



"It is a hard matter to enjoy the world without being entangled with the cares and pleasures of it."  
—Thomas Manton

23-May-14

## *How Human Nature Came to Be*

In May, 2014, a longtime California politician, State Senator Leland Yee (D-San Francisco), who is charged with gun trafficking and corruption for allegedly accepting bribes, suggested that money for political campaigns should come from state coffers because "money just simply corrupts." He went on to explain: "I think there's that old adage, power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. It's just human nature. After a while, you kind of feel that you deserve, you know, all the perks of office, because you've suffered so much, you've given up so much. You should have all of those kinds of trappings." So much for ethics.

In one sense, he is correct: Human nature—the fundamental dispositions and characteristics of human beings—is highly susceptible to corruption. We tend to be selfish, self-centered, and self-aggrandizing. We habitually follow behaviors and opportunities that promote or benefit us without thought to how they may affect others. Everyone covets what others have. Most will lie to deflect hurt or blame. Some will steal to line their pockets. A few will take another person's life to protect their self-interests. As David writes in [Psalm 14:3](#), speaking of "the children of men," humanity, "They have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one."

Why is human nature so corrupt? Why is it so widespread? How did it come to be? Did [God](#) create it this way?

## CGG Weekly: How Human Nature Came to Be (23-May-14)

God did indeed create mankind, forming Adam "of the dust of the ground, and breath[ing] into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" ([Genesis 2:7](#)). [Job 32:8](#) informs us that "the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding," meaning that, not only did God give us life, but He also gave us intellect and faculties for language, logic, creativity, forethought, and many other cognitive abilities. However, the Creation account also records, "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" ([Genesis 1:31](#)). The nature God created in man was originally, not just "good," but "very good." It was not corrupt.

When they were created, then, Adam and his wife Eve had pure minds. Certainly, as fleshly beings, they had physical drives that tend to pull in a selfish direction—drives to feed themselves, protect themselves, etc. They were innocent, however, in their pursuit to satisfy these drives. While in this state, God gave them a couple of very specific commands: to tend and keep the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 2:15](#)), but not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil upon pain of death (verse 17).

Their idyllic, innocent life ended with the temptation of Eve by the cunning serpent ([Genesis 3:1-5](#)), who was God's—and now humanity's—great adversary, Satan the Devil, in disguise ([Revelation 12:9](#)). God reveals the Devil's origin in [Isaiah 14:12-15](#) and [Ezekiel 28:12-17](#): He was created as a marvelous and powerful angel, a cherub who covered God's throne with his wings, yet whose ambition and pride "corrupted his wisdom" and led him to attempt to attack God's throne and usurp His authority over all creation. As mighty as this archangel was, no mere creature can defeat God, so the Almighty cast this now-fallen angel down to earth in ruin, along with one-third of his fellows whom he had persuaded to his cause ([Revelation 12:4](#)). It was this being, speaking through a serpent, who was "in Eden, the garden of God" ([Ezekiel 28:13](#)), intent on corrupting God's newest creatures before they could even begin following God's way of life.

The serpent immediately sowed doubt and confusion in Eve's mind by questioning God's command. As she fumbled through her reply, he accused God of deceit, saying, "You will not surely die" ([Genesis 3:4](#)), if she ate the forbidden fruit. Then he threw his ace, as it were, contradicting God, urging her that just the opposite would happen: ". . . in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (verse 5).

Satan played the oldest trick in the book, stroking her vanity to desire to be equal with God through disobedience, and she ate of the fruit. Though not deceived ([I Timothy 2:14](#)), Adam weakly followed his wife's lead into sin. In this moment, carnal human nature—what all human beings now possess—was created.

Human nature generally follows the course that it took with Eve, as explained in [Genesis 3:7](#): The fruit of the forbidden tree looked good, she desired to eat it, and she saw how it could benefit her, so she partook of it despite God's command. The apostle John calls this "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" in [I John 2:16](#), commenting that it is "not of the Father but is of [the world](#)." The apostle Paul reminds us of sin's penalty: "The wages of sin is death" ([Romans 6:23](#)), just as God had warned them.

The deed was done; they could not "unbite" the fruit. They had chosen to follow the lies of Satan rather than the commands of God, and the course of this world was set. God sent them out of Eden, blocking their way back should they ever desire to return to take of the Tree of Life and live eternally in sin ([Genesis 3:22-24](#)). Because of their rebellion, God let humanity go its own way, as Paul explains in [Romans 1:28](#): "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting."

Now all of humanity, except for those few whom God calls to redeem ([John 6:44](#)), are open to the selfish and rebellious attitudes of Satan the Devil, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others" ([Ephesians 2:2-3](#)). Because human beings have a spirit, they are able to "tune in" to the spirit broadcast by the Adversary, and without the resistance that only God's Holy Spirit can offer, all fall under its influence without exception. As they continue to listen to it as they grow up, it becomes their nature, a miniature copy of Satan's.

However, if we have been called, accepted [Jesus Christ](#) as Savior, and pledged ourselves to Him for His use through [baptism](#), Paul writes, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" ([I Corinthians 2:12](#)). Redemption through Christ is the only cure for corrupt human nature, and even then it takes a lifetime to learn to resist the pulls of that nature and instead do God's will ([Galatians 5:16-25](#); [James 4:7-10](#)). It can be done, for Jesus Himself said, "With God all things are possible" ([Matthew 19:26](#)).

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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*From the Archives: Featured Sermon*

**Human Nature: Good or Evil?**

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by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Richard Ritenbaugh, reflecting on the recent observation of Independence Day, suggests that this event should furnish us with an opportunity to reflect on the philosophies and ideas of the Founding Fathers, including their beliefs about human nature. The Founding Fathers shared the belief, for the most part, that human nature was depraved, shaped by the Calvinistic Protestant doctrine of total depravity and Augustine's notion of original sin, positing that all humans are affected by depravity, and that even the good things in our nature are tainted by evil. Because the Founders knew that government consisted of power, they placed checks and balances in order to protect the electorate against tyranny, with varying lengths of tenure for members of the three branches. The Founding Fathers realized that power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Unfortunately, the checks and balances that the Founding Fathers had instituted have severely eroded; carnal human nature has taken control. The secular progressives mistakenly believe that human nature is perfectible, guided by the parameters of evolution. Conservatives tend to believe that human nature is evil and that the best anyone can do is control it. The Bible takes a rather dim view of carnal human nature; we struggle against it until our death. Satan, in the Garden of Eden, turned the minds of our parents against God and onto serving ourselves. We absorb sinful attitudes from our parents, siblings, and the world. The spirit in man is receptive to Satan's negative spirit. Our flesh is essentially selfish, making us vulnerable to carnality. We are commanded to fight against self, society, and Satan through the power of God's Holy Spirit, submitting ourselves as a sacrifice to God, transformed to God's way of life and image, designed to function this way since creation. God cannot create godly character by fiat. Hence, He has given us free moral agency so we can make choices. This factor—the ability to improve or corrupt nature—is controlled

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## *From the Archives: Featured Article*

### [Living By Faith and Human Pride](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

II Corinthians 5:7 is clear that God wants us to walk—live our lives—by faith, but our pride and vanity, mirroring the attitude of Satan the Devil, frequently get in the way. John Ritenbaugh delves into the depths of pride and its tragic results for the individual and for all mankind, most of all because it causes us to reject God and His Word.

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