

# Roman Catholic's View of Man's Primitive Condition Criticized

by John Murray

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*John Murray critiques the Roman Catholic view of man's primitive condition and the Pelagian principle, arguing that the Lutheran view of the divine image is defective and that human depravity is total.*

**Duration:** 50:17

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:6-9, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:17, 1 Corinthians 15:49

**Topics:** "Roman Catholic"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker criticizes an inadequate interpretation of the fall of man and its gravity, contrasting it with the biblical representation. He quotes Robert Bellarmine, who states that the state of man after the fall is no different from the state of Adam in pure nature, emphasizing the loss of supernatural grace due to Adam's sin. The speaker prays that believers never lose sight of the glory that awaits them when Christ returns and they are glorified with Him. He also argues against the concept of a two-fold action in man's creation, stating that human nature does not labor under more ignorance and infirmity than it did in pure nature. The corruption of nature, according to the speaker, stems solely from the loss of supernatural grace.

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## Transcript

Let us pray. O Thou who dwellest on high, we pray Thee that out of the abundance of resources which Thou hast made available for us, out of the fullness which is deposited in Christ Jesus, our various needs may be supplied day by day. That this pilgrimage journey of ours may be fulfilled according to the terms of the high vocation that is in Christ Jesus.

And that we may never be unmindful of the great glory of this vocation and of the great glory that awaits the children of God when Christ will come in His glory and when they will be glorified with Him. Forbid, O Lord, that we should ever lose sight of the glory of that consummation and may our whole being gravitate to the vindication of Thy workmanship that will be given at the manifestation of Thy mercy. Amen.

...of man's creation on the part of God. The one action, endowments with nature, and then the other action, natural and by which he was enslaved. ...or discrimination in the action of God.

And perhaps the greatest business is that to possess something additional in order to remedy a defect, to remedy a defect, goes counter to what is implied in the assertion that God made man in His image, that God made man in His image. Now, as I pointed out to you yesterday, there is a discrepancy between the position taken by some Roman Catholic theologians and others respecting this divine image. But if you take the older view, the older view in Roman Catholic theology, that the image of God resides in the spirit with which man was endowed and therefore belongs to the state of pure nature, the older view that it really belongs to the state of pure nature, that position, that position means that man in the image of God, man in the image of God has the defects, infirmities and liabilities that only supplementary grace can remedy.

Man in the image of God has created all these liabilities and defects and infirmities which only supplementary grace can remedy. Now that position directly impinges, directly impinges upon the character of God's action. If you take the other viewpoint, which is more common in recent Roman Catholic theology, that the image, that the image belongs to superadded grace and is therefore preternatural or supernatural, that also goes count to the biblical representation.

Because you cannot make the abstraction or the disjunction which that position implies. Scripture says God made man in his image. God made man in his image.

There is no possibility of making a disjunction between man in his identity, man in his identity and man in the image of God. That disjunction is involved in this second and now more current Roman Catholic position against evil alternatives, evil alternatives. The older position, it says that man was created to the divine image and he is in a state of pure nature.

On the more recent position, the image belongs to what is superadded evil alternative, goes count to the biblical representation. In the biblical representation you can never, just like with thunder, with all the energy it may be, according to Scripture, you can never make any disjunction between man and him, our image. You could never conceive that God made man with all the qualities, then let us make man also in our image.

Not to make any disjunction. A man with all his potential properties and then superaddition. That's a unified constitution.

And there's no other definition, no other definition of man. Terrible. He no longer defines his very identity and is the image of God.

Well, so much for that second point. Now third. Third.

Criticism is that the whole issue of inadequate interpretation of the fall and of its gravity. Inadequate interpretation of the fall and of its gravity. But one that is tragically contrary to the biblical representation.

For no one construes the fall in terms of the condition that was his prior to superaddition, prior to the superadded gifts. Condition that belonged to man prior to the superadded gifts. Bellarmine, Robert Bellarmine, one of the most sensitive of all Catholic people, is very explicit.

And I'll give you this quotation, verbatim. Wherefore, this is quotation, wherefore the state of man after the fall does not differ from the state of Adam in the state of pure nature, in purest nature, I guess. From the state of, say, in the state of pure nature, any more than, any more than, a man, any more than a man bereft of his clothing differs from a native man.

That's very clear. But the Latin is very, very apt. It is thus, *foliatus anudo*.

Nor, still quoting, nor, apart from the original thought, the original thought of Adam, is human nature on a lower plane, nor does it labor under any more ignorance and infirmity than it was unlabored in the state of pure nature. Hence, the corruption of nature does not proceed from the lack of any gift, nor from the accession of any quality, nor from the accession of any evil quality, but solely from the loss of supernatural grace on account of Adam's sin. Won't you repeat, sir? On account of Adam's sin.

The loss of supernatural grace, supernatural gift, on account of Adam's sin. Now, that's very clear, isn't it? Yes. It was unlabored.

Was, referring to, human nature is not on any lower plane, you see. Human nature is not on any lower plane, nor does it labor under any greater ignorance and infirmity than it was unlabored or than that it would be or would have labored in the state of pure nature. You see, you get the idea.

Latin is sometimes very, very compact, just like Greek. All modern languages are very... ..circumlocutious, is that the word? Well, we have an awful lot of circumlocution in our modern languages. Well, if we could get back to speaking Latin.

Well, I can't do that and neither could you, so we'd better get ahead. Now forward. Fourth criticism.

It is characteristically felt that there is a wrongish position to regard sin as proceeding from the sensuous nature of man. Sensuous nature of man. So sin is construed as the assertion of the lower impulses beyond the limits of reason.

Integrity, on the other hand, is the control of these lower desires and impulses by reason. Well, there, of course, it can be called a Manichean and Gnostic view of the physical, of the corporeal. For in this you find the material is regarded as evil and antithetical to that which is spiritual.

But in any case, whatever may be the affinities of that position in pagan philosophy, it is wholly unscriptural to regard sin as originating from the conflict between the sensuous and the supersensuous in man's being. It is unscriptural, wholly unscriptural, to regard sin as originating from the conflict between the sensuous and the supersensuous in man's being. The account of the origin of sin in the third chapter of Genesis, in this respect, eloquent.

The temptation by which he was seduced at the beginning was not an appeal to the sensuous. I wish I could drive that home. All sorts of people make a vital mistake in the interpretation of Genesis 3 at this point.

It was not an appeal to the sensuous. What was the temptation to which Eve succumbed? What was it? Eve shall be a god, knowing good and evil. She saw that it was a tree to be desired to make one's wife.

The temptation was directed to the spiritual merit of the woman, of course, first. And sin had its origin in the acceptance of this attack upon God's veracity. And therein resides the iniquity of the tempter's allegations and of Eve's acquiescence.

The temptation, in other words, and the succumbing to that temptation were intensely noetic, and in that sense spiritually one is utterly removed from the witness of sin. Actually removed is the notion that sin consists in the assertion of lower impulses above the dictated. The account in Genesis means reason

asserting itself in opposition to all that God most characteristically is.

All that God most characteristically is. Don't take notes, please, for a minute. If you have such an account as this in Genesis, all the fruit of that tree is very delicious.

There isn't a tree in the garden that has such delicious fruit. And if you taste that fruit, then you see a far more delicious fruit. Ye shall be a god, knowing good and evil.

You see the orientation, the direction, the appeal of it was. And of course, you will get a great kick out of it or something like that. Not at all.

Ye shall be a god, knowing good and evil. You see the orientation, the direction, the appeal of it was. And of course, I'm utterly Godless.

Now, of course, this is Hemsworth. The physical, the bodily is drawn within the scope of sin. And the body becomes a body of sin.

The body becomes depraved. But not because of the initiates and initiations of sin. Simply because of the unity of personality.

The apostasy was in the spirit. That which ye most characteristically is, was made in the image of God. Of course, because of the unity, personality, that apostasy in man's spirit.

It all is within its orbit. The depravity of the human body. I think we can therefore readily see how far we can go.

This is typically Holy Scripture. Origin of sin. Holy pagan.

Anti-biblical. All direction and bias. And it is no wonder that Rome's anthropology and Rome's doctrine of sin have been so diverged from the biblical.

Now five. This is the final. Rome endorses the Pelagian principle that only acts of will or their subjective consequences are truly and properly sinful.

Endorses the Pelagian principle that only acts of will or their subjective consequences are truly and properly sinful. The formula which Rome applies as the criterion of sin is create de acti volente. Which means knowingly and voluntarily.

Knowingly and voluntarily. And that formula, knowingly and voluntarily, must obtain if anything is truly and properly sinful. But let me just ask.

If something is sinful, when sciente act volente applies, is it innocent then? When it is unknowingly and involuntarily indulged, the very asking of the question exposes the falsity of this criterion. Because this criterion places a premium upon ignorance. A premium upon ignorance.

And places the criterion by which sin needs to be judged in the subjectivity of the person. In the subjectivity. You can readily see how convenient this formula becomes.

Because if it can be judged that a person does something however wrong it may be, well, it warms the view of the origin of sin. The origin of sin. So to sum up this criterion.

In the law bishops there is anastasizing dualism. Anastasizing dualism. And a Pelagian voluntarism.

And so the ethic of Rome, the ethic of Rome is to a large extent determined by a view of human nature. A view of human nature emanates from pagan sources rather than from biblical sources. Now what goes on to suggest another view of God.

That the image of God does not consist in anything that is not losable. It is not losable. In the moral lexical endowed at the beginning being the knowledge, righteousness and holiness of the Son does not simply a man tell.

However, you will find in all these theologians. There are the Newton theologians. Even in a man like John Gerhart.

Statements to the effect that in fallen man there are certain vests. It is very difficult to know. However, the action falls upon defining the divine image.

And if there are vestiges of definition. Now what are we going to say. I do think that there are two respects that Lutheran theology does not take in the image of God.

That is it does not take Genesis 9, 6 to 3rd. And we must remember that any viewpoint is erroneous if applied rigidly and extensively. But second a relationship between the Lutheran view of man's depravity.

The evangelical Lutheran was the person who does not awkwardly say. And that in the last analysis that is the reason for the differentiation that there is between among men. Whether a man resists or does not resist the gospel.

According to this viewpoint the gospel, the word of God has inherent in it saving power. And is invariably effective when it does not meet with an obstacle. If it does not meet with resistance on the part of a certain person.

Then the gospel is effective at salvation. Consequently according to this view people who are capable of offering non-resistance to the gospel. Is going to be passive and receptive in the influence which the word and truth of the gospel exerts.

Now what can we say about that? Well I must say this. That that viewpoint, that viewpoint reflects a defective view of human depravity. Defective view of human depravity.

For when we take into account the doctrine of total depravity. The doctrine of total depravity. The gravity of the, of the sinfulness of sin.

Then no fall in person. No fall in person. When we take into account total depravity that is the sinfulness of sin.

No fall in person is capable of offering non-resistance to the gospel. No one is capable of offering non-resistance. Because the very nature of depravity is to offer resistance to the gospel.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God. See? Enmity against God. And that enmity comes to its most virulent expression at the point of the gospel revelation.

So you see in this non-resistance construction a defective view of human depravity. Now how does that relate itself to the Lutheran view of the divine image? How? Well, I, this is my own, these are just my own reflections. The Lutheran view of the image of God is that which makes allowance for this view of human.

It is after all the fact that man is in the image of God even in his fallen state. I say it is the fact that man is in the image of God that makes sin the serious thing that it is and consigns man to such depravity. So I say that the proper view of man in the image of God is fallen man.

The proper view of man in the image of God is covalency. The proper view of human depravity. The higher is your assessment.

The higher is your assessment of man's identity. That is man's inalienable identity as man in the image of God. The more aggravated the sin of man and the depravity which that sin entails.

A good deal of modern thinking goes in the opposite direction from that of what we want. If you will leave for example. I'll stop there.

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