



Around the Word
BIBLE STUDY
Summer 2016

Original Sin

Part 2: Original Sin & Creation

Martin Luther on Original Sin:

We are infected with the poison of original sin from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, inasmuch as this happened to us in a nature still perfect.

(Commentary on Genesis 3, LW 1:163)



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Introduction: When we confess our sins we do not only confess the things we have done wrong. We also confess that we have a sinful nature. "We are by nature sinful and unclean..." But it is important to distinguish between our human nature and original sin. In the years after the death of Martin Luther, some theologians were teaching that our human nature was sin. This was wrong, and the error was shown with four proofs: 1. God did not create sin (but He does create us), 2. Jesus did not redeem sin (but He did redeem humanity), 3. The Holy Spirit does not sanctify sin (but He does sanctify us), and 4. Sin will not be resurrected, but we will. In this study we consider the connection between creation and sin.

*Note: There are a lot of Scriptures references in this study. If you need to shorten the time, the most important texts are indicated with asterisks (**).*

Opening: Psalm 139:13-18

¹³For you formed my | inward parts;*
you knitted me together in my | mother's womb.

¹⁴**I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonder- | fully made.***

**Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it | very well.**

¹⁵My frame was not hid- | den from you,*
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths | of the earth.

¹⁶**Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every | one of them,***

**the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there were | none of them.**

¹⁷How precious to me are your thoughts, | O God!*
How vast is the | sum of them!

¹⁸**If I would count them, they are more | than the sand.***

I awake, and I am still | with you.

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;**

as it was in the be- | ginning,*

is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

The Poison of Sin; The Difference Between Man and Sin

Original sin, like a spiritual poison and leprosy (as Luther says), has poisoned and corrupted the whole human nature. We cannot show and point out to the eye the nature apart by itself, or original sin apart by itself. Nevertheless, the corrupt nature, or essence of the corrupt man, body and soul, or **the man himself** whom God has created (and in whom dwells original sin, which also corrupts the nature, essence, or the entire man), and **original sin**, which dwells in man's nature or essence, and corrupts it, are not one thing. As also in external leprosy the body which is leprous, and the leprosy on or in the body are not, properly speaking, one thing. But a distinction must be maintained also between **our nature** as created and pre-

served by God, in which sin is indwelling, and **original sin**, which dwells in the nature. These two must and also can be considered, taught, and believed separately according to Holy Scripture.

How do the examples of poison and leprosy help us understand the distinction between our human nature and the sin that corrupts it?

The chief articles of our Christian faith urge and compel us to preserve this distinction. For instance, in the article of Creation, Scripture testifies that God has created human nature not only before the Fall, but that it is a creature and work of God also since the Fall.

Read Deuteronomy 32:6. Who made us? What else does this verse teach about the work of God?

Read Isaiah 45:11. God is whose "Maker"? How does this relate to our confession in the Creed "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"?

***Read Isaiah 54:5. Can you identify seven names or titles for God in this verse?*

***Read Isaiah 64:8. The image of the potter is found a number of times in the Scriptures (for example Jeremiah 18:6, Romans 9:20f). Who is the potter? Who is the pot?*

Read Acts 17:25. This verse is part of St. Paul's preaching to the pagans in Athens. According to this verse, even the unbelievers are given life by whom?

Read Revelation 4:11. This verse is a hymn of praise by the heavenly hosts to God the Father. What do they sing about God's creating us?

***Read Job 10:8-12. Job goes into great detail about God's individual act of creation. Can you list all the things Job mentions about God creating him?*

****Read Psalm 139:14-16.** According to this beautiful Psalm of David, who has made us? In verse 14, what three adjectives describe our making? What about the adjective in verse 15? Consider the verbs in these three verses (formed, covered, made, etc.). This is a stunning picture of the Lord's care in crafting each of us.

Read Ecclesiastes 12:7. According to Solomon, who gave us our spirit?

These passages clearly testify that God, even since the Fall, is the Creator of man, and creates his body and soul. Corrupt man cannot, without any distinction, be sin itself, otherwise God would be a creator of sin!

Our Small Catechism confesses in the explanation of the First Article:

I believe that God has made me and all creatures, that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them.

When we confess the God is the "Maker of heaven and earth" we are confessing that He is our Maker. How does this give us comfort?

Likewise, in the Large Catechism it is thus written:

This is what I believe and mean, that is, that I am a creature of God; that He has given and constantly preserves to me my body, soul, and life, members great and small, and all my senses, mind, and reason.

"I am a creature of God" is a very different confession than "I am the result of chance." Consider how our Christian confession that God has created us is different from the teaching of evolution.

The Corruption of Sin Sticks to Our Nature

Nevertheless, this same creature and work of God is lamentably corrupted by sin; for the mass from which God now forms and makes man was corrupted and perverted in Adam, and is thus transmitted by inheritance to us.

And here pious Christian hearts justly ought to consider the unspeakable goodness of God, that God does not immediately cast from Himself into hell-fire this corrupt, perverted, sinful mass, but forms and makes from it the present human nature, which is lamentably corrupted by sin, in order that He may cleanse it from all sin, sanctify and save it by His dear Son.

From this article, now, the distinction is found indisputably and clearly. For original sin does not come from God. God is not a creator or author of sin. Nor is original sin a creature or work of God, but it is a work of the devil.

Conclusions, both Theological and Practical

Now, if there were to be no difference whatever between the nature or essence of our body and soul, which is corrupted by original sin, and original sin, by which the nature is corrupted, it would follow either that

BIBLE STUDY

Original Sin part 2

God, because He is the Creator of this our nature, also created and made original sin, which, accordingly would also be His work and creature; or, because sin is a work of the devil, that Satan would be the creator of this our nature, of our body and soul, which would also have to be a work or creation of Satan if, without any distinction, our corrupt nature should have to be regarded as sin itself; both of which teachings are contrary to the article of our Christian faith.

Therefore, in order that God's creation and work in man may be distinguished from the work of the devil, we say that it is God's creation that man has body and soul; also, that it is God's work that man can think, speak, do, and work anything; for "in Him we live, and move, and have our being," (Acts 17:28). But that the nature is corrupt, that its thoughts, words, and works are wicked, is originally a work of Satan, who has thus corrupted God's work in Adam through sin, which from him is transmitted by inheritance to us.

Why is it so important to distinguish between our nature and our sin? How does this distinction give us comfort and peace?

Closing Hymn: Praise the Almighty (st. 1 & 3)

1. Praise the Almighty, my soul,
adore Him!
Yea, I will laud Him until death.
With songs and anthems I'll come
before Him
As long as He doth give me
breath.
From Him my life and all things
came;
Bless, O my soul, His holy name.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!



3. Blessed, yea, blessed is he forever
Whose help is in the Lord most high,
Whom from the saving faith naught can sever
And who in hope to Christ draws nigh.
To all who trust in Him, our Lord,
Counsel and aid He doth afford.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Johann D. Herrnschmidt, 1675-1723
Translated by Alfred Brauer, 1866-1949

**The non-italicized portions of this study are excerpted (with slight amendments) from the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration I: 33-42. (Triglotta: The Lutheran Confessions, which is in the public domain. See www.bookofconcord.com for more.)*

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