

Original Man

General Audiences 1-23

September 5, 1979- April 2, 1980

What is Meant by the Beginning?

“The Lord Jesus used precisely this phrase ‘from the beginning’ in the dialogue about marriage reported in the gospels of Matthew and Mark. We want to ask ourselves what this word ‘beginning’ means. In addition, we want to clarify why Christ appealed to the ‘beginning’ in this particular circumstance, and for this reason we offer a more precise analysis of the relevant text of Sacred Scripture.” TOB 1:1

What does beginning mean and why was it appealed to? Man and Woman He Created Them answers the major existential questions; who are we and how can we be happy? These questions are answered through salvation history. Saint John Paul II could have started quoting directly from Genesis but instead he quotes Christ who is quoting Genesis. He knows the importance of starting with Christ, because Christ is the key to living by the norms of the beginning.

“One of the recurring themes in John Paul’s works is that since we are all created in God’s image and likeness, we do not know ourselves or how to act unless we know Christ, the God-man who reveals God to us.” (Richard M. Hogan Pg. 70)

“Christ answers our most profound questions—and he is the only one who can, because he alone “reveals man to man himself.” (Richard M. Hogan Pg. 70)

Approaching Genesis

Some Pharisees came to him to test him and asked him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?” And he answered them, “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator created them male and female and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and unite with his wife, and the two will be one flesh’? So it is that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined let man not separate.” They objected, “Why then did Moses order to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?” Jesus answered, “Because of the hardness of your heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” (MT 19:3-8)

“Christ does not accept the discussion on the level on which his interlocutors try to introduce it; in a sense, he does not approve the dimension they tried to give the problem.” TOB 1:2 Instead

he appeals for them to reflect on their hearts from the beginning before they had hearts of stone, and he quotes scripture which they also would have memorized by heart.

“That significant expression, ‘from the beginning,’ repeated twice, clearly leads the interlocutors to reflect about the way in which, in the mystery of creation, man was formed precisely as ‘male and female.’” TOB 1:4

First Account of the Creation of Man/ Genesis 1

The first account of creation is known as the Elohist account because this is the term that is used for God. It is the objective account of creation. God made man. God created the world. This account is an objective account. It is also cosmological. Cosmos in Greek means order. God orders the universe and man and woman crown that order.

“At the same time, however, the Creator orders him to subdue and rule the earth: he is therefore placed above the world. Although man is so strictly tied to the visible world, nevertheless the biblical narrative does not speak of his likeness with the rest of creatures, but only with God.” (TOB 2:3)

“The Creator seems to halt before calling him (man) to existence, as if he entered back into himself to make a decision. ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.’” (TOB 2:3)

This account has a theological character because it describes man in his relationship to God. This makes it impossible to reduce man to the rest of the world. “The level of this first account of creation... has above all a theological character. An indication of this is above all the definition of man based on his relationship with God, which includes at the same time an affirmation of the absolute impossibility of reducing man to the world.” (TOB 2:4)

Second Account of Creation of Man/ Genesis 2

The second account of creation is known as the Yahwist account because that is the name used for God. It is much more subjective, meaning it deals with the subjective experiences of man. This is the account that Saint John Paul II focuses on the most.

“The pope makes a vital point toward the end of the third address. He insists that by his reference to ‘the beginning,’ Christ is expecting us to ‘go beyond’ the boundary caused by original sin. We are to live according to the original norm, even though we suffer the effects of original sin. One might ask how Christ could give such a command. He can give it because he is the one who carries the cross.” (Richard M. Hogan Pg. 74)

“It is impossible to understand the state of ‘historical’ sinfulness without referring or appealing to the state of original (in some sense ‘prehistoric’) and fundamental innocence (and in fact Christ appeals to it).” (TOB 4:2)

“Thus, historical man is rooted, so to speak, in his revealed theological prehistory; and for this reason, every point of his historical sinfulness must be explained (both in the case of the soul and the body) with reference to original innocence. One can say that this reference is a ‘co-inheritance’ of sin, and precisely of original sin. While in every historical man this sin signifies a state of lost grace, it also carries with itself a reference to that grace, which was precisely the grace of original innocence.” (TOB 4:2)

Original Solitude

“Then the Lord said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him.’” (Gen 2:18)

1. Man is alone.
2. Adam’s discovery of his mind
3. Adam’s discovery of his body and his power to choose
4. The human body expresses and reveals the person
5. Adam and the death of the body

“The body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden since time immemorial in God, and thus be a sign of it.” (TOB 19)

Original Unity

“So the Lord caused a deep sleep (torpor) to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and made it into a woman. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.’” (Gen 2:21-23)

“There is no doubt that man falls into this torpor with the desire of finding a being similar to himself. In this way the circle of the human person’s solitude is broken, because the first ‘man’ reawakens from his sleep as male and female.” (TOB 8:3)

“We can deduce that man became the image of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons, which man and woman form from the very beginning. Man becomes an image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion.” (TOB 9:3)

“Every conjugal union renews in some way the mystery of creation in all its original depth and vital power. When they unite with each other (In the conjugal act) so closely so as to become one flesh, man and woman rediscover every time and in a special way the mystery of creation, thus returning to the union in humanity (Flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones) that allows them to recognize each other and to call each other by name as they did the first time. This means reliving in some way man’s original virginal value, which emerges from the mystery of his solitude before God” (TOB 10:2)

Original Nakedness

“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” (Gen 2:25)

“Nakedness signifies the original good of the divine vision. It signifies the whole simplicity and fullness of this vision, which shows the pure value of man as male and female, the pure value of the body and of its sex.” (TOB 13:1)

“They see and know each other, in fact, with all the peace of the interior gaze, which creates precisely the fullness of the intimacy of persons.” (TOB 13:1)

“Only the nakedness that turns the woman into an object for the man, or vice versa, is a source of shame. The fact that they did not feel shame means that the woman was not an object for the man nor he for her.” (TOB 19:1)

Spousal Meaning of the Body

“Man appears in the visible world as the highest expression of the divine gift, because he bears within himself the inner dimension of the gift.” (TOB 19:3)

“The spousal meaning of the body refers to the body’s power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift- and through this gift- fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence.” (TOB 15:1)

