

St. Maximos the Confessor

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33. When God the Logos created human nature He did not make the senses susceptible either to pleasure or to pain; instead, He implanted in it a certain noetic capacity through which men could enjoy Him in an inexpressible way. By this capacity I mean the intellect's natural longing for God. (*note: this is pleasure according to nature*) But on his creation the first man, through an initial movement towards sensible objects, transferred this longing to his senses, and through them began to experience pleasure in a way which is contrary to nature. Whereupon God in His providential care for our salvation implanted pain in us as a kind of chastising force; and so through pain the law of death was wisely rooted in the body, thus setting limits to the intellect's manic longing, directed, in a manner contrary to nature, towards sensible objects.

(*Philokalia, vol. II, p.243, #33*)

34. Pleasure and pain were not created simultaneously with the flesh. On the contrary, it was the fall that led man to conceive and pursue pleasure in a way that corrupted his power of choice, and that also brought upon him, by way of chastisement, the pain that leads to the dissolution of his nature. Thus because of pleasure sin became the freely chosen death of the soul; and pain, by means of this dissolution, brought about the disintegration of the material form of the flesh. For God has providentially given man pain he has not chosen, together with the death that follows from it, in order to chasten him for the pleasure he has chosen. (*Philokalia, vol. II, p.244, #34*)

35. Because of the meaningless pleasure which invaded human nature, a purposive pain, in the form of multiple sufferings, also gained entrance. It is in and from these sufferings that death takes its origin. Such pain drives out unnatural pleasure, but does not totally destroy it. Its total destruction is effected by the grace of divine pleasure when this is active in the intellect.

(*Philokalia, vol. II, p.244, #35*)

37. All suffering has as its cause some pleasure which has preceded it. Hence all suffering is a debt which those who share in human nature pay naturally in return for pleasure. For suffering naturally follows unnatural pleasure in all men whose generation has been preceded by submission to the rule of causeless pleasure. I describe the pleasure that derives from the fall as 'causeless' because clearly it has not come about as the result of any previous suffering.

(*Philokalia, vol. II, p.244, #37*)

38. Once human nature had submitted to the syndrome of pleasure freely chosen followed by pain imposed against one's will, it would have been completely impossible for it to be restored to its original life had the Creator not become man and accepted by His own free choice the pain intended as a chastisement for man's freely chosen pleasure. But in His case the pain was not preceded by generation according to the rule of pleasure. In this way, by accepting a birth which did not originate in pleasure, it was possible for Him to liberate birth from the penalty imposed on it.

(*Philokalia, vol. II, p.244, #38*)

39. After the fall the generation of every man was by nature impassioned and preceded by pleasure. From this rule no one was exempt. On the contrary, as if discharging a natural debt, all underwent sufferings and the death that comes from them. None could find the way to freedom, for all were under the tyranny of ill-gotten pleasure, and so subject to justly deserved sufferings and the still more justly deserved death which they engender. Because of this, another kind of suffering and death had to be conceived, first to destroy the ill-gotten pleasure and the justly deserved sufferings consequent on it - sufferings which have pitifully brought about man's disintegration, since his life originates in the corruption that comes from his generation through pleasure and ends in the corruption that comes through death; and, second, to restore suffering human nature. This other kind of suffering and death was both unjust and undeserved: undeserved because it was in no way generated by preceding pleasure, and unjust because it was not the consequence of any passion-dominated life. This other kind of suffering and death, however, had to be devised so

that, intervening between ill-gotten pleasure and justly deserved suffering and death, it could completely abolish the pleasure-provoked origin of human life and its consequent termination in death, and thus free it from the pleasure-pain syndrome. It would then recover its original blessedness, unpolluted by any of the characteristics inherent in beings subject to generation and decay.

That is why the Logos of God, being by nature fully God, became fully man, with a nature constituted like ours of a soul endowed with intellect and a body capable of suffering; only in His case this nature was without sin, because His birth in time from a woman was not preceded by the slightest trace of that pleasure arising from the primal disobedience. In His love He deliberately accepted the painful death which, because of pleasure, terminates human life, so that by suffering unjustly He might abolish the pleasure-provoked and unjust origin by which this life is dominated. For, unlike that of everyone else, the Lord's death was not the payment of a debt incurred because of pleasure, but was on the contrary a challenge thrown down to pleasure; and so through this death He utterly destroys that justly deserved death which ends human life. For the cause of His being was not the illicit pleasure, justly punished by death, through which death entered into human life.

(Philokalia, vol. II, p.245, #39)

42. The Lord revealed His wisdom by the way in which He healed man, becoming man without the slightest change or mutation. He demonstrated the equity of justice when in His self-abasement He submitted deliberately to the sentence to which what is passible in human nature is subject, and made that sentence a weapon for the destruction of sin and of the death which comes through sin - that is, for the destruction of pleasure and of the pain which pleasure engenders. It was in this pleasure-pain syndrome that the dominion of sin and death lay: the tyranny of sin committed in pursuit of pleasure, and the lordship of the painful death consequent upon sin. For the dominion of pleasure and pain clearly applies to what is passible in human nature. And we seek how to alleviate through pleasure the penalty of pain, thus in the nature of things increasing the penalty. For in our desire to escape pain we seek refuge in

pleasure, and so try to bring relief to our nature, hard pressed as it is by the torment of pain. But through trying in this way to blunt pain with pleasure, we but increase our sum of debts, for we cannot enjoy pleasure that does not lead to pain and suffering.

(Philokalia, vol. II, p.246, #42)

43. The Lord gave clear evidence of His supreme power in what He endured from hostile forces when He endowed human nature with an incorruptible form of generation. For through His passion He conferred dispassion, through suffering repose, and through death eternal life. By His privations in the flesh He re-established and renewed the human state, and by His own incarnation He bestowed on human nature the supranatural grace of deification.

44. God became true man and bestowed on human nature a new or second form of generation leading us through suffering to the pleasure of the life held in store for us. For when our forefather Adam broke the divine commandment, in the place of the original form of generation he conceived and introduced into human nature, at the prompting of the serpent, another form, originating in pleasure and terminating through suffering in death. This pleasure was not the consequence of antecedent suffering but, rather, resulted in suffering. And because he introduced this ill-gotten pleasure-provoked form of generation, he deservedly brought on himself, and on all men born in the flesh from him, the doom of death through suffering. Thus, when the Lord became man and created in human nature a new form of generation, accomplished by the Holy Spirit, He accepted that death through suffering, justly deserved in the case of Adam, but in His case not deserved at all because His own generation was not provoked by the ill-gotten pleasure introduced by our forefather through his disobedience; and by doing so He destroyed whatever in the origin and doom of human generation according to Adam was not initially from God, and made all those who were reborn spiritually from Him free from its guilt.

(Philokalia, vol. II, p.246-247, #43-44)

45. The Lord removed the pleasure which arises from the law of sin, in

order to nullify the effects of generation according to the flesh in those reborn in Him by grace through the Spirit. For when the pleasure of generation inherited from Adam is no longer active within them, but only the pain that arose because of Adam, He allows them to experience death, which was originally a sentence imposed on human nature as a penalty for sin; but in their case it is not a debt payable for sin, but an event that God in His providence permits, because of their natural condition, for the purpose of destroying sin. For when death is not born of that pleasure whose chastisement is its natural function, it begets eternal life. For just as Adam's life of pleasure gave birth to death and corruption, so the Lord's death on account of Adam, being unconditioned by the pleasure that originated in Adam, was the genitor of eternal life.

(Philokalia, vol. II, p.247, #45)

46. After the fall human life was generated by means of pleasure--provoked conception through sperm and of birth into the world of transience; and it ended in painful death through corruption. But the Lord was not generated in the flesh in the same manner, nor was He conquered by death.

47. Sin first enticed Adam and tricked him into breaking the commandment; and by giving substance to sensual pleasure and by attaching itself through such pleasure to the very root of nature, it brought the sentence of death on all nature, since through man it impels all created things towards death. All this was contrived by the devil, that spawn of sin and father of iniquity who through pride expelled himself from divine glory, and through envy of us and of God expelled Adam from paradise (cf. Wisd. 2: 24), in order to destroy the works of God and dissolve what had been brought into existence.

(Philokalia, vol. II, p.247-248, #46-47)

49. In Adam the sentence of death was imposed on nature (cf. Gen. 2 : 17), since sensual pleasure had become the principle of its generation. In Christ it was on sin that the sentence of death was imposed (cf. Rom. 8 : 3), for in Christ nature was given a new form of generation, unconditioned by sensual pleasure.

50. If we who have been given the honour of becoming the house of God (cf. Heb. 3 : 6) by grace through the Spirit must patiently endure suffering for the sake of righteousness (cf. Heb. 10 : 36) in order to condemn sin, and must readily submit like criminals to insolent death even though we are good, 'what will be the fate of those who refuse to obey the Gospel of God?' (I Pet. 4 : 17). That is to say, what will be the fate or sentence of those who not only have diligently kept that pleasure-provoked, nature-dominating Adamic form of generation alive and active in their soul and body, will and nature, right up to the end; but who also accept neither God the Father, who summons them through His incarnate Son, nor the Son and Mediator Himself, the ambassador of the Father (cf. I Tim. 2 : 5)? To reconcile us with the Father, at His Father's wish, the Son deliberately gave Himself to death on our behalf so that, just as He consented to be dishonoured for our sake by assuming our passions, to an equal degree He might glorify us with the beauty of His own divinity.

(Philokalia, vol. II, p.248, #49, 50)

65. A thief is a man who in order to deceive his hearers pretends to reverence divine principles. Although he has not come to know the true quality of these principles through his actions, he traffics in glory merely by speaking about it, hoping that in this manner he will be thought righteous by his hearers and so capture their admiration. To put it simply, he whose way of life does not match his speech, and whose inner disposition is opposed to spiritual knowledge, is a thief whose appropriation of what is not his proves him to be evil. Scripture fittingly addresses these words to him : 'But to the wicked God says, "Why do you speak of my statutes and appropriate my covenant with your mouth?"' (Ps. 50:16. LXX).

66. A man is also a thief when he conceals his soul's unseen evil behind a seemingly virtuous way of life, and disguises his inner disposition with an affected innocence. Just as one kind of thief filches his audience's mind by uttering words of wisdom, so this kind pilfers the senses of those who see him by his pretence of virtue. To him it will be said: 'Be ashamed of yourselves, all you who are dressed in clothes that do not belong to you' (cf. Zeph. 1 : 8), and 'In that day the Lord will reveal their pretence' (Isa.

3 : 17 LXX). I seem to hear God saying these things to me daily in the hidden workshop of my heart, and feel that I am explicitly condemned on both counts.

(Philokalia, vol. II, p.252, #65, 66)

67. A man is a perjurer - that is to say, he swears falsely on the name of the Lord - when he promises God that he will lead a life of virtue and instead pursues what is alien to his promise, in this way breaking, through neglect of the commandments, the vows of his profession of the religious life. To put it briefly, he who has freely chosen to live according to God and is not perfectly dead to this present life is a liar and a perjurer, since he has sworn an oath before God - that is, he has promised Him to follow the spiritual path irreproachably - and he has not fulfilled his promise. For this reason he merits no praise at all. For although 'everyone that swears by Him shall be praised' (Ps. 63 : 11. LXX), this applies only to those who, having dedicated their life to God, fulfil the vows of their promise through truly performing works of righteousness.

(Philokalia, vol. II, p.252, #67)

68. He who simulates spiritual knowledge merely by the utterance of words filches the mind of those who hear him in order to boost his own reputation. Similarly, he who simulates virtue in his outward behaviour pilfers the sight of those who look at him, once more in order to promote his own self-glory. Both steal by means of deceit, the first perverting his audience's mind, the second the bodily sense of those who see him.

73. Everyone should be taught to live and govern himself according to his intelligence alone, and to have so little concern for his body that he is able to break, through strenuous effort, his soul's attachment to it, and so to free his soul from all images of material things. The senses, which at first rejected the intelligence and accepted the folly of sensual pleasure, like a sinuous snake, must be quelled by the intelligence. It was because man had rejected intelligence that the sentence of death was justly imposed on him in order to put an end to the devil's access to his soul.

(Philokalia, vol. II, p.253 & 254, #68, 73)