



The Holy See

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday 19 September 1979

The Second Account of Creation:

The Subjective Definition of Man With reference to Christ's words on the subject of marriage, in which he appealed to the "beginning," we directed our attention last week to the first account of man's creation in the first chapter of Genesis. Today we shall pass to the second account, which is frequently described as the "Yahwist," since it uses the name "Yahweh" for God. The second account of man's creation (linked to the presentation both of original innocence and happiness and of the first fall) has by its nature a different character. While not wishing to anticipate the particulars of this narrative - because it will be better for us to recall them in later analyses - we should note that the entire text, in formulating the truth about man, amazes us with its typical profundity, different from that of the first chapter of Genesis. This profundity has a especially subjective nature and is therefore, in a certain sense, psychological. The second chapter of Genesis constitutes, in a certain manner, the most ancient description and record of man's self-knowledge. Together with the third chapter it is the first testimony of human conscience. A reflection in depth on this text - through the whole archaic form of the narrative, which manifests its primitive mythical character - provides us *in nucleo* with nearly all the elements of the analysis of man, to which modern, and especially contemporary philosophical anthropology is sensitive. It could be said that Genesis 2 presents the creation of man especially in its subjective aspect. Comparing both accounts, we conclude that this subjectivity corresponds to the objective reality of man created "in the image of God." This fact also is - in another way - important for the theology of the body, as we shall see in subsequent analyses. It is significant that in his reply to the Pharisees, in which he appealed to the "beginning," Christ indicated first of all the creation of man by referring to Genesis 1:27: "The Creator from the beginning created them male and female." Only afterward did he quote the text of Genesis 2:24. The words which directly describe the unity and indissolubility of marriage are found in the immediate context of the second account of creation. Its characteristic feature is the separate creation of woman (cf. *Gn* 2:18-23), while the account of the creation of the first man is found in Genesis 2:5-7. The Bible calls the first human being "man"

('adam), but from the moment of the creation of the first woman, it begins to call him "man" (ish), in relation to *ishshah* ("woman," because she was taken from the man - *ish*). It is also significant that in referring to Genesis 2:24, Christ not only linked the "beginning" with the mystery of creation, but also led us, one might say, to the limit of man's primitive innocence and of original sin. Genesis places the second description of man's creation precisely in this context. There we read first of all: "And the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man; then the man said: 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man'" (*Gn* 2:22-23). "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (*Gn* 2:24). "And the man and his wife were both naked, and they were not ashamed" (*Gn* 2:25). Immediately after these verses, chapter 3 begins with its account of the first fall of the man and the woman, linked with the mysterious tree already called the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (*Gn* 2:17). Thus an entirely new situation emerges, essentially different from the preceding. The tree of knowledge of good and evil is the line of demarcation between the two original situations which Genesis speaks of. The first situation was that of original innocence, in which man (male and female) was, as it were, outside the sphere of the knowledge of good and evil, until the moment when he transgressed the Creator's prohibition and ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The second situation, however, was that in which man, after having disobeyed the Creator's command at the prompting of the evil spirit, symbolized by the serpent, found himself, in a certain way, within the sphere of the knowledge of good and evil. This second situation determined the state of human sinfulness, in contrast to the state of primitive innocence. Even though the "Yahwist" text is very concise, it suffices with clarity to differentiate and to set against each other those two original situations. We speak here of situations, having before our eyes the account which is a description of events. Nonetheless, by means of this description and all its particulars, the essential difference emerges between the state of man's sinfulness and that of his original innocence. Systematic theology will discern in these two antithetical situations two different states of human nature: the state of integral nature and the state of fallen nature. All this emerges from that "Yahwist" text of Genesis 2-3, which contains in itself the most ancient word of revelation. Evidently it has a fundamental significance for the theology of man and for the theology of the body. When Christ, referring to the "beginning," directed his questioners to the words written in Genesis 2:24, he ordered them, in a certain sense, to go beyond the boundary which, in the Yahwist text of Genesis, runs between the first and second situation of man. He did not approve what Moses had permitted "for their hardness of heart." He appealed to the words of the first divine regulation, which in this text is expressly linked to man's state of original innocence. This means that this regulation has not lost its force, even though man has lost his primitive innocence. Christ's reply is decisive and unequivocal. Therefore, we must draw from it the normative conclusions which have an essential significance not only for ethics, but especially for the theology of man and for the theology of the body. As a particular element of theological anthropology, it is constituted on the basis of the Word of God which is revealed. During the next meeting we shall seek to draw these conclusions.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana