

The Doctrine of Original Sin

Intro: There are many today who believe in the doctrine of "original sin" and think they find proof of it in Romans 5:19 and other texts: "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous." So we raise the question, "is it true that everyone inherits by birth a corrupted nature that renders them incapable of responding to the word of God or doing anything good? Are babies born in sin.

What is the doctrine of original sin?

The Effects of Adam's Sin upon his Posterity. " That the sin of Adam injured not himself only but also all descending from him by ordinary generation, is part of the faith of the whole Christian world."

"As to the ground of these evils, we are taught that 'the covenant being made with Adam not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression.' Or, as is expressed in the Confession, 'Our first parents, being the root of all mankind, the guilt of their sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature were conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.'" (Hodges' Systematic Theology, Vol. II, Part II-Anthropology)

Where did it originate?

Early in the 2nd and 3rd centuries it was commonly believed that man continued with free will and moral responsibility after the fall.

"It was the universal faith of the church that man was made in the image of God, pure and holy, and fell by his own guilt. But the extent of sin and the consequences of the fall were not fully discussed before the Pelagius-Augustine controversy in the fifth century." (Schaff, Vol. II, p. 246)

But as time went on opinions began to change in favor of the view that man could not choose to do right because of the fall. Some began to contend that God was in control of everything absolutely and thus he chose who would be saved and who would be lost. These discussions culminated in a great historic debate around the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 5th between a man by the name of Augustine and Pelagius.

Augustine, (354-430AD) credited with formulating the concept of original sin, held that Adam's fall corrupted man, making the human race a mass of sin. Man inherited both the tendency to sin and the guilt for Adam's sin, for in him the entire race sinned. (ISBE)

Pelagius contended that man in cooperation with God could act because he maintained free will and moral responsibility.

Augustine for various reasons won the day and his doctrine had a profound impact upon the religious world, even until this day.

Impact of the doctrine on the religious world

Already the Roman Catholic hierarchy was developing and the doctrine of that church was forming. Original sin became a fundamental tenet of that faith.

Council of Trent 1545-1563: "Adam's first sin has been transmitted to all his descendants".

Episcopalians or Anglicans who are similar to Roman Catholic concepts except in organizational structure:

Common Book of Prayer, Articles of Religion IX & X: "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is ingendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek... which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire, of the flesh, is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin." "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will."

The Calvinistic view (Presbyterian and Reformed tradition)

Calvin wanted to return to the views of St. Augustine, from which he felt the Catholics had departed. He formalized these principles in a large volume called "Institutes of the Christian Religion". His whole view of salvation was influenced by the fundamental assumption that men do not have free will and by the fall, have lost the power to choose good. Calvin formulated his doctrines into a system of faith, doctrines of which are popularly taught by means of the "TULIP" acrostic.

Total Inherited Depravity

Unconditional Election

Limited Atonement

Irresistible Grace

Perseverance of the saints

Confession of Faith: "Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts

of the soul and body. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions."

Lutherans in the tradition of Martin Luther, who also called for reform of Catholic views of salvation in Germany:

Augsburg confession Article 2: "It is also taught among us that since the fall of Adam all men who are born according to the course of nature are conceived and born in sin. That is, all men are full of evil lust and inclination from their mother's womb and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God. Moreover, this inborn sickness and hereditary sin is truly sin and condemns to the eternal wrath of God all those who are not born again through baptism and the Holy Spirit."

Baptist view (Hiscox says Baptists are Calvinistic)

Not everyone believed in the concept of absolute sovereignty, among them independent groups who later because they practiced immersion were called "Baptists".

Some Baptist held to the Calvinistic views altogether (These are the primitive baptists).

Some Baptist groups refuse to accept the idea that God has decreed the condemnation of anyone. However, believing also in the doctrine of original sin and inherited depravity, thus suggest that an influence of the Spirit is given to all and men choose whether they will accept the call God is issuing:

Philadelphia Confession of Faith: "Our first parents by this sin fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them, whereby death came upon all, all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of the souls and body. The guilt of sin was imputed (and corrupt nature conveyed) to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin, the subjects of death and all other spiritual miseries, temporal and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free. From the original corruption-whereby we are utterly indisposed disabled, and made opposite to all good and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions."

Quotes by John McArthur

*It was not the many other sinful acts that Adam eventually committed, but the indwelling **sin** nature that he came to possess because of his first disobedience, that he passed on to his posterity. Just as Adam bequeathed his physical nature to his posterity, he also bequeathed to them his spiritual nature, which henceforth was characterized and dominated by **sin**. God made men a procreative race, and when they procreate they pass on to their children, and*

to their children's children, their own nature-physical, psychological, and spiritual.

Mankind is a single entity, constituting a divinely ordered solidarity. Adam represents the entire human race that is descended from him, no matter how many subgroups there may be. Therefore when Adam sinned, all mankind sinned, and because his first sin transformed his inner nature, that now depraved nature was also transmitted to his posterity. Because he became spiritually polluted, all his descendants would be polluted in the same way. That pollution has, in fact, accumulated and intensified throughout the ages of human history. Instead of evolving, as humanists insist, man has devolved, degenerating into greater and greater sinfulness.

Even tiny babies can die, not because they have committed sins but because they have a sin nature, the ultimate consequence of which is death. A person does not become a sinner by committing sins but rather commits sins because he is by nature a sinner. A person does not become a liar when he tells a lie; he tells a lie because his heart is already deceitful. A person does not become a murderer when he kills someone; he kills because his heart is already murderous. "For out of the heart," Jesus said, "come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders" (Matt. 15:19).

Natural human depravity is not the result but the cause of man's sinful acts. An infant does not have to be taught to disobey or be selfish. It is born that way. A young child does not have to be taught to lie or steal. Those are natural to his fallen nature, and he will express them as a matter of course unless prevented.

Others argue that it is not fair to be born guilty of Adam's sin. "We did not asked to be born," they argue, "nor did our parents or their parents or grandparents before them." But neither was it "fair" that the sinless Son of God suffered the penalty of sin on behalf of all mankind. If God were only fair, Adam and Eve would have been destroyed immediately for their disobedience, and that would have been the end of the human race. It is only because God is gracious and forgiving, and not merely just, that men can be saved. The magnitude of Paul's analogy is mind-boggling, and its significance cannot be fully comprehended but only accepted by faith.

In addition to these we might add Methodists who came into existence by the work of John Wesley:

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually (Article VII—Of Original or

Birth Sin form the Methodist Discipline)

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will. (Article VIII—Of Free Will)

Robert Turner suggested that some 80% of all religious groups accept as fact the idea of original sin. For all of these groups the belief in original sin is foundational to their whole scheme of salvation, however they conceive it!

Why does it matter? (the effect on doctrine of salvation)

The doctrine of original sin has led to the formation of a number of Catholic doctrines

Sacramentalism

There are seven sacraments or sacred rituals by means of which, properly administered by the "church", man may receive an infusion of grace from God

This infusion is necessary because of the inability of man to respond to God.

Infant baptism and sprinkling

If the infant is tainted by original sin, it needs forgiveness to be saved should it die in infancy or childhood. Hence, because children were not immersed, sprinkling was substituted and the child's "sins" were washed away.

"Yes, every child born into this world has the guilt of original sin upon his soul. Original sin is the sin that we inherit from our first parents. Original sin excludes us from heaven unless forgiven. It is forgiven only by baptism, hence when an unbaptized baby dies, it can not enter the kingdom of God." (Questions of Catholics answered by W. Hebst)

Proxy faith and confirmation

Catholic: "Confirmation is the sacrament through which the Holy Ghost comes to us in a special way and enables us to profess faith as strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ. The word confirmation means a strengthening. We are not certain from Sacred Scripture of the exact time and circumstances of the institution of Confirmation." (A Catechism of Christian Doctrine Pg 265)

Lutheran: "Those baptized (as infants) need to confirm the church's action of their behalf in the affirmation of their baptismal covenantor confirmation. This is our acceptance of our responsibility-at an age of reason (age of accountability 8-14), willfully, and determinedly, to be a disciple." (Lutheran church membership and you, Pg 12)

Erroneous doctrines about Mary, Jesus' mother

Immaculate conception of Mary

On Dec 8, 1954, Pope Pius IX, Official Papal Decree before 200 bishops in St. Peter's Cathedral, "It is proclaimed by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and the blessed apostles Peter and Paul and in our own authority that the doctrine which holds the blessed virgin Mary to have been, from the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Saviour of mankind, preserved free from all stain of original sin, was revealed by God, and is therefore, to be firmly believed by all the faithful."

Sinlessness of Mary

"By a special privilege of Almighty God, our blessed mother was free throughout her life from all actual sin, both moral and venial." (A Catechism of Christian Doctrine Pg 47)

Assumption of Mary

On Nov 2, 1950 Pope Pious XII declared, "Wherefore, after we have unceasingly offered our most fervent prayers to God, and have called upon the Spirit of Truth, for the glory of Almighty God who has lavished His special affection upon the Virgin Mary, for the honor of her Son, the immortal King of the ages and Victor over sin and death, for the increase of the glory of that same august Mother, and for the Joy and exultation of the entire church; by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority , We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her life, was assumed body and soul into heaven."

Prayers to Mary

The doctrine of original sin led to the continuation of Catholic practices.

Many Protestant groups (Presbyterians, Episcopals, Lutherans, Methodists) practice infant baptism and sprinkling, proxy faith and childhood confirmation in imitation of Catholic faith

Methodist Discipline: (Since) "infants are guilty of original sin, then they are proper subjects of baptism, seeing in the ordinary way, they cannot be saved unless this be washed away by baptism. It has already been proved that this original sin cleaves to every child of man, and hereby they are children of wrath and liable to eternal damnation."

Other denominations rejected the idea of infant church membership while holding to original sin. However they could offer no logical explanation for how and why infants were cleansed.

Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit; who worketh when, and where, and how he

pleases; so also are all elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word. (Philadelphia confession)

The doctrine of original sin led further to another concept of salvation.

Original sin became the basis for the doctrine of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the sinner to create faith and bring about salvation.

Cf. Calvinism's irresistible grace

Although the gospel be the only outward means of revealing Christ and saving grace, and is, as such, abundantly sufficient thereunto; yet that men who are dead in trespasses may be born again, quickened or regenerated, there is moreover necessary an effectual insuperable work of the Holy Spirit upon the whole soul, for the producing in them a new spiritual life; without which no other means will effect their conversion unto God. (Philadelphia Confession of Faith).

Prooftexts for Original sin and imputation of Adam's guilt to all posterity

Ps. 51:5

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5)

Calvinists and other advocates of original sin point to this text as proof that all are "born sinners".

Who had the sin and iniquity? David or his mother? To be "brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin" is an expression of the exposure of David to a sinful world that had its effect in his life. It is in fact a true statement of the grounds of sin in all of us (we are born into a world of sinners and are influenced by the behavior of the whole society around us from the beginning of our lives).

Moreover David may be using a poetic expression that simply says, "I've been a sinner virtually my whole life".

It is interesting to compare David's expression with that of Job about his care for orphans:

(But from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, And from infancy I guided her), (Job 31:18) Lit. "from my mother's womb" Did Job mean to say that he took care of orphans from the day of his birth? Or, did he simply mean to say in poetic language. I've taken care of orphans virtually my whole life".

Notice David's use of this figure to, in another context, describe the faith that he had all his life!

Upon Thee I was cast from birth; Thou hast been my God from my mother's womb. (Psalm 22:10)

So much for total depravity of infants!

Eph. 2:3

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh,

indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Ephesians 2:3)

First, note that in verse 1 the apostle plainly declares that spiritual death is the consequence of “your trespasses and sins” (NASV). This emphasizes *personal sin*. Though the term “your” is not found in the King James Version (following the Textus Receptus), it is amply supported by evidence from ancient Greek manuscripts, early versions, and the writings of the “church fathers” in the post-apostolic period (Salmond, p. 283).

Second, in verse 3 Paul affirms that all of us “were ... children of wrath.” The verb *emetha* (“were”) is an imperfect tense form. The imperfect tense describes continuity of action as viewed in the past. Thus, here it depicts the habitual style of life which had characterized these saints prior to their conversion. Had the apostle intended to convey the notion of inherited sinfulness at the time of their birth, he easily could have expressed that idea by saying, “you *became* by birth children of wrath.”

Third, it is also significant that the verb is in the middle voice in the Greek Testament. The middle voice is employed to suggest the subject’s personal involvement in the action of the verb. The language therefore stresses that the sinful condition of the Ephesians had been their *individual* responsibility. Hence, combining the imperfect tense and middle voice aspects of the verb, we might paraphrase the passage thusly: “...you *kept on making yourselves* children of wrath.”

Fourth, it is probable that the King James Version, and most subsequent translations, reflect a Calvinistic bias in the rendition, “by nature children of wrath.” The Greek word *phusei*, rendered “nature” in our common versions, can denote “a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature” (Thayer, p. 660).

Edward Robinson observed that the term can be understood of a “native mode of thinking, feeling, acting” on the part of those who are “unenlightened by the influence of divine truth” (p. 771). Clearly, these people, by habitual practice, had become worthy of divine wrath.

Hugo McCord’s translation has an excellent rendition of this passage. It suggests that the Ephesians had “by custom” become children of wrath. Winer contended that their trespasses and sins had made them “natural children of wrath” (p. 270). Moule suggested that the phrase rendered “by nature children of wrath” might be equivalent to saying, “*left to ourselves we are destined to suffer the consequences of sin*” (p. 174). Thus, the Ephesians, in their unregenerate state, had become, by long practice of sin, deserving of the wrath of God. These thoughts are consistent with the immediate context and with the tenor of the Bible as a whole.

Fifth, it is worthy of note that if this passage teaches that babies are born totally depraved, one would have to infer necessarily that infants

who die in that condition are *lost* since they are clearly designated as “children of wrath” (cf. the expression “son of perdition” - John 17:12). Yet, this is a conclusion that even denominationalists are loath to accept.

Romans 5:19.

Paul affirms a fact without a discussion of "how" the situation is true. If Paul means to say that men are made sinners unconditionally, then would we not also be forced to say that men are made righteous unconditionally? But if we are made righteous by conditions, can we not also be made sinners by conditions? Pauls states what those conditions are. Death passed to all men because all sinned! We are made sinners by unbelief! We are made righteous by faith! The larger context suggests that Paul is showing that all are sinners by their own volition!

Rom. 1-2 establish the sinfulness of man and God's wrath against sinners. Why would God be angry with people who cannot help what they are and who cannot change what they are?

Paul's has emphasized not that all have inherited sin but "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23).

The larger contexts suggest that Paul is showing that all may be made righteous through faith in Christ.

Salvation is for "all" who believe--Rom. 1:16-17.

Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved--Rom. 10:13.

What does the Bible really teach?

There is a presumption against the doctrine in view of the consequent doctrines that must be created to explain or ameliorate the harshness of the doctrine of original sin.

That the guilt of sin is not inherited from our answers (Eze. 18:20).

That children themselves are not only capable of good but are in fact models for the saved. (Mt. 18:1ff)

Men become sinners by acts of their own volition (Rom. 7:9-10).

That man does have free will and does have the power to choose good without direction operations of the Spirit (Mt. 23:37).