

Lecture I: Original Sin & Atonement

Original Sin(s)+ in the Orthodox Perspective:

- Adam and Eve were perfect and good (**Gen1:27**); they had a 'good' human nature that was created 'in the image of God'. After the fall, this image was distorted; the moral human nature was wounded, weakened and damaged by sin.
- Adam begot a son in his own 'distorted' image.

- The sinful human nature that we inherited is sentenced to death for “the wages of sin is death” (**Rom 6:23**).
- In addition, the whole creation was also affected by the fall, God told Adam, “Cursed is the ground for your sake” (**Gen 3:17**)

Different view on Original Sin:

- The Calvinists maintain that the sin of Adam was imputed (made to count) to the whole human race. They base their belief on the following passage:
- “Even Levi, who receive tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him” (**Heb 7:9-10**).
- in their minds, Adam’s sin was imputed to his descendants; all of them are **guilty of that actual sin** in the Garden and justly deserve punishment for it.

Refutation of this View

- First of all, St. Paul doesn't affirm that tithes were counted to Levi.
- Therefore, what we inherit or what is transmitted to us is Adam's fallen human nature and **not his actual sin**. Moreover, we have our own sins to contend with because all of us have sinned and deserve punishment.

Redemption & Atonement:

- Sin is an offense against God King David said, “Against You, **You only**, have I sinned and done evil in Your sight” (**Ps 51:4**).
- Consequently, any sin requires unlimited atonement.

atonement should be provided by a person who is:

- **Unlimited** - To be able to provide this unlimited atonement the Savior has to be unlimited.
- **Sinless** - The Savior has to be free from sin to be able to redeem others, or else he would need salvation himself.
- **Human** - Since human beings committed the sin, therefore, a human being should pay the price.
- **Mortal** - Since the wages of sin is death (**Rom 6:23**), therefore, the savior has to be mortal.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is:

- **Unlimited** -He said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty” (**Rev 1:8**)
- **Sinless** –n Archangel Gabriel said to the Virgin, “That **Holy One** who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (**Lk 1:35**). Our lord said, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (**Jn 8:46**)
- **Human** -Our Lord was called the Son of Man several times, also, the Bible documents that on several occasions He was thirsty, hungry, tired, sleeping, etc....
- **Mortal** Even though our Lord is immortal due to His divinity, he assumed a human nature that was liable to die.

The Ransom:

- Our Lord said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life **a ransom** for many” (**Mk 10:45**).
- The word ‘ransom’ suggests some kind of payment and someone to whom this ransom is paid.

“To whom was this ransom paid?”

- Origen and some early fathers suggested that this ransom was paid to the devil but the Church rejected this idea.

H.H. refuted this and said...

- “The ransom was paid to the Divine Justice. The Old Testament sacrifices were symbols of the sacrifice of the cross. These sacrifices were not offered to the devil but were offered to God. Hence, holy fire came down from heaven and consumed them (**1 Kg 18:38**), and it is written that God “smelled a soothing aroma” (**Gen 8:21**) after the sacrifice of our father Noah. Since sin is committed against God (**Ps 51:4**) then the price of this sin should be paid to God Himself, the devil has no right to ask or to accept a ransom. The devil is just an accuser (**Rev 12:10; Job 1**). On the cross our Lord offered Himself to the Father (**Lk 23:46**) and not to the devil.”

Nature of Salvation:

- God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (**Gen 1:26**).
- Many church fathers commented about this (their sayings are written in the paper)
- St. Cyril of Alexandria and St. Augustine consider ‘the image’ and ‘the likeness’ as synonyms that were used interchangeably in the Holy Book of Genesis.
- However, all the Fathers agree that we grow in the likeness of God and that this likeness is perfected in Eternal Life

Deification:

- Deification is an ancient theological term used to describe the process by which a Christian becomes more like God. A distinction must be drawn between the idea of deification as “becoming God” (*theosis*) and as “becoming like God” (*homoiosis theoi*).

What Deification is not:

- When the Church calls us to pursue godliness, to be more like God, this doesn't mean that human beings then become divine.
- For we are human, always have been human, and will always remain human. We cannot take on the divine nature of God. God said it clearly, "My glory (of the divinity) I will not give to another" (**Is 42:8**).

What Deification is:

- Deification means we are to become more like God through His grace.
- Thus, those who are joined to Christ through Faith, Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist begin a re-creation process, being renewed in God's image and likeness.
- We become, as St. Peter writes, "partakers of the divine nature" (**2 Pet 1:4**).

H.H. explains...

- A hypostatic (personal) union between the divine nature and a human nature only took place in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- The divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is undermined by two ways:
 - Belittling our Lord and claiming that He was created – Arianism.
 - Exalting creatures (humans) to His Divine Level - Pantheism.

- What St. Peter means is **partaking of the divine virtues** and not the essence of the Godhead.
- He therefore shows us the way by saying in the same verse, “... having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (**1 Pet 1:4**).
- Those who misinterpret St. Peter’s words fall into the deception of Satan who said to Eve, “you will be like God” (**Gen 3:5**), the devil convinced her that they would be divine!

In a Nutshell:

- The sin of Adam led to:
 - A corrupt human nature with a predisposition to sin.
 - We inherited this corrupt nature and have fallen in sin.
 - Death gained dominion over all of humanity as a result of the corrupt nature and sin.
 - All creation suffers from the sin of Adam and ours.

In a Nutshell

- □ The Nature of Salvation:
 - The Incarnation of the Logos restored the human nature to its original state and blessed it giving it the potential to fulfill the destiny of its creation; “The Likeness of God”.
 - The death of our Lord on the cross gave us the forgiveness of our sins by satisfying the Divine Justice, “without shedding of blood there is no remission” (**Heb 9:22**).

In a Nutshell

- The creation **is still** groaning and laboring with birth pangs until now **(Rom 8:22)** probably because people are still sinning.
- But it **will be** delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God **(Rom 8:21)**

Q & A

Q: Since the death of our Lord satisfied the Divine Justice, why then do we still die?

A. There is two kinds of deaths:

1. Physical death of the body
2. Spiritual death due to sin