

# Of the Honour and Happiness of Man in a State of Innocence.

by John Gill

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*The sermon discusses the honour and happiness of man in a state of innocence, highlighting the Garden of Eden as Adam's habitation, the support of his animal life, and the significance of his work in the garden.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:8-22, Psalm 115:16, Proverbs 3:18, Isaiah 45:18, Luke 23:43, Ephesians 5:31-32, Revelation 22:2

**Topics:** "Divine Provision", "Innocence"

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## Description

John Gill emphasizes the honor and happiness of man in a state of innocence, focusing on Adam's creation and his placement in the Garden of Eden. He describes how Adam was endowed with wisdom, knowledge, and the responsibility to cultivate the garden, which was a symbol of God's provision and care. The sermon highlights the significance of Adam's communion with God, the joy of his labor, and the creation of Eve as a partner, illustrating the divine intention for companionship and community. Gill also reflects on the deeper spiritual implications of these events, connecting them to the nature of Christ and the church. Ultimately, the sermon underscores the ideal state of humanity before the fall, marked by harmony with God and creation.

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## Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 3--Chapter 6

OF THE HONOUR AND HAPPINESS OF MAN IN A STATE OF INNOCENCY.

Having considered the first and principal events of providence respecting angels, I shall proceed to consider such as respect man, as soon as created, and when in his first estate, and the honour and happiness of that estate; not what regard his internal honour and excellency, being created in the image and likeness of God, which lay in his wisdom and knowledge; in his holiness and righteousness; in the right use of his rational powers, his understanding, will, and affections; in communion with God, and in his frequent appearances to him, which have been treated of; but what regard his external honour and happiness; as, 1.

First, His being placed in the garden of Eden; for an habitation to dwell in; for the support of his animal life; and for his exercise in the culture and dressing of it, 1a. First, For his habitation; "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden"; and there he put the man whom "he had formed" (Gen. 2:8). Indeed, the whole earth was made to be inhabited by man, as it has been ever since the creation of it; "the heaven", even "the heavens are the Lords"; he has reserved that part of his creation for himself, for the habitation of his holiness; and for his attendants, the holy angels; "But the earth hath he given to the children of men", for them to dwell in; (see Isa 45:18; Ps. 115:16).

And though Adam was heir and lord of the whole world, yet there was one particular spot more excellent than all the rest, assigned him for his residence; even as a king of a large country has his royal seat, palace, and court, in some particular part of it: and it appears that this garden of Eden was not the whole world, as some have thought, which, for its delightfulness and fertility, might be called a garden; but though it was exceeding delightful and fruitful, in comparison of what it is now; yet it is certain, that the garden of Eden was a distinct spot from the rest of the world; this is clear from the man being said to be put into it when created, which shows that he was formed without it, and when made, was removed into it; as also from his being driven out of it when he had sinned.

To which may be added, that we read of a land that was at the East of it; (see Gen. 2:8; 3:24; 4:16). It is called the garden of God, because of his planting; and of Eden, because of the pleasantness and delightfulness of it, as the word signifies; hence any spot that was uncommonly fruitful and delightful, is compared unto it (Gen. 13:10). Where this garden was, cannot be said with any certainty; whether in Armenia, Assyria, or in Judea; most probably it was in Mesopotamia, since we read of an Eden along with some places in that country (Isa. 37:12).

However, it is not to be known at this day; and there are many things that contribute to the obscurity of it; as its being left without any to cultivate it, upon Adam's being ejected from it, and so, in course of time, must become ruinous and desolate; and from the curse taking place upon it, as no doubt it did, and upon it chiefly and in the first place, as being man's peculiar habitation; "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth": besides, fire might spring up out of the earth, and destroy the trees and ornaments of it; or they might be washed away afterwards by the waters of the flood; and what through the change it might then undergo, as the whole earth did; and through the alteration of the course of the rivers of it, it is no wonder it should not be known at this day where it was.

However, it was so delightful a spot, at its first plantation, that the church of Christ is compared unto it, and is called, in allusion to it, "a garden enclosed"--and her plants, "an orchard", or "paradise of pomegranates" (Song of Sol. 4:12,13). Moreover, it was an emblem of the heavenly state, which is therefore called paradise (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:3, 4; Rev. 2:7). 1b. Secondly, Adam was put into the garden of Eden for the support of his animal life; where grew trees, not only pleasant to the sight, but good for food; and Adam was allowed to eat of them all excepting one (Gen. 2:9,16,17), there are two trees particularly taken notice of; "the tree of life, in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil": the former is so called, because with the other trees of the garden, it was a means of maintaining Adam's animal life, and perhaps the chief means of it; and so of the continuance of his life, so long as he stood in his integrity; for notwithstanding his body was gifted with immortality, this it had not from the constitution of it, but from the gift of God; and was to be continued in the use of means, and by eating of the fruit of this tree in particular; though what it was, and its fruit, are not now to be known by us: not that it had such a virtue in it as to prevent diseases; to which Adam's body was not, as yet, subject; nor such as to give and preserve immortality, and continue it, as Adam vainly thought it would, after he had

sinned; which seems to be supposed in Genesis 3:22 spoken according to his sense of things; but this tree was planted and pointed at, and called by this name, because it was a token that Adam had his natural life from God, the God of his life; and that it depended upon him, and that he might expect the continuance of it so long as he kept his state of integrity: it was also an emblem of Christ, who is therefore called the tree of life (Prov. 3:18; Rev. 2:7; 22:2).

But not then to Adam, unless of him as his Creator, from whom, as such, he had his life and being; but not of him as Mediator, who, as such, is the author and giver of life, spiritual and eternal; but of him, as such, Adam had no knowledge; and so could not be a symbol of spiritual and eternal life to him, in that his then present state, though it might be after his fall. There was another tree, called "the tree of knowledge of good and evil": what that tree was, cannot be said; it is generally thought to be the apple tree; founded upon a passage in (Song of Sol. 8:5).

Others have thought of the fig tree, because that Adam and Eve immediately plucked the leaves of that tree, to cover their naked bodies with; but after they had suffered so much by eating the fruit of it, it can hardly be supposed, if this was the tree, that they would have so much as touched its leaves, and much less have wrapped their bodies with them; and there is no sufficient foundation for either of them; nor for any other suggested; as the vine tree, stalks of wheat, &c. and though this tree might be as good for food as any other of the trees, yet it was forbid to be used for that purpose, as a trial of man's obedience.

It had its name, not from any virtue that it had of ripening the rational powers of man, and of increasing and improving his knowledge, as say the Jews and Socinians, who take Adam to be but a great baby, an infant in knowledge;<sup>[1]</sup> whereas his knowledge of God, and of things natural and moral, was very great: and besides, had he wanted knowledge, this tree could not be the means of accelerating and increasing it, since he was forbid to eat of it; nor was it so called from the lie of the serpent; "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil".

But this tree had its name before that lie was told, or any temptation was offered to Eve (Gen. 2:9,17; 3:5). But it was so called, either because God hereby tried and made known, whether Adam would obey his will or not; or eventually, since hereby Adam knew by sad experience, what the good was he had lost, and might have enjoyed; and what a bitter and evil thing sin was, and what evil it had brought on him and his posterity; otherwise Adam full well knew before, in the theory, the difference between good and evil; but by his fall, or eating of the fruit of this tree, he knew these things practically; to his great grief and distress. 1c.

Thirdly, Adam was put into the garden of "Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. 2:15), for the culture of it; not to worship and serve God in it, as some give the sense of the word: indeed as Adam had a right knowledge of God, and knew it was his duty to worship, serve, and glorify God, he took every opportunity of doing it in the garden; and the various trees and plants, and beauties of it, must needs lead him into adoring views of the great Creator; and he might often take his walks in the garden to contemplate the perfections of God displayed in it; even as Isaac went into the field to meditate on divine things.

But the sense of the passage is, that he was put into the garden to cultivate it and keep it in good order, and keep out of it everything that might be injurious to it; and this was a proper exercise for man in his state of innocence; for it was never the will of God that men should in any state live an idle and lazy life; nor indeed any of his creatures, the most exalted; the angels are "ministering spirits", employed in the service of God, and in ministrations to their fellow creatures.

Yet the work of man in the garden was without toil and fatigue, he did not eat his bread with the sweat of his brow, as after the fall; but his service in it was attended with the utmost delight and pleasure; nor was it at all dishonorable to him, nor inconsistent with the high, honorable, and happy estate in which he was. 1d. Fourthly, What added to the delight and fruitfulness of the garden of Eden, was a river that went out of it to water it; which was parted into four heads or branches, the names of which were Pison, Gibon, and Hiddekel or Tigris, and Euphrates; which may be symbols of the gospel and its doctrines, which, like a fountain or river, went forth out of Zion the church, and makes it cheerful and fruitful; and of the ordinances of it, those still waters of the sanctuary; or of the Spirit and his grace, which are rivers of living waters which flow from them that believe; or rather of the everlasting love of God, that pure river of water of life, a river of Eden, or of pleasure; the four heads and branches of which are election, redemption, effectual calling, and eternal life (Rom. 8:30). 2.

Secondly, Another remarkable event in providence, relating to the honour of man in his estate of innocence, is the bringing of all the creatures to him to give names unto them, and whatsoever names he gave them they were called by (Gen. 2:19), which was a proof and instance of his great wisdom and knowledge, part of the image of God he was created in; for to give names to creatures suitable to their nature, required a large share of knowledge of them; insomuch that Plato<sup>[2]</sup> said, that it seemed to him that that nature was more than human that gave names to things; and besides, by the creatures being brought unto him for such a purpose, whether by the ministry of angels, or by an instinct in them, it was putting him into the possession of them, as being their lord and proprietor; whose dominion over them was declared when created, and now confirmed by this act. 3.

Thirdly, Another providential event, and which shows the care of God over Adam, and his concern for him, is providing an help meet for him, and a partner with him in civil and religious things, man being a sociable creature; and whereas no suitable one could be found among the creatures, he cast man into a deep sleep, and took out a rib from him, and of that made a woman, brought her to him and joined them together in marriage, by whom he could propagate his species and live a social life; which shows that marriage is honorable, being instituted in paradise, and not at all inconsistent with the pure state of man in innocence; and it was also typical of the marriage of Christ, the second Adam, and his church; and of their mutual union and communion; (see Eph. 5:31,32). ENDNOTES:

[1] Vid. Joseph. Antiq. 1. i. c. 1. s. 4. Socinum de Stat. Prom. Hom. c. 4. Et Smalcium apud Peltii Harmon. Remonstr. et. Socin. art. 6. p. 39.

[2] In Cratylo, p. 268-270.

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