

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. [1 Cor 15:21-22]

According to these passages, we inherited sin and death as a result of Adam's sin. This is why St. Paul reminds us that *"we were by nature children of wrath."* [Eph 2:3]

This situation should not be considered as totally hopeless. Adam's sin earned us a Redeemer from sin and death. (Gen. 3:15) From the Mass on Holy Saturday: *"Oh happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!"* As a result of original sin, we need Jesus Christ. This sin gave God the opportunity to share His Only Son with us. Christ's victory over sin won us more blessings than those lost through Adam's sin (CCC 420). In the words of St. Paul, *"where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."* [Rom 5:20] God worked through Adam's sin for our greater good and His Glory.

Through Christ's Resurrection, Baptism re-establishes God's friendship with us by washing away this sin from our soul (1 Peter 3:21). In Baptism we receive Sanctifying grace and are born again into eternal life (John 3:5). Sanctifying grace makes us pleasing to God (CCC 2024). Baptism does not cancel all the effects of Adam's sin, such as concupiscence -the inclination to evil (CCC 405). But it and the other Sacraments give us the grace needed to *"work out (our) own salvation with fear and trembling."* [Phil 2:12].

In summary the symptoms of original sin demonstrate our need for God. Original sin is the loss of original holiness and justice due to

Adam's sin. As a result man is alienated from God and also other men. Man has a wounded nature inclined towards evil. A denial of this fact can only lead to serious errors in education, politics, social action and morals (CCC 407). The revelation of original sin cannot be compromised without also compromising the revelation of our Salvation.

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July 11, 1995

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Pamphlet 251

Original Sin

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Psalm 51:5

Many people today deny the reality of original sin. Modern thinkers claim that evolution disproves it. Some object to the idea of inheriting sin from our parents, while others simply deny sin itself. Some Christians claim that the Bible never teaches it and so on. However G.K. Chesterton while still an Anglican wrote in his book, **Othodoxy**, that original sin is the most obvious of all Christian doctrines.

According to the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** (CCC), the doctrine of original sin is in some sense the reverse side of the doctrine of Redemption (CCC 389). In **Genesis** 2-3, God created man in His Image and established our first parents - Adam and Eve - in His friendship. This friendship included Sanctifying grace - the gift of holiness and eternal life. Adam, however, freely chose to live apart from God by trusting instead in the knowledge of good and evil - wanting to be like gods. Adam rejected God through disobedience and lost this friendship for himself and us. This loss is original sin (Gen 3:22ff; CCC 396-399).

The concept of original sin is not exclusively Catholic. Even though some Evangelical Protestants may shutter at the term, they readily acknowledge the fall of mankind and accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. Now without original sin, there would be no need for a Savior. The story of Adam and Eve found in the Book of Genesis is inherited from our Hebrew heritage (Gen. 3).

Even the ancient Greek pagans had an inkling idea of original sin and imperfectly expressed it in the tale of "Pandora's Box."

Now the doctrine of original sin cannot be proven by natural reason, but it is easily witnessed by its symptoms: the need for police, the collapse of great civilizations, suicide, suffering and so on. Another symptom is war. People have always and will always kill each other in mass quantity. The more advanced, civilized cultures merely execute war more efficiently. War is not exclusively reserved for nations. Street gangs, families or a single terrorist can rage war. But war is exclusively a human endeavor. Monkeys, though nimble with their fingers, do not make bombs, guns or even knives. Man on the other hand has fashioned the most primitive weapons out of stone before he could record history. In recent years, man has successfully sent robots to explore distant planets but still lives under the threat of nuclear holocaust. Even though man is intelligent and capable of doing great works, war quickly reminds us of our fallen state - a state sometimes appearing to be beneath animals. Without the doctrine of original sin, this paradox of humanity is an even deeper mystery.

Modern thinkers may claim that evolution disproves original sin, even though evolution is still only a theory. Even if evolution were proven to be fact, fossils can tell us little about our first parents and their spiritual souls. Also recent research in human mitochondrial DNA tends to indicate that the human race descended from a single woman - perhaps scientific evidence for Eve. (Mitochondrial DNA is genetic material inherited only from the mother and not from the father, unlike nuclear DNA.) Now evolution does not

disprove original sin, but on the contrary - sin seems to disprove evolution. Evolution does not explain man's sinful setback. If man evolved from animals, then man also shares a common digression missing among animals.

Some may object to the idea of inheriting sin; however, these people forget about human solidarity - the human race as one big family. Even though we are responsible for our actions due to human free will, our deeds still affect other people and vice versa. If I drive while drunk, my action can deprive someone else of their life. If my children see me stealing, then they will more likely choose to steal as a result of my example and so on. Now original sin is not due to our action, so it is not our personal fault (CCC 405). However as a result of human solidarity and Adam as the father of the human race, we still inherit the state of Adam's sin - "a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice" [CCC 404]. This disharmony between human free will and human solidarity is a consequence of original sin.

Others may not only deny original sin, but deny sin altogether. For example socialists try to replace personal responsibility for human behavior with impersonal forces, such as unequal distribution of wealth. Humanists reduce personal sins to social problems and believe that man can eventually solve all problems - seeing no need for a divine Savior. Other thinkers may not want to acknowledge their own personal sins, even though they readily recognize when others trespass against them. These thinkers arrogantly deny man's fundamental weakness and dependence on God, our Creator.

Now the term "Original Sin" may not be found in the Bible; however, the doctrine is

present. King David refers to it in **Psalm 51:5** (see top). Job declares in poetic fashion:

Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble...Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one. [Job 14:1 & 4; RSV]

Both of these passages imply that our sinfulness is inherited from our parents, even though there is no mention of Adam's sin.

The clearest revelation on original sin is found in the Epistles of St. Paul, especially **Romans 5:12-20**. St. Paul writes:

Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. [Rom 5:18-19]

Adam's original disobedience made us all sinners, while Christ's obedience on the Cross saves us from our sins. St. Paul also writes:

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned. [Rom 5:12]

Adam's sin also brought death; however, death here should not be merely thought of in terms of bodily death as that which all animals experience but in a spiritual sense, as in the loss of eternal life (CCC 403). This passage also implies that even though Adam brought death into the world, we are also responsible since we all sinned. Elsewhere St. Paul writes: