

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
January 15, 1934

Spare Tires.

A non-Catholic co-ed in a New York State college writes the following:

"I wish you'd give me your ideas on the topic we were discussing in English class this morning. We are reading Milton's Paradise Lost in which he attempts to explain the ways of God to man. He seems to think that the cause of all evil in this world was Adam's failure to resist temptation and that as a punishment God ordained that he should suffer and all his progeny too. If this were the answer, certainly it would seem that God were being unjust, for why should innocent people suffer for the sins of others?"

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Pure Gift. Suppose a benefactor gave your college, say \$1,000,000, on condition that the college would build a magnificent library. And suppose, contrary to this condition, officials of your college refused to construct the library. Would it be unreasonable, unjust, if the benefactor withdrew his gift? To future generations of students who would be deprived of a fine library, should it seem that the benefactor, and not the officials of the college, was to blame?

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The Gifts of Adam and Eve. God generously constituted Adam and Eve in a supernatural state of grace. He gave to them, and through them to posterity, rectitude of human nature, according to which the lower appetites were perfectly subordinated to reason. He gave them, also, infused natural and supernatural knowledge of a religious, moral, and physical nature, necessary to their state as heads and progenitors of the human family. Adam and Eve were freed, by God's generosity, from the necessity of dying and of suffering pain. They enjoyed a special felicity -- no hunger or thirst, no disagreeable experience was to shadow their lives. And, mark well, all these were pure gifts of God. He in no way owed them to Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve had no title to them.

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The Condition. In conferring His gifts, God set one condition -- that Adam and Eve should not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He forewarned Adam and Eve of the consequences of violating the condition, which was reasonable enough and within their power to fulfill.

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The Fall. Exercising their free wills and knowing the consequences, Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree and lost thereby what they had received. As a result, perfect self-control of man gave way to the struggle between the flesh and the spirit. Infused knowledge became a thing of the happy past, and by hard study and difficult processes of reasoning, man had henceforth to get at the truth. Suffering and death, hunger, greed, became enemies of every child born of woman.

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The Meaning of Original Sin. Original sin, which man inherits from his first parents, is not sin in the strict sense of the word. It is not that God regards each individual man now as if that man had personally sinned. No, original sin signifies, rather, the loss of the inheritance of the grace and special gifts which, out of His abundant generosity, God conditionally conferred upon Adam and Eve.

God does not seem, therefore, to have dealt unjustly with Adam and Eve, nor with us. A person might feel like blaming Adam and Eve for our present misfortunes, as he might blame his willful grandfather for squandering a fortune. But there is no good reason for blaming God.

PRAYERS: Deceased - a relative of a student. Operations for appendicitis - Wm. Mackey (some congestion in one lung) and Edward Buchart. Ill - the mother of Father Kenna, C.S.C.; the father of John Hemming; a friend of a student. Three special intentions.