

The Bible, Evolution, and the Catholic Understanding of Original Sin
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November 10, 2012

Introduction

The purpose of these talks funded by the John Templeton Foundation is to foster the understanding and use of contemporary science by Catholic religious leaders in their preaching, writing, and other forms of pastoral ministry. It is worth noting that the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe, which is still accepted by most scientists today, was first proposed by a Catholic priest-scientist from Belgium, Abbé Georges Lemaitre. Another priest-scientist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, although initially viewed with suspicion by Church authorities, has nevertheless had an enormous influence in bringing about gradual acceptance within Catholic institutions of the scientific study of the evolutionary development of life on planet earth, including that of humans. In 1996 Pope John Paul II delivered a message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in which he accepted the basic tenets of the theory of evolution, which he said was “more than a hypothesis.”¹ In terms of human evolution, while insisting on the direct creation of every human soul by God, the Pope went very far in the direction of the conclusions of scientists who are hesitant to state when exactly humans did evolve from pre-humans. John Paul II said that

The sciences of observation describe and measure the multiple manifestations of life with increasing precision and correlate them with the time line. The moment of transition to the spiritual is not the object of this kind of observation, which nevertheless can discover at the experimental level a series of very valuable signs indicating what is specific to the human being. But the experience of metaphysical knowledge, of self-awareness and self-reflection, of moral conscience, freedom, or again, of aesthetic and religious experience, falls within the competence of philosophical analysis and reflection, while theology brings out its ultimate meaning according to the Creator’s plans.²

This morning Dr. Daryl Domning presented an attractive and convincing argument in favor of looking at original sin from the viewpoint of evolution. It is one that I generally accept as true, at least in light of our current understanding of the origin and development of the universe, including that

of life, even human life. This afternoon, then, I wish to concentrate on some of the issues involved in moving away from the traditional concept of original sin.

Genesis 2-3

I begin with a look at the literary genre of Genesis 2-3, the story of Adam and Eve. For many centuries that story was taken to be a simple, historical fact, that Adam and Eve had been granted immortality in the Garden of Eden but had committed a certain sin of disobedience and were punished in various ways, primarily by being expelled from that garden and from access to the tree of life which would have guaranteed their immortality. St. Augustine thought this was history, as did St. Thomas Aquinas, and even the members of the Council of Trent in the mid 1500s.

Charles Darwin's publication of his book, *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 and his *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* in 1871 challenged that view. Ancient Mesopotamian myths and legends were dug up by archaeologists in the late 1800's, with extraordinary parallels to some of the early chapters of the Book of Genesis. Towards the end of the 19th century the German scripture scholar Hermann Gunkel developed the theory of various literary genres such as myth, legend, saga, and other non historical forms of literature. In 1901 he presented some of those genres in a book entitled, *The Legends of Genesis*. At the time the Church was strongly opposed to such an interpretation of the Bible, but by 1943 Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical, *Divino afflante spiritu*, in which he acknowledged the importance of studying the biblical text in terms of ancient modes of writing, which would also include the judicious use of literary genres. One of those literary genres is myth.

Myth

Many of us might think of myth as a story that is unreal, as being untrue. The literary definition of a myth is slightly different. It gets its origin from mythology or stories of the gods, and indeed, there is mythic imagery in the Bible which derives from such stories, such as God riding on the wings of the wind (as in Ps 18:10; or Ps 104:3).

The literary genre of Myth is important in studying the Bible, because whenever we speak about God as active in this world, we must use symbolic or metaphorical language to do so. God does not really make a lump of

earth and breathes on it to make a man, as in Gen 2:7. The story is important because it tells us something significant about human beings, that they are partly flesh and partly spirit, that they have a psychosomatic unity, a unity of body and soul. Exactly how God caused that to happen is perhaps a matter of science, but THAT God is the creator of all humans is a matter of faith in the fundamental truth of the Bible.

There is a special importance to the time of a myth, which is said to have happened “once upon a time,” or in primordial time. That is not a time within chronology, but as primordial time, in a certain sense, “it never happened, but it is always there,” because it really is an explanation of a reality involving the gods, or more importantly, God.

Genesis 2-3 as a Story set in Primeval Time with Mythic Imagery

For many years now Catholic scholars, along with their colleagues who are members of other Christian denominations, have recognized that the literary genre of Genesis 2-3 is not history but a mythic narrative of origins in service of a theology of origins. Fr. Bruce Vawter, in his 1977 commentary entitled *On Genesis, A New Reading*³ wrote that the author “has knit together a number of mythological motifs”⁴ and that “according to the story, immortality was not a gift that [Adam] forfeited but rather one that he failed to obtain.”⁵ He compares this aspect of Genesis 2-3 with the mythical story of Gilgamesh, an ancient Mesopotamian hero who sought immortality, then discovered at the bottom of the ocean a plant of life that could grant it, but failed to gain that immortality because the plant was stolen from him by a serpent while he slept. Genesis 2-3 many also be compared to the Babylonian myth of Ea and Adapa, whose main character, Adapa, was offered “water of life” and “bread of life” which would have granted him immortality, but because of “false counsel” refused them, and also failed to attain immortal life.⁶ Fr. John Scullion, S.J., in his 1992 commentary on Genesis,⁷ also writes that “*ha-adam* is not by nature immortal, nor is there any sign in the biblical text of Genesis 2-3 that he has been granted immortality by God.”⁸ The story is set “in primeval time. It is beyond history. It is the story of Everyman.”⁹ Brother Michael Maher, M.S.C., in his 1982 commentary on the Book of Genesis¹⁰ says that “Genesis 2-3 has no direct parallel in the mythology of the Ancient Near East. But the chapters incorporate many mythological motifs by which the author conveys a profound message about man and woman, their relationship to God and their moral responsibility in the world.”¹¹ Sr. Joan Cook, S.C., in her 2011 Genesis commentary¹² also states: “Even though death has not been

explained, the story makes clear that the Creator, the snake, and the woman see it as something to avoid. Here the story resembles other ancient Near Eastern myths that describe the futile efforts of creatures to become immortal” (p.19).

A look at the punishments described in Gen 3:14-18 is very instructive:

The Lord God said to the serpent: “(14) Because you have done this, you shall be banned from all the animals and from all the wild creatures; On your belly you shall crawl, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life...(16) To the woman he said: “I will intensify the pangs of your childbearing; in pain shall you bring forth children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall be your master. (17) To the man he said: “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat, Cursed be the ground because of you! In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life. (18) Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, as you eat of the plants of the field. (19) By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat, Until you return to the ground from which you were taken; For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

The punishments explain certain mysterious realities of experience: Why snakes don't have legs and seem to eat dust; why women suffer such great pains in childbirth, or why they yearn for a husband who – in their culture – would lord it over them, why the Palestinian ground is so full of thorns and thistles, requiring intensive and painful manual labor, and most of all, why people die.

Comparisons of the biblical narrative with extra-biblical mythology consider mythology not simply as non-factual, as something that is not true, but rather as poetic attempts to portray profound human reality in relationship to God. As pertaining to the literary genre of myth, it is able to express deep truths better than a declarative exposition of them. But an awareness of the nature of the text would require us to say that there never was a time in history when the events described actually took place. The Genesis story describes the reality of temptation, sinfulness, shame, and death in a narrative set in primordial time, which never happened as portrayed, but is always true, because it explains the realities of our daily experience.

No Further Mention of Adam and Eve in the Hebrew Scriptures

Surprisingly, there is no further direct mention of the story of Adam and Eve in the rest of the *Tanak*, the Jewish Bible. Ezekiel 28 describes the downfall of the King of Tyre in terminology that is reminiscent of Genesis 2-3, but that is all. Only later are there two verses in the Greek Bible, the Septuagint, which refer to the Adam and Eve story. Sirach, a Jewish author from about 200 B.C., wrote that “In woman was sin’s beginning, and because of her we all must die” (Sirach or Ecclus 24:23), and The Book of Wisdom, written originally in Greek about 50 B.C., states: “By the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who are in his possession experience it” (2:24).

Yetzer hara’, and Not Original Sin, in Judaism

Within Judaism, there is an awareness of human inclination to evil, but it is not connected to the story of Adam and Eve. It is called the *yetzer hara’*, “evil inclination,” and refers to the reason for the Flood in Gen 6:5, “When the Lord saw how great was man’s wickedness on earth, and how no desire that his heart conceived was ever anything but evil, he regretted that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was grieved.” Yet at the end of the Flood story, in Gen 8:22, the LORD says that he will not “doom the earth because of man, since the desires of man’s heart are evil from the start.” Humans are simply made that way, with a *yetzer hara’* before the Flood, and one also after the Flood!

Rabbi Louis Jacobs, writing on sin for *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1972), says of the *yetzer hara’* that it can “easily lead to wrongdoing,” but that it “provides life with its driving power,”¹³ and cites a rabbinic Midrash that without it, people would not build homes, marry, raise a family, or engage in commerce (Gen. R. 9:7).¹⁴ He then cites several further rabbinic texts, which emphasize *yetzer hara’* as enticing humans to sin (Suk. 52b). R. Simeon ben Lakish is quoted as having said, “Satan, the *yetzer hara’*, and the angel of death are one and the same” (BB 16a). But study of the Torah is a good way to overcome it. One rabbinic text quotes God as saying, “My children! I created the evil inclination, but I created the Torah as its antidote: if you occupy yourselves with the Torah, you will not be delivered into its hand” (Kid. 30b).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Catechism of the Catholic Church #390, acknowledges that “the account of the fall in *Genesis* 3 uses figurative language” and that it “affirms a primeval event.” Now according to mythology, a “primeval event” would refer to a time beyond time, similar to “once upon a time,” divorced from actual chronology, as a typological expression of a universal condition. But the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* goes on to give its own definition of a “primeval event,” namely “a deed that took place *at the beginning of the history of man.*” The next sentence of the Catechism puts the blame back on our first parents: QUOTE: “Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents.”

Gabriel Daly, in his article on “Original Sin” in the *New Dictionary of Theology* (1989), takes up the case of the 1966 *Dutch Catechism* which gave an existentialist interpretation of original sin, and notes that a Commission of Cardinals insisted that it refer once again to a “historic fall” and the “transmission of a real state of sin by ‘propagation.’” (p.729).

Monogenism

Focus on the historic fall occasioned by our first parents and the inheritance of the consequences of that fall to all of humanity, seems to imply monogenism, that all of us do indeed derive from one set of parents, whatever their names, whenever they lived. But monogenism is not compatible with the results of contemporary studies of DNA shared by humans and certain prehuman forms.

In his book, *Original Selfishness*, Dr. Domning has a chapter entitled “No more Adam and Eve: science refutes monogenism,”¹⁵ and cites a study by Francisco Ayala about a segment of human DNA known as the DRB1 gene, which is common to monkeys and apes as well as to humans. There are 59 versions of the human DRB1 gene, and 32 of them have been in existence around 6 million years ago, at the time of divergence of humans from chimpanzees and gorillas. Ayala has shown that any one individual can carry no more than 2 of those 32 versions of the DRB1 gene, so there must have been at least 16 individuals living at the same time during those 6 million years, and to bring them over the gap from pre-human to human, would have taken a so-called population bottleneck of at least 4,000

individuals. Domning concludes (p.72): “Given the present genetic makeup of humanity, therefore, a bottleneck population as small as 2 people...was clearly a mathematical impossibility.” This would seem to give the coup de grace to the idea of Adam and Eve as historically our first parents.

Just last year Kenneth W. Kemp, of the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota, published an article entitled “Science, Theology, and Monogenesis,”¹⁶ in which he also presented Francisco Ayala’s study about population bottlenecks and Ayala’s conclusion that the minimum number of “synchronously reproducing individuals” to maintain the level of diversity actually observed in the DRB1 gene is about 4,000, as Professor Domning had also noted. Kemp added some other studies, and concludes: “Other estimates of the size of the bottleneck, based on other data, fall into this same range.”¹⁷ He then takes up the warning of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #390, that “the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents, and tries to find a scenario faithful to both a population bottleneck of 4000 or 5000, as postulated by evolution, and the *Catechism*’s insistence on the real existence of a single set of first parents whose sinful actions marked the whole of human history.” Kemp makes a distinction between humans as a “theological species” and a “biological species.”¹⁸ According to him, the biological species is “the population of interbreeding individuals,” while the theological species is “the collection of individuals that have an eternal destiny.”¹⁹ In terms of the 4,000 or 5,000 individuals minimally at the bottleneck between humanoid creatures and truly human persons, Kemp is able to imagine the following scenario:

The 5000 individuals would be hominids,

in many respects like human beings, but which lack the capacity for intellectual thought. Out of this population, God selects two and endows them with intellects by creating for them rational souls, giving them at the same time those preternatural gifts the possession of which constitutes original justice. Only beings with rational souls (with or without the preternatural gifts) are truly human. The first two theologically human beings misuse their free will, however, by choosing to commit a (the original) sin, thereby losing the preternatural gifts, though not the offer of divine friendship by virtue of which they remain theologically (not just philosophically)

distinct from their merely biological human ancestors and cousins. These first true human beings also have descendants, who continue, to some extent, to interbreed with the non-intellectual hominids among whom they live.²⁰

Eventually they arrive at 5,000 humans, each descended from a single original human couple!

The author is serious, even though this scenario might strike us as bizarre. He seems to mix the natural process of polygenesis with divine manipulation of putting souls into two members of a large population, and waiting for them to give birth to truly human descendants, who interbreed with non-intellectual hominids and produce with them more truly human beings, now with souls.

Further Reflection on Monogenism

In 1951 Pope Pius XII wrote as follows:

3897. [T]he faithful in Christ cannot accept this [the] view, which holds that either after Adam there existed men on this earth, who did not receive their origin by natural generation from him, the first parent of all; or that Adam signifies some kind of multitude of first parents; for it is by no means apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled with what the sources of revealed truth and the acts of the magisterium of the Church teaches about original sin, which proceeds from a sin truly committed by one Adam, and which is transmitted to all by generation, and exists in each one as his own [cf. *Rom* 5:12-19; Concilium Tridentinum, Sessio V, canones 1-4].

Yet there are indications that within the Catholic Church monogenism need no longer be insisted upon.

1. Neither Pope John Paul II nor Pope Benedict XVI repeated the words of Pope Pius XII on monogenism, though they did repeat his insistence on the immediate creation of all human souls by God.
2. In 2004 the International Theological Commission, then under Cardinal Ratzinger, issued a document called “Communion and Stewardship – Human Persons Created in the Image of God,” which

was submitted to Cardinal Ratzinger for approval prior to publication. Paragraph 70 states:

With respect to the immediate creation of the human soul, Catholic theology affirms that particular actions of God bring about effects that transcend the capacity of created causes acting according to their natures. The appeal to divine causality to account for genuinely *causal* as distinct from merely *explanatory* gaps does not insert divine agency to fill in the “gaps” in human scientific understanding (thus giving rise to the so-called “God of the gaps”). The structures of the world can be seen as open to non-disruptive divine action in directly causing events in the world. Catholic theology affirms that the emergence of the first members of the human species (whether as individuals or in populations) represents an event that is not susceptible of a purely natural explanation and which can appropriately be attributed to divine intervention. Acting indirectly through causal chains operating from the beginning of cosmic history, God prepared the way for what Pope John Paul II has called “an ontological leap...the moment of transition to the spiritual.” While science can study these causal chains, it falls to theology to locate this account of the special creation of the human soul within the overarching plan of the triune God to share the communion of trinitarian life with human persons who are created out of nothing in the image and likeness of God, and who, in his name and according to his plan, exercise a creative stewardship and sovereignty over the physical universe.

This would have been the perfect place to insist on monogenism, but the International Theological Commission did not do so.

3. More recently, in a January 16, 2006 article in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Fiorenzo Facchini stated: “The spark of intelligence was lighted in one or more hominids when, where and in the ways God willed it.” By saying “one or more hominids, when, where and in the ways God willed,” leaves open the door to polygenism.²¹
4. Jesuit Fathers Jacques Dupuis and Joseph Neuner, authors and editors of a book entitled *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (1996 edition), wrote that “Recent theology,

however, is seeking explanations of original sin under the supposition of polygenism, and so tries to remove the reason for its rejection."²² One such effort is taking place here, today.

Original Sin according to St. Paul

Although the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2-3 does not suffice as proof of the reality of original sin, St. Paul's teaching on sin comes a lot closer, and has inspired the Fathers of the Church, especially in the fourth century, to develop the doctrine of original sin.

Universality of Sin

Its starting point is the idea of the universality of sin, which is found in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.

1 Kgs 8:46 says, "there is no one who does not sin"; Qoheleth, also known as Ecclesiastes, 7:20: "No one on earth is sufficiently upright to do good without ever sinning." And Prov 20:9 asks the rhetorical question, "Who can say, 'I have cleansed my heart; I am purified of my sin?'" Qo 9:3 adds: "The human heart is full of wickedness.... Folly lurks in our hearts until we end among the dead."

St. Paul: "All have sinned" (Rom 3:23) and they can be justified only by QUOTE "grace, as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement, by his blood, effective through faith" (Rom 3:24-25).

In Paul the universal dimension of human sin is especially exemplified in the figure of Adam: "As all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ" (1 Cor 15:22). Of special consideration in this regard is Rom 5:12-21.

Romans 5:12-21

In Romans 5:12-21, Paul contrasts the effects of Adam's disobedience and sin with the effects of Christ's obedience and salvation. Paul's main concern is to show that just as through the head of humanity, Adam, sin and death came into the world, so through Christ, "the head of the new humanity"²³ there came salvation and eternal life.

Verse 12 requires a special consideration since St. Augustine's Latin text contains what we would say today is a mistaken translation of the Greek expression *eph ho* as "in whom," rather than more correctly, "in as much as." St. Augustine's translation of Rom 5:12 then read, "Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus death spread to all men, *in whom* all sinned." The "in whom" would then apply to Adam, and according to this reading, all his later descendants sinned in him, in his loins, so to speak. The newer translation of the Greek *eph ho*, as "in as much as," implies that death came to all, not only to Adam, "inasmuch as all sinned" (along with him). This new translation, then, would emphasize that salvation by Christ is contrasted not only to the sin of Adam but also to everyone's personal sins, "inasmuch as all sinned."

Though this is important, it does not change everything, for in Rom 5:18, the focus is once more on the contrast between Adam's sin, which brought about condemnation for all, and Christ's act of uprightness, which brought "justification and life to all."

Paul's main concern, is expressed in the last two verses, 20-21, the superabundance of the grace of Christ: "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (21) so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

Does Paul *teach* the real existence of Adam in Rom 5:12-21, or did he merely *presuppose* it? Stanislaus Lyonnet, SJ, professor for many years at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome said that "Adam's culpability, the universality of sin, and the solidarity of all men are to him [Paul] facts commonly known and proven from Scripture. They are not *ends*, but rather *presuppositions* and *means* for his proof [in Romans 5:12-21]. He uses them in order to illumine and clarify the universality of the saving work of Christ.... [T]he literal understanding of the account of the Fall does not belong to the *object* of Pauline teaching..."²⁴ (pp.220-221).

We must now skip 1500 years of history of the further development of the doctrine of original sin, and simply look at the famous 5 canons on original sin decreed by Council of Trent against Martin Luther and the Reformers in 1546.

*The Council of Trent 1546:*²⁵

canon 1: If anyone does not confess that the first man Adam, when he transgressed the commandment of God in paradise, immediately *lost holiness and justice [sanctitas et justitia]*, in which he had been constituted, and incurred ... also death, which formerly God has spared him from,... let him be anathema.

[From this we learn that in paradise Adam was constituted in holiness and justice when he sinned];

canon 2: If anyone says that the sin of Adam *hurt only himself and not his progeny*, and lost holiness and justice *only for himself and not also for us...* let him be anathema. [Therefore by the sin of Adam we too lost holiness and justice]

canon 3. If anyone says that this sin of Adam, which is one by origin and is communicated to all by propagation and not by imitation [*propagatione, non imitatione*], and is in all and proper to each, (if anyone says) that it can be taken away through the powers of human nature or by some other remedy than through the merit of the one mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, ... or denies that this merit of Jesus Christ is applied through the sacrament of baptism both to adults as well as to infants... let him be anathema.

[This central canon states that the sin of Adam is communicated to us by propagation, not by imitation, and that it is taken away by the merit of the one mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, through the sacrament of baptism both for adults as well as infants]

canon 4. If anyone denies that newly born infants are to be baptized... for the remission of sins....let him be anathema. [So newly born infants are baptized for the remission of sins]

canon 5. If anyone denies that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ conferred in baptism the guilt of original sin is remitted, or asserts that not everything is taken away which has the true and proper nature of sin, but says that it is only...not imputed, let him be anathema... Concupiscence or inclination (*fomes*) remains in the baptized, but is not able to hurt those who do not consent but fight manfully through the grace of Jesus Christ....

[Through baptism the guilt of original sin is remitted, but concupiscence remains].

When these canons were decreed in 1546, everyone still held to the real, historical existence of Adam and Eve and of the events described in Genesis 2-3.

CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIES OF ORIGINAL SIN

Soon after Vatican II, the Dutch theologian Piet Schoonenberg, pointed out that the canons of the Council of Trent do not give answers to questions that did not exist at the time, for instance, was there a real Adam in a real paradise, does the handing on of original sin by propagation and not by imitation refer exclusively to physical generation or can it mean something else? The canons of Trent presuppose a specific state of affairs because of their historical location, and should be interpreted according to their main assertion, and not as the only possible formulation of that mystery.²⁶

The primary intent of the Council of Trent was to insist on the *necessity of the grace of Christ for salvation*, namely that humans cannot achieve their own salvation. This truth will still have to be honored today, by newer versions of the understanding of original sin.

Especially important in this connection is the expression "by propagation, not by imitation"; the Pelagians, against whom the text is directed, taught that the sin of Adam was communicated by imitation of his bad example.

Piet Schoonenberg

Schoonenberg argued that a child cannot "imitate" someone responsibly or sinfully prior to having arrived at the age of reason. But major psychological and spiritual deformations already take place in the development of a child long before then. Sinful attitudes of the parents and of others in the culture would affect the child negatively, and produce inclinations to evil. This could be understood in a psychological way as "by propagation and not by imitation." In an existentialist view of the world, "to be" as a human being is "to-be-in-a-situation," and therefore to be affected intrinsically by that situation. Original sin, then, according to Piet Schoonenberg, is the collectivity of all the many personal sins of humanity from the very beginning, reaching every person, and therefore constituting the "sin of the world" which Christ has come to take away (John 1:29).²⁷

Gabriel Daly, OSA

The Irish Augustinian theologian, Gabriel Daly, OSA,²⁸ in a book entitled *Creation and Redemption*, distinguishes between the *substance* of the doctrine of original sin (which is non-negotiable) and the *manner of its formulation* (which is open to cultural change). He lists three elements of the doctrine which are essential:

- (1) Christ is central to the whole divine economy, which includes creation, revelation, and redemption;
- (2) Every human being is in need of the redemption won for the [human] race by Christ;
- (3) The need for redemption is antecedent not merely to the commission of personal sin but also to exposure to sinful influences. (p.125).

Original Sin as a Present Reality

A number of writers about original sin put their emphasis not so much on the biological, which of course they acknowledge, but on how humans have created a society in which all of us are enmeshed in sinful structures that seem to be intractable. Bernard Lonergan has pointed to the essential mechanisms of bias that underlie social sin.

Bernard Lonergan

In his book *Insight*, Lonergan stacks up bias from the individual, to the local group, and to other groups, eventually world-wide. As rational beings, we humans could be expected to solve the many social problems that exist, and had we been pure intelligences, we might well have resolved them and discovered workable solutions, but our perennial selfishness gets in the way. We choose not to look at solutions that would call for our self-abnegation; we allow self-deception, and dismiss the intelligent solutions as being impractical. The essential problem is attention. We refuse to look. Sin has no rationality; it is a surd. But it blocks human progress most severely.

SOLUTION

Whether in classical form, or in evolutionary form, original sin with its concomitant concupiscence, needs to be overcome. Traditionally that is accomplished through the sacrament of baptism, which removes us from the state of original sin and brings us the grace of Christ necessary for salvation. That is still the case today, but calls for some changes of focus.

Baptism is a sacrament of initiation whereby one enters the Christian community of the disciples of Jesus, united with the Risen Lord as members of the body of Christ, the Church. The ritual of exorcism, which is still used today is in two forms. The first form speaks of original sin, the second one does not, at least not explicitly. The first form reads as follows:

Almighty and ever-living God,
 You sent your only Son into the world
 To cast out the power of Satan, spirit of evil,
 To rescue man from the kingdom of darkness,
 And bring him into the splendor of your kingdom of light.
 We pray for this child:
 Set him (her) free from original sin,
 Make him (her) a temple of your glory,
 And send your Holy Spirit to dwell with him (her).
 We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Alternate form:

#221:

Almighty God,
 You sent your only Son
 To rescue us from the slavery of sin,
 And to give us the freedom
 Only your sons and daughters enjoy.
 We now pray for these children [this child??]
 Who will have to face the world with its temptations,
 And fight the devil in all his cunning.
 Your Son died and rose again to save us.
 By his victory over sin and death,
 Bring these children [this child?] out of the power of darkness,
 Strengthen them [him, her] with the grace of Christ,
 And watch over them [him, her] at every step in life's journey.
 We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Both forms speak of the mission of Jesus as Son of God to win victory of Satan, sin, and death.

Besides baptism of water and the spirit, there are also many forms of the baptism of desire, which, through God's grace, under certain circumstances, are its basic equivalent and are a source of grace.

Jesus accomplished this not only by his death on the cross, seen as expiation or redemption, but primarily by the example of his life, of total selfless love for each and every one he encountered. By his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus provided us with the example of pure altruism, and promised us a reward in eternal life, and indeed, eternal punishment for those who steadfastly refuse to lead a life of altruistic love.

Just as the process of evolution has brought the world from simple cells to the great complexity of life that exists today, so also humans have made great technical and cultural strides these last 150,000 years. The hope is that we will continue to make progress. The doctrine of original sin warns us, however, that human progress is not linear, nor inevitable, but involves a constant battle with the forces of evil. Yet progress is being made. The inchoate successes of liberation theology and of feminist theology are beginning to show positive results in many parts of the world. The world itself is getting to become a "global village," and although we are still too often unmoved by the terrible sufferings of fellow human beings in other parts of the world, we have nevertheless become more aware of their plight and at least some of us have dedicated their lives in selfless service to others. Jesus showed us the way, heroic people have followed in his paths, and hope for the future is real, if not assured. The Holy Spirit is in our midst. God who created us from within this world gives us the strength to utilize its many riches not for ill but for good. Original selfishness can be overcome by daily combat through the grace of Christ, who promises us a final victory at the end of days.

¹ Pope John Paul II, "Message to Pontifical Academy of Sciences on Evolution," *Origins* 26, no.25 (December 5, 1996) 414-16.

² John Paul II, 416.

³ Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis, A New Reading* (NY: Doubleday, 1977).

⁴ Vawter, 63.

⁵ Vawter, 89.

⁶ Vawter, 68f.

⁷ John Scullion, SJ, *Genesis*, Old Testament Studies 6, Collegeville: Michael Glazier, Liturgical Press, 1992).

⁸ Scullion, 41.

⁹ Scullion, 42.

¹⁰ Michael Maher, MSC, *Genesis* (Collegeville: Michael Glazier, Liturgical Press, 1982).

¹¹ Maher, 48.

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- ¹² Joan Cook, SC, *Genesis*, vol.2 of the New Collegeville Bible Commentary Series (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011).
- ¹³ Louis Jacobs, "Sin," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1972), vol. 14, columns 1592-93.
- ¹⁴ Jacobs, 1592.
- ¹⁵ Domning, 71-74
- ¹⁶ Kenneth W. Kemp, "Science, Theology, and Monogenesis," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85,2 (2011): 217-36.
- ¹⁷ Kemp, 225.
- ¹⁸ Kemp, 230.
- ¹⁹ Kemp, 230.
- ²⁰ Kemp, 231-32.
- ²¹ <http://catholicforum.fisheaters.com/index.php?topic=2415395.0%3Bwap2>; downloaded November 9, 2012.
- ²² Jacques Dupuis, SJ, and Joseph Neuner, SJ, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (1996), p.169.
- ²³ " (Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 406)
- ²⁴ James L. Connor, "Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches," *TS* 29 (1968), 215-240, pp.220-21..
- ²⁵ Denzinger #1511ff; *The Church Teaches*, 371ff
- ²⁶ Piet Schoonenberg, as quoted in Connor, p.224.
- ²⁷ Piet Schoonenberg, "Original Sin," *Man and Sin*, 1967, pp.124-91.
- ²⁸ Gabriel Daly, OSA, *Creation and Redemption* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989), p.125.