

October 11, 2009
Saint Philip of the Seven

Father Pat's Pastoral Ponderings

As Christians meditated on the Pauline contrast between Adam and Christ (Romans 5; 1 Corinthians 15), they discovered further points of corresponding opposition between them. They perceived that each defect of man's fallen existence was matched by a specific remedy introduced into human experience by the incarnate Word. This came to pass, wrote St. Gregory the Theologian, when "the new was substituted for the old." This happened, he went on, "because of philanthropy toward the one who had fallen through disobedience."

Gregory reveled in demonstrating how the various Christological "moments" recorded in the gospels corresponded to sundry features of Adam's Fall: "each property of His, who was above all, was interchanged with each of ours." Thus, the tree connected with the first sin was matched by the tree on which Christ paid the price for sin, and "hands were set over against hands: in the one case, hands extended in self-indulgence, and, in the other, hands spread out in generosity; the first put forward without restraint, the second restrained by nails; hands driving Adam from the garden, and hands extended to the ends of the earth."

All of these things took place, wrote Gregory, for our training (*paidagogia*) and our healing (*iatreia*), "restoring the old Adam to the place from which he fell and leading him to the tree of life, from which the tree of knowledge had estranged him, because it was partaken of unreasonably and improperly." Thus, too, the Virgin Mary, who introduced God's Word to the human race, takes the place of Eve who introduced the human race to sin. Bethlehem supercedes Eden, and the manger replaces the ancient garden. Indeed, Gregory continued, "this is the reason the angels glorified first the heavenly, and then the earthly. For this cause the shepherds beheld the glory over the Lamb and the Shepherd. This is why the star led the Magi to adore and make offerings, in order that idolatry might be destroyed."

The healing of the ancient Fall proceeded through the life and ministry of the incarnate Word: "This is the reason Jesus was baptized and received testimony from on high, fasted and was tempted, and conquered him who had formerly been victorious. This is why devils were cast out, and diseases healed, and powerful preaching was entrusted to men of low degree, who proclaimed it fruitfully."

In all of these moments of the Incarnation, Christ was bringing remedy to Adam's Fall: "This is what the Law, our schoolmaster (*paidagogos*), intends for us. This is what the Prophets intend, who are placed between the Law and

Christ. This is what Christ intends, who fulfills the spiritual law. This is the reason for the emptied Godhead and the assumed flesh. This is the intention of the new union between God and man, one thing composed of two, and both existing in the one. This is the reason . . . the economy, because of philanthropy toward the one who had fallen through disobedience, became a new mystery."

Gregory extends this comparison to consider the very nature of the Incarnation. It is precisely because Christ is the replacement of Adam, he reasoned, that Christ can be no less human than Adam---with both soul and body. As the whole human being fell in Adam, the whole human being was restored in Christ. In the Incarnation, "God was united to the flesh through the mediation of the soul, and such disparate natures were knit together by an affinity of each to the component that mediated between them, so that one became all for the sake of all, and for the sake of one-our forefather-the soul for the sake disobedient soul, and the flesh, because the flesh cooperated with the soul and was condemned with it. Christ, who was transcendent and beyond the reach of sin, did this for Adam, who had become subject to sin" (*Orations*2.23-25).

The parallel of Adam and Christ, therefore, served another important function in the history of Christological dogma. Although the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, in the fifth century, first gave dogmatic expression to these formulas of Christology----the unity of Christ in the duality of His natures---in the previous century, we find them already in Gregory the Theologian. For him, the complete humanity of Christ was an inference of His being the new Adam, the true head of the human race.

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