles obviously presents an out-and-out challenge, since all the illustrations we could possibly imagine would not suffice to satisfy the first (the pole of the self-absorbed), whereas the second (the altruistic pole) has its function in a world that by definition should totally exclude them. However, let us here examine a few diagrams (on the following page) which, though they make no claim to illustrate perfectly these two universes, will perhaps have – at least we hope they will – a certain power of suggestion.

So – the first illustration (diagram 1) aims at conjuring up the structure of the self-absorbed self with the multiple areas of appropriation that tend to stifle in it the life of the spirit, represented in the center by the little radiant sphere. We find here the world of "having" which is likewise that of "appearing", turned towards the outside of things, and through which the heritage left by Adam almost unfailingly incites us to define ourselves by casting on life and on ourselves a superficial regard that considers only what they give off exteriorly.

For its part, the second illustration (diagram 2) tries to represent the structure of the altruistic self by suggesting a form of renunciation of self, which evidently gives the impression of illustrating the "nothing", but a nothing that, when you get down to it, is equivalent to, as Saint John of the Cross teaches, the possession of the All, and that is not unlike the "zero" with which Marie-Paule constantly identifies herself in her writings. We are here in the world of "being", the world in which the person's life expresses itself not so much by what it possesses or retains as by the richness of the relationships that it carries on with God and with its neighbor, a richness that is a gleaming reflection of the virtues nourished by the divine love. It is evident that it is in this second form that we must conceive of this germ of divine life that was put in Adam as of his origin.

However, when the sin occurred it was the self-absorbed self that strove to take over the forefront, with all its "exteriorizing" tendencies and all the oppression of the life of the spirit these latter brought. And, with time, this self-absorbed self penetrated our fallen nature to such a depth that, in addition to its domains of predilection – those of power, stardom or material possessions –, today it often tries even to make its way into our spiritual life to reign there subtly as master, and this in spite of all the efforts we are able to make to achieve a certain purity. From this there appear those dangers tied in with the emergence of the "pharisaical self" that stalks each of us and constantly induces us, by reason of our nature of self-absorption inherited from Adam, to convert this course, based essentially on the "being" that ought to constitute our spiritual life, into a banal progression impregnated with "having" and "appearing".

That is what we are trying to represent here – without any way being cynical – by means of the third illustration (diagram 3) in which, as we can see, *the various realities and the various means habitually associated with the spiritual life are not being employed as they ought to be, that is to say, as instruments for the lightening of the self in its journey towards oblation, but rather contribute to weighing down the self-absorbed self that has quite simply converted the entire sphere of its spiritual life into a domain of appropriation, power and appearance.*

Like that famous character of mythology who transformed everything he touched into gold,¹⁴ the pharisaical self thingifies everything it comes into contact

with in the sphere of being by making of them so many objects of the world of "having". Through a process not unlike a form of petrification or of mummification, the realities of the spiritual life are thus killed, as it were, in their essence, all the while preserving their exterior appearance, which explains why Jesus quite justly characterized the Pharisees as "whited sepulchers".¹⁵

THE INITIAL LIBERTY OF OUR FIRST PARENTS

But Adam and Eve, of course, were very far from living under the yoke of this monopolizing self that tends to gather everything to itself and to go astray in the exterior domain of things, for God had given them the extraordinary gift of liberty in grace.

"Oh! the splendid liberty of man full of grace! God Himself respected it, and it was threatened neither by exterior forces nor by interior appetites. The sublime royalty of man deified, son of God and heir to Heaven, a royalty of domination over all creatures. A royalty that also permitted you to reign over that which now tyrannizes you the most – your *self*, in which there unceasingly ferment all the poisons of the great wound. "When one says, 'Man, king of the visible creation, was created with the power to exercise his dominion over all creatures,' one must reflect on what this means. It means that Grace and the other gifts received by man in the first instant of his existence rendered him capable of exercising his kingship as much over himself as over his inferior part. In effect, he had knowledge of his final end, he had the love that impelled him naturally towards that end, he had the control of matter, and he had control over the senses that function at the interior of that matter. United as he was to Order, and loving Love, he was able to give God all that was due God, and to his own *self* that which he was permitted to give it, without this leading to disorders of the passions or to the overpowering play of instincts. Spirit, intellect and matter formed in him a harmonious whole with which he had been favored from the first moment of his existence and which he had received as a completed unity and not one constituted in successive stages, as some claim."¹⁶

And no one can blame God for the loss of that liberty, for He had given His creatures all that was necessary for them to be able to preserve that liberty and sanctify themselves. In effect,

"... they were filled with grace and innocence before their sin. They were endowed with integrity and knowledge proportionate to their high state and to their even more eminent destiny, that of passing from the Terrestrial Paradise to that of Heaven in order to enjoy eternally the presence of their God. They had also received all that was needed in order to sanctify themselves and be perfect in the face of all temptation. They had received this without having in them the weaknesses inherent to sin."¹⁷

In sum, the life of the spirit that God had placed in Adam and Eve rendered them capable of grasping in depth all the spiritual and loving substance of His project of Creation, and of contributing to it through divinizing themselves. And if the Fall had the effect of excluding them from a real place,¹⁸ it had, more notably, the result of ejecting them from themselves, as it were, by throwing them out of alignment with the center of the spiritual life God had given them.

Finally, and consequently, if it is written that after the Sin "their eyes were opened" to their nakedness, what basically happened was that their eyes were "closed" at the same time to all the loving inwardness

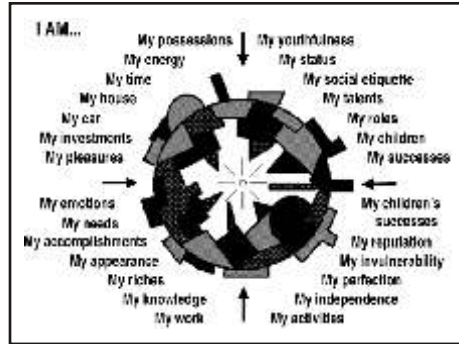


Diagram 1: The oppressive clutter of the "self-absorbed self". The dark masses and shaded forms indicate the various domains of appropriation with which we are inclined to identify ourselves (the false self) and which tend to suppress the life of the spirit in us. The purpose of the arrows pointing towards the interior is to illustrate this suppression that threatens the germ of divine life placed in each of us, represented here by the little radiating sphere shown in the center of the diagram.

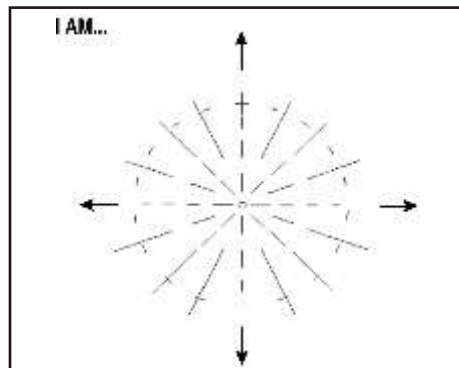


Diagram 2: The liberating expansion of the "altruistic self". Here, the germ of the divine life that, in the preceding diagram, was threatened can now achieve its full expansion after having detached itself from all the forms of the "false self" and from all the domains of appropriation that menaced it with subjugation. In the image of Him who created it, this germ here takes the form of a radiation of "pure love", set aflame by the divine Life that, without destroying either its unity or its characteristics, causes them to stand out through an iridescence of virtues.

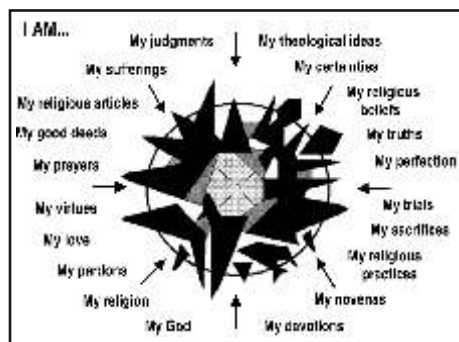


Diagram 3: The double deceitful game of the "pharisaical self". In this diagram the dark or shaded masses designate the various realities that ought normally to accompany the person in his process of spiritualization, but which he has thingified. These latter take the form of points turned towards the exterior in order to illustrate the simulacrum of spiritual life of which they form a part, for, even if they seem thus to be oriented towards obliteration and, in appearance, intact, they are, in reality, dead in their essence to the point of becoming for the life of the spirit instruments of suppression (arrows pointing towards the interior) and death (shaded sphere in the center). We should note that even God (at the bottom of the diagram) can become an object of appropriation when, instead of approaching Him in humility and striving towards Him by opening himself to the mystery that envelops God, the human being diminishes Him in an idolatrous fashion, making of Him an object to be possessed through which he seeks himself in a narcissistic fashion.

of the Father's perfect plan, thus fixing the existence of future generations which, "having eyes to see with and ears to hear with", would succeed in neither seeing nor hearing; generations that, straying in the periphery of their being, as Adam and Eve strayed outside Eden, would seek in vain on the outside a Kingdom that, as the first lines of the *Imitation* point out, is within us.

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1. Valtorta, M., *The Notebooks 1943*, Isola del Liri, Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, 1996, p. 63.
2. Valtorta, M. *Leçons sur l'épître de saint Paul aux Romains*, Isola del Liri, Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, 1999, p. 73.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
4. Translation of the Book of Proverbs (8:26-31), taken from Valtorta, M., *The Poem of the Man-God*, vol. 3, Isola del Liri, Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, 1989, p. 403.
5. These reflections, moreover, make us aware, in a surprising manner, of just how distorted is the regard we cast on creation, as is shown by the ponderousness of our technocratic language. For example, a region where one can still observe animals becomes a "faunistic reserve", while a beautiful natural region becomes "a site of great ecological potential", etc.
6. Even certain evolutionists, capable of observing nature perspicaciously, have had to recognize that it abounds in the original and that, consequently, it displays "creativity", which is the next thing to admitting explicitly that it comes from a Creator. Thus, Dobzhansky and Boesiger aver: "We think that biological evolution is creative. It is creative because it produces what is truly new... An artist creates when he conceives something new. Evolution is creative in the same sense that the work of an artist is a creation." (Dobzhansky T. and Boesiger E., *Essais sur l'évolution*, 1968, p. 147 in Tresmontant, C., *Comment se pose aujourd'hui le problème de l'existence de Dieu*, Paris, Seuil, 1966, p. 354)
7. Valtorta, M., *Leçons sur l'épître de saint Paul aux Romains*, Isola del Liri, Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, 1999, pp. 152-153.
8. Valtorta, M., *The Poem of the Man-God*, vol. 2, Isola del Liri, Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, 1987, p. 549.
9. Garrigou-Lagrange, R., *Les trois âges de la vie intérieure*, Treatise on ascetic and mystical theology, vol. I, Paris, Cerf, 1955, p. 285.
10. An allusion to the celebrated confidence made by Saint Augustine: "Too late loved I Thee, O Thou Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new! Too late I loved Thee! And behold, Thou wert within, and I abroad, and there I searched for Thee; deformed I, plunging among those fair forms which Thou hadst made. Thou wert with me, but I was not with Thee." (*Confessions*, Book X, Translation by H. Gardner, S. J., Pocket Books Inc., 1952, p. 195)
11. Valtorta, M. *Leçons sur l'épître de saint Paul aux Romains*, Isola del Liri, Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, 1999, p. 153.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
14. King Midas.
15. That is why, because of these atavistic tendencies to humanise and kill all that is spiritually living, we have no choice but to leave to God the direction of our spiritual life. In effect, if we were to take charge of it we would certainly risk, notably through refusing all forms of trial or in choosing only those that suit us, of making a sorry job of our life that would become hypertrophied on the plane of appearances, but spiritually hollow.
16. Valtorta, M., *Leçons sur l'épître de saint Paul aux Romains*, Isola del Liri, Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, 1999, p. 132.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
18. A place which, according to the revelations made to Consuelo in Spain, was indeed located in the region of Chaldea. Cf. *Marie, trône de la Sagesse*, Revelations made to Consuelo, Barcelone, Éd. Résiac, 1994.