

The Prophetic Role Of Pope John Paul II

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Forum:

The many messages I received after posting the last newsletter suggest that many of you were inspired by the report about Pastor Allen Stanfield, a Southern Baptist minister in Riverside, California, who recently accepted the Sabbath together with his whole congregation. Thank you to all of you for your notes of encouragement.

It is a most gratifying experience for me to see how the Lord uses the printed page and spoken word to bring conviction to the heart of church leaders about forgotten truths like the Sabbath. Last Sabbath I had a similar experience in Amesbury, Massachusetts, where I was invited to present my popular SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR. A charming lady, who serves as the official pastor of the American Baptist church in town, attended the meetings both on Friday evening and Sabbath morning.

On Friday evening she sat toward the front listening very attentively. Later that evening she was introduced to me as the Baptist pastor of the local Baptist Church. I gave her a complimentary copy of my latest book THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE. She was most grateful and reassured to me that she intends to study the Sabbath and introduce this timely truth to her colleagues who will be attending the next Baptist ministerial convention. I will be sure to keep you updated about any future positive development. In future installments I will share with you some very encouraging experiences of church leaders and scholars who have accepted the Sabbath and joined our SDA church during the past few years.

A PSEUDO-VATICAN DOCUMENT

Numerous people have contacted me during the past few days regarding the authenticity of an alleged "Vatican Document" that lays out a 10 points strategy to destabilize the SDA church. For the sake of those unfamiliar with this document, let me quote the first 5 points of the document:

1. "To infiltrate, among the Adventists, ideas, projects that could aid in bringing about a Catholic-Adventist closeness.
2. Make concessions that would tend to bring together Catholic thinking among the Adventists.
3. To look for, analyze, with the Seventh-day Adventists common objectives for evangelism.
4. To dismember mistaken paradigms that the Adventists have about the Roman Catholic Church.
5. To demonstrate to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, that it's origin as a church has no Biblical basis. . . . "

EVALUATION:

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that this document that is circulating widely especially among our Adventists, is a pure fabrication of someone afflicted by a sickness known as "conspiracy mentality."

The fabricator of this spurious document has failed to realize that Vatican scholars are not so naïve to publicly announce their strategy to undermine Protestant churches such as the Adventist one. Furthermore the Vatican at this time is facing enormous problems in trying to salvage their own Catholic Church from indifference and apostasy.

Besides the numerous theological problems the Vatican is facing with dissidents such as feminists, liberals, charismatic, and liberation theologians, there is the alarming decline in church attendance. Pope Paul John II addresses this specific problem in his Pastoral Letter DIES DOMINI, which I have examined at great length in chapter 1 of THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE. The stark reality is that in Catholic countries like Italy, it is estimated that only about 5% of Catholics go to Mass on Sunday. The Pope is alarmed by this trend and seeks to find a resolution by making Sunday the Biblical Sabbath in order to justify to enforcement of Sunday observance within the church by means of canonical law and outside the church by means of civil legislation.

At this critical moment when the Catholic church is fighting for survival, it is hardly conceivable that her leaders would invest their time and interest in plotting a strategy to destabilize the Adventist church. No sane person sets on fire his neighbor's house while trying to extinguish the fire burning down his own house.

One of the clearest indications of the falsity of the document is the assumption that the Catholic church is willing to make concession in order "to bring together Catholic thinking among the Adventists." It is evident that the author of this document is unaware of the strategy adopted by the Second Vatican Council of tolerance toward Non-Catholics. The Vatican, as the essay below indicates, is no longer seeking to bring back the Protestants into the Catholic fold, but rather to gain their respect, especially for the spiritual leadership of the Pope as the symbol of the religious unity of mankind. In other words, the Catholic church now teaches that it no longer necessary to become a Catholic to be saved. Protestant and pagans for that matter, can be saved by following the "lesser light" as long as they accept the spiritual leadership of the pope. This new strategy of the Catholic Church is sufficient to disprove the alleged anti-SDA conspiracy of the "Vatican Document."

In view of the interest generated by the pseudo-Vatican document, I decided to post this time a lecture that I have delivered few years in various parts of the world on "The Prophetic Role of Pope John Paul II." The lecture has been professionally recorded and is available in two audio cassettes for only \$10.00, postpaid. Feel free to request your set of cassettes. We guarantee to mail them to you on the same day we receive your order.

THE PROPHETIC ROLE OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

Pope Paul John II will be remembered as the most traveled Pope in history. A look at the Pope's itineraries, meetings and messages suggest that he has two major overriding concerns. The first is the restoration of Catholic unity and identity, especially among American Catholics, where the church is threaten by prevailing dissent over doctrines and discipline. To meet this challenge Pope John Paul II have visited the United States four times in recent years. The second is his desire to foster ecumenical understanding and cooperation among people of all religions under the moral and spiritual leadership of the papacy. His vision is to become the undisputed spiritual leader of mankind. This essay seeks to understand Pope John Paul II's strategy for achieving these objectives.

RESTORATION OF CATHOLIC UNITY AND IDENTITY

Extent of Catholic Dissent. In his public speeches to the crowds and especially in his private messages to the leaders of his church, Pope John Paul makes it clear that he is deeply concerned about the independent ways of American Catholics who believe they have a right to pick and choose their beliefs and practices in a cafeteria-style, accepting those teachings they agree with and ignoring those they disagree with.

The American political experience with its emphasis on the democratic process, has influenced many American Catholics to question the teachings of their church and to develop their own independent beliefs and practices.

An indication of how widespread is Catholic dissent in America is provided by the poll taken for TIME (September 7, 1987). The poll indicates that a staggering 93% of professing Catholics believe that "it is possible to disagree with the Pope and still be a good Catholic." In fact, "only 37% accept the infallibility of papal teaching on moral issues." The major area of disagreement with official Catholic teaching is what Theologian Daniel Maguire calls "the pelvic issues:" abortion, artificial birth control, homosexuality, sex outside marriage, and divorce and remarriage. Other two closely related issues are priestly celibacy and the ordination of women as priests.

TIME's poll indicates that only 14% of Catholics agree with their church's teaching that abortion should be illegal in all cases; only 24% accept their church's teaching that artificial birth control is wrong; only 29% concur with their church that premarital sex is always wrong; only 24% agree with their church that divorce and remarriage in the church is wrong. Less than half of the Catholics (47%) believe that celibacy for priests should be obligatory and that women should not be ordained as priests.

Discipline, Unity and Identity. This prevailing dissent among American Catholics constitutes a challenge that the resolute John Paul is determined to meet. A major reason why he has come to America several times, is because he recognizes the exceptional vitality, influence and potential of American Catholicism. While in most countries of Western Europe less than 10% of Catholics attend Mass weekly, in the United States, according to the TIME poll, attendance is 54%. American Catholics are not passive spectators but active participants and generous supporters of their church. They may disagree with their church but they are deeply committed to her, though increasingly on their own terms.

The independent spirit of American Catholics is of grave concern to John Paul because he knows all too-well that America is trend-setter. It influences the world not only with blue jeans and running shoes, but also with its moral and religious values. In his opening remarks upon his arrival at the Miami International airport on September 12, 1987, the Pope said that America is called by God to fulfilled a noble destiny to the world. This means that the direction the American Catholic Church takes today, could well become the trend of the world-wide Catholic Church tomorrow.

Win Confidence. To restore discipline, unity and identity to the American Catholic Church the John Paul has used a twofold strategy during his visits to the United States. First, he has endeavored to win the confidence of Catholics to himself by utilizing effectively all the modern means of communication. Second, he has sold with holy conviction to American Catholics his unpopular stand against divorce and remarriage, artificial birth control, extramarital sex, homosexuality, abortion, optional celibacy and ordination of women as priests.

To win the confidence of Catholics in particular and of the American public in general, during his visits John Paul has not engaged publicly in tongue lashing and finger wagging, but he has wooed friendly crowds to himself by delivering warm homilies, bestowing blessings, listening to complaints, and showing his genuine concern and compassion for the poor and suffering ones. By winning first the confidence and respect of millions of Catholics who have seen his sincerity, piety and compassion in action, the pope has been better able to gain support for his unpopular stand on official church discipline and doctrines.

Reaffirm Official Teachings. There is no question that John Paul sees himself as a man called by God to save the Catholic Church from disintegration by reaffirming the commitment of its members and leaders to the historical teachings of Rome. An important lesson that John Paul learned in the hot battle he fought against nazism and communism in

his own country of Poland, is that the church can survive only if it is rigorously disciplined and strongly united in essential doctrines and piety.

Consequently a major goal of John Paul's pontificate has been to forge a united church, updated in its external forms, but strongly traditional in its adherence to church discipline and teaching. One of the first steps he took to achieve this goal, was to revive the Sacred Congregation for Doctrine of Faith—formerly known as the Inquisition. This watchdog organization, presided by the German-born Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, has pressed charges against such theologians as Edward Schillebeeckx of Holland, Jack Pohier of France, Bernard Hasler of Switzerland. It has stripped Hans Kung of his post as teacher of Catholic theology at the University of Tübingen, and has suspended Father Charles Curran from his teaching post at the Catholic University of America, in Washington, D.C.

Another step taken by Pope John Paul has been to gradually build up a Vatican curia with a core of tough disciplinarians who will support his conservative program. The same is true of the new U.S. bishops he has hand-picked every year on the basis of their conservatism. By changing the makeup of the hierarchies, the Pope now enjoys greater support in promoting the reaffirmation of traditional Catholic teachings.

Catholic revisionists and feminists accuse John Paul of being out of touch with the reality of the Catholic Church in America. The truth of the matter is that it is these Catholic dissenters who are out of touch with the reality of the Catholic Church in Rome. These fail to realize that John Paul is not running a democracy, but a pyramidal hierarchy whose head is the pope and whose center is Rome.

Pope John Paul made this point very clear when in 1987 he told reporters in Miami that democracy is not the preferred form of government for the Catholic Church. Rather he pointedly stated: "It is an institution governed by Jesus Christ, a theocratic one." Since Catholics believe that Christ governs His church through His vicar, the Pope, it is the Holy See in Rome that decides what is Catholic and what is not.

Outcome of Papal Visits. Have the papal visits succeed in fostering unity and reaffirmation of traditional beliefs among Catholics? Contrary to what some news analyst may say, I believe that to a large extent they have been, for two major reasons. First, because people have been electrified by Pope John Paul's charismatic personality. They have come to admire even more his piety, sincerity and warm pastoral concern. Second, because to genuine Catholics the Pope speaks with the unique authority of one who claims to be the vicar of Christ on earth. He embodies the teaching authority of the church which, Catholics believe, was given to the Pope by Christ through the power of the keys bestowed upon Peter and his successors.

This high Catholic view of the Pope as the impersonation of Christ on earth, makes the words he has spoken during his visits the final word that any true Catholic must and eventually will accept. While most Catholics may publicly express their disagreement with their Pope's teachings, privately and inwardly they welcome his word of authority. It gives to them a sense of assurance, certainty and stability, amidst the confusing and conflicting teachings and values of our time.

ECUMENICAL OUTREACH

Global Spiritual Leader. The vision of John Paul extends beyond the parochial concerns of the American Catholic Church, to include people of all Christian and non-Christian religions. Thus, a second major goal of his visit has been to enhance his role as the moral and spiritual leader of mankind. John Paul sees himself as a man called to serve as the spiritual leader not only of his own church but also of mankind.

This global vision is evident in the major themes of his speeches in all his trips. He pleads for human dignity, brotherhood, social justice, peace, an end to the arm race, and especially for compassion toward the poor and downtrodden.

The role of John Paul as the spiritual leader of mankind is widely accepted. For example, in 1987 President Reagan traveled to Miami to personally welcome him as the spiritual leader not only of Catholics but of all Americans. It is noteworthy that never before had an American president traveled to another city to welcome a head of state. In the brief welcoming ceremony on the tarmac of Miami International Airport, Reagan encouraged the Pope to preach freely to the American people. "As you exhort us," the President said, "we will listen. For with all our hearts we yearn to make this good land better still."

To foster his role as the moral and spiritual leader of mankind, the pope welcomes regularly to the Holy See delegations and leaders from Christian and non-Christian religions. The pope is accepted by world religious leaders as the champion of the spiritual aspirations of mankind.

Why are religious and political leaders so eager to meet the Pope? Why do millions of non-Catholic Americans join their Catholic neighbors in cheering the Pope? This would hardly have happened forty years when conservative Protestants nourished deep hostility toward the papacy. A papal procession forty years ago might have brought out rock-throwers and perhaps bombers.

Similarly, diplomatic recognition of the Vatican by the United States would have been impossible thirty years ago. In 1951 President Truman had to abandon the plan to extend diplomatic recognition to the Vatican, because of the strong protests from Protestants. In 1984, however, President Reagan was able to recognize the Vatican and the Pope as a Head of State by appointing Mr. Wilson as official ambassador to the Holy See, without any significant Protestant reaction.

Prophetic Fulfillment. Social analysts describe with surprise this radical Protestant change of attitude that has taken place, from foes to friends of the Pope and of the Catholic Church. Seventh-day Adventists are not surprised by this Protestant change of attitude toward the Catholics, because for 100 years they have announced to the world, on the basis of their interpretation of Biblical prophecy, that American Protestantism would be foremost in bridging the gulf of separation from Roman Catholicism and in cooperating with Rome. A century ago Ellen White, a founder of Adventism, wrote with prophetic foresight: "The Protestants of the United States . . . will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power" (GC 588).

The warm reception and ecstatic admiration of the Pope by millions of American Protestants, clearly points to an unprecedented acceptance of the religious leadership role of the papacy. The gulf of separation between Catholicism and Protestantism is truly being bridged. What has brought about this radical of attitude, from hostility to friendliness between Catholics and Protestants? The reasons are many, but three of them stand out, in my view.

Tolerance toward Non-Catholics. The first and foremost reason in my view is the new Catholic policy of benign tolerance toward non-Catholics. Paradoxically, while the Pope is intransigent toward Catholics by expecting them to uphold traditional church discipline and teachings, he is now tolerant and open toward outsiders. Protestants, for example, have been rehabilitated from heretics, to "separate brethren," and now to brothers and sisters in Christ. Similarly, members of world religions are now treated with openness and respect.

The reason for this new tolerance appears to be a new Catholic awareness-expressed even in the Constitution of the Church of Vatican II-that salvation is no longer found only inside the Catholic Church but also outside the Catholic fold, by all who live according to their conscience. The traditional view expressed in Pope Boniface VIII's Bull, "Unam Sanctam" that "there is one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and that outside this Church there is neither salvation nor remission of sins," has been replaced by the current view that there is salvation inside and outside the Catholic Church. This new

Catholic attitude of tolerance and respect toward outsiders, is obviously paying back dividends in terms of good will and admiration toward Catholics and their Pope.

The Pope is successfully gaining global acceptance by adopting, what Jesuit Professor Vernon Ruland calls "The Catholic Double Standard" [The Christian Century (Dec 16, 1981), p. 1311]. This consists of strict intransigence toward Catholics and "benign tolerance toward outsiders." From Catholics the Pope expects uncompromising adherence to the official church teachings. From outsiders the Pope expects them "to strive sincerely to live according to their conscience." By adopting this double standard the Pope is succeeding admirably today in being widely accepted as the Papa urbis et orbis, the spiritual Father of Rome and the world.

Pope's Stand for Morality. A second reason that accounts for the Pope's popularity, especially among evangelicals, is his strong stand for certain fundamental doctrines of Biblical faith. Though evangelicals cannot agree with the pope on such points as the role of the Virgin Mary, the Mass, the intercession of the saints, masses for the dead, priestly celibacy and so on, they admire his strong commitment to the authority of Scripture, to the sacredness of marriage, to a Biblical sexual ethics, to protect the life of unborn babies, and to discipline the most blatant opponents of evangelical faith.

Instead of attacking Catholicism, evangelical are choosing to attack liberal Protestantism for undermining the authority of Scripture, for promoting unbiblical moral values, for conforming to the contemporary secular values. To them the Pontiff has become, as Prof. Martin E. Marty puts it, "a walking fortress of faith" (TV Guide, Sept 5, 1987, p. 34) in the midst of a godless society.

Unintentionally, perhaps, liberal Protestantism has contributed to enhance the authority of the Pope by eroding confidence in the authority of the Bible. One might say that to the extent that Protestantism weakens the authority of the Bible for defining Christian beliefs and practices, to that same extent it strengthens the authority of the Pope. The reason is simple. Most Christians resent tyranny but welcome the voice of authority, certainty and assurance. They want to hear from their church leaders, "This is the way, walk you in it!" When they fail to hear this voice of authority from the Scripture as proclaimed by their pastors, they become attracted to the Pope who claims to offer the infallible interpretation of Scripture.

Pope's Advocacy of Social Justice. A third reason that endears the Pope to mainstream Protestants and to people in general, is his advocacy of social justice, respect for the rights of all people, even of the unborn, a more equitable distribution of resources, peace based on justice, an end to the arm race, and especially, love toward the poor and downtrodden. By championing these legitimate human aspirations with zeal, dignity and devotion, the Pope has become for many the symbol of the noblest aspirations mankind must struggle to achieve.

Summing up, we could say that John Paul has learned to be a man of many things to many people. To devout Catholics he is the symbol of their piety, certainty and assurance of salvation amidst the conflicting teachings and values of our time. To evangelicals, he is a man of faith and courage, willing to withstand the secular, humanistic pressures of our times. To mainstream Protestant and people in general, he is the champion of peace based on social justice.

A Final Warning. The many positive facets that make John Paul attractive and popular must not blind evangelicals to the fact that he strongly stands for traditional Catholic teachings and practices. With more enthusiasm and greater communication skills than his predecessors, he stands for the teachings that have divided Protestantism from Roman Catholicism. The great Protestant truths of Scripture alone, Christ alone, grace alone, and faith alone, are still unacceptable to Roman Catholicism.

In his messages John Paul has repeatedly reiterated his strong commitment to the interpretation of the Scripture by the magisterium of the church, the intercessory role of

Mary and of the Saints, transubstantiation, papal infallibility, the sacramental role of the priests, forgiveness only through the sacrament of penance, salvation by faith plus meritorious works, and masses for the dead. These are part of the list of Catholic teachings which John Paul views as not negotiable.

Ecumenical Christian unity for John Paul is possibly only in Catholic terms. At the 1979 meeting in Chicago with the nation's Catholic bishops, he quoted the testament of Pope Paul VI, who said: "Let the work of drawing near to our separated brethren go on, with much understanding, with much patience, with great love: but without deviating from the true Catholic doctrine."

Let us never forget that he stands for both social progress and Catholic conservatism. While in the area of social justice Rome has changed and John Paul has been a strong advocate of such changes, in the area of church doctrine and discipline, Rome is still the unchangeable Rome and John Paul is simply its most effective communicator.

John Paul travels around the world to negotiate deals with Catholic dissenters or with Protestant admirers, but to remind his own parishioners and the whole world, that historical Catholic beliefs are not negotiable. What should all of this mean to Catholic and non-catholics? To Catholics, it means that they should make no illusion that their Pope and their church is about to change their historical teachings, especially on sexual ethics.

To Protestants, it means that, on the one hand, we must admire John Paul's courageous and unpopular stand for the Biblical view of the sacredness of marriage and human life as well as his uncompromising denunciation of homosexuality and of sex outside marriage as sinful acts. On the other hand, we must never forget that the same Pope is equally uncompromising on the fundamental Catholic teachings that have divided Protestantism from Catholicism because they rest on venerable ecclesiastical traditions.

To Adventists, it means that that we must have the same kind of uncompromising courage displayed by John Paul. We need to articulate and accept more fully the Biblical view of the sanctity of marriage and human life, if we want to retain our identity and mission to the world.

John Paul's commitment to uphold traditional Catholic teachings constitute a challenge for all Christians, first to show respect for all, irrespective of creedal differences, and second, to seek for saving truth not in the broken cisterns of human traditions or of contemporary social values, but in the Word of God, the only source of truth that can make us free and secure for eternity.

Sabbath School Helps For Lesson 6: "The Fall" May 1-7

A PERSONAL NOTE: I apologize for posting the following outline in upper case. This is the way the outline appears in my overhead transparencies which I use for teaching my Bible classes. The many notes of appreciation I have received from the members of this forum who teach the Sabbath, has convinced me to post this outline, though it may not be as easy to read. A comforting thought: You do not have to struggle like the students to understand my Italian accent.

The Human Fall And Its Consequences

The Nature Of The First Sin

1. Formal Aspect

From a purely formal aspect, mankind's first sin is presented in the bible as consisting of the eating of the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil. The reason why the tree was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil is not clear. Presumably, the meaning of the name of the tree derives not from a magic power of its fruit to impart

special knowledge, but from its testing function. By abstaining from it, mankind would learn obedience and goodness; by partaking of it, mankind would learn disobedience and evil.

2. Material Aspect

The materially aspect of the first sin of mankind shares the common characteristic of sin, namely, opposition to and independence from God. John speaks of three significant components present in sin: "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). These elements were present in the first sin. The lust of the flesh, that is, an inordinate desire to satisfy appetite, is reflected in the woman's confession that "the tree was good for food." The lust of the eye is noticeable in the admission that the tree "was a delight to the eyes." The pride of life is present in the statement that "the tree was to be desired to make one wise" (Gen 3:6). Sinful actions offer a temporary deceptive satisfaction to our sensual perceptions: it tastes good, it looks good, it makes me feel good, so it must be right.

Satan's Temptation

1. The Method Of The Tempter: Seeds Of Distrust

The method used by the tempter was to sow seeds of distrust and unbelief in Eve's mind by questioning the validity of God's instruction and treating it as an infringement upon their liberty. "did God say, 'you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'" (v.3).

He then went on assaulting directly by reassuring her "you will not die" (v. 4); on the contrary, "you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (v. 5). Eve yielded to this temptation through deception, Adam joined in the transgression through affection for Eve (Gen 3:13-17; 1 Tim 2:14). The tempter approached Eve presumably because he thought she was more susceptible to doubt since she had not been instructed directly by God. Moreover, she could effectively reach the heart of Adam.

2. Nature Of The Temptation

a. Doubt: The biblical account suggests that doubt, unbelief, and pride were the main factors which led to the first fatal disobedience. Eve doubted God's goodness, she disbelieved his warning, she coveted the knowledge not intended for her. The first sin manifested itself in the mind as unbelief, distrust of God, in the will as the desire to be like God, in the heart as an unholy satisfaction to eat God's forbidden fruit.

b. Self-Centeredness: Essentially the first sin was the desire to make self rather than God the ultimate concern. The external act of partaking of the forbidden fruit only served to give formal expression to the internal desire to prefer self to God.

3. The Serpent: Figurative Or Literal?

a. Some maintain that the serpent should not be regarded as a literal animal, since serpents do not speak. In their view, the serpent is either a figurative designation for Satan, or a symbol of covetousness. This figurative interpretation of the serpent is contradicted (a) by the plain description of the serpent in Genesis 3:1; (b) by the punishment pronounced upon the animal itself in Genesis 3:14-15; (c) by the understanding of biblical authors (2 Cor 11:3; Rev 12:9). The serpent was therefore a real animal used by Satan as the instrument of temptation.

b. The speaking of the serpent is to be understood as a supernatural phenomenon caused by the power of Satan, similar somewhat to the speaking of Balaam's ass. To attract Eve's attention, the serpent originally must have enjoyed human admiration. On account of its role in the first sin, the serpent has become a symbol of

Satan (Rev 12:9). Its cunning nature and its poisonous sting have made it a fitting symbol of the nature and work of the devil..

The Immediate Consequences Of The First Sin

1. Corruption Of Human Nature

Adam and Eve were created not only innocent but also holy and pure. They had no sinful desire or inclination. The immediate result of their sin was a sense of shame and pollution which led them to hide from God and to cover their nakedness (Gen 3:7, 10). The contagion of their sin spread to their mental, physical, and moral faculties. Human nature became corrupt and as a result human beings began committing sin (Gen 4:8; 6:5). The first sin resulted in sin and death entering this world (Rom 5:12).

2. Separation From God

The fall interrupted the open communion and fellowship with God. Our first parents immediately felt that they had disobeyed and displeased God, consequently they tried to flee from him rather than to seek his fellowship (Gen 3:8; Is 59:2).

3. Physical Death

a. Separation from God resulted not only in spiritual decline but also in physical death. God warned our first parents that "in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen 2:17). Another possible reading of the Hebrew is "dying you shall die." From the moment our first parents ate of the forbidden fruit, the aging, dying process began. From a state in which it was possible not to die, they descended to a state in which it was impossible not to die (Gen 3:19).

b. This decaying process affected not only the body but also the mind, whose powers were weakened. The reality of death entered this world and has been passed on to all mankind through the sin of our first parents (Rom 5:12). Thus, contrary to the theory of evolution, human beings have not developed greater bodily and mental strength but have experienced a degeneration from a perfectly sound mental, physical, and spiritual nature to the present imperfect condition.

4. Environmental Deterioration

The fall affected even the inanimate natural world. God said: "cursed is the ground because of you; . . . thorns and thistles it shall bring forth" (Gen 3:17-18). The irresponsible human exploitation and pollution of the natural world have intensified the effects of the divine curse. The scripture tells us, however, that the time is coming when "the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21; cf Is 35).

The Connection Between Adam's Sin And That Of The Human Race

There have been differing historical views regarding the connection between Adam's sin and that of the human race. Some deny the existence of any casual connection between the sin of Adam and the sinfulness of the human race, while others explain the connection in different ways.

1. The Pelagian Theory

"All men" share in the sin of Adam not because of any transference upon them of Adam's guilt, but because they themselves commit sin.

2. The Realists Theory

The guilt and corruption of Adam's sin is transmitted to all his descendents through procreation, because all of them were seminally substantially present in Adam when he sinned.

3. The Mediate Imputation Theory

Adam's sin is imputed upon all human beings not because they sinned in Adam but because they have inherited a depraved nature as a result of his sin.

4. The Federalists Theory

Adam's sin is imputed to all persons, because when Adam sinned, he acted as the representative of the whole human race.

Weakness Of The Above Theories

A common weakness of all these historical theories is that they have attempted to derive from the passage of Romans 5:12 a rational explanation for the manner in which Adam's sin has been "transferred" to the human race. Paul, however, does not explain the manner in which the sin of "one man" is passed on to "all men." He simply states the fact that Adam's descendents are united in solidarity with him sin and death. Nowhere does Paul suggest that this solidarity is caused by "inherited" sin through procreation or natural descent.

The function of Paul's argument on the solidarity between Adam's sin and the human race is not to explain how original sin is transmitted, but to affirm that the "grace of God," by virtue of the corresponding solidarity between Christ & humanity, has "abounded for many . . . Much more than one man's trespass" (Rom 5:15).

Sex and heredity have generally been seen as the two important channels through which Adam's sin has been transmitted to the human race. This explanation has been popular for at least two reasons:

a. It reduces original sin to something of a biological, tangible element. This in turn provides an easy excuse for the manifestation of sin, "he inherited such a disposition, so he cannot help it."

b. It has provided a justification for the baptism of infants, as a way to remove the stain or original sin inherited from Adam.

The Biblical View: Mankind's Solidarity With Adam

1. An Indissoluble Connection

The scripture recognizes an indissoluble connection between Adam's sin and that of the human race. "sin came into the world through one man and death through sin . . . Because all have sinned" (Rom 5:12). "in Adam all die" (1 Cor 15:21). Adam's sin is clearly viewed as the cause for the universality of sin.

2. Mankind's Solidarity With Adam

This universality of sin is explained by Paul not through the concepts of sex and heredity but rather through the notion of mankind's solidarity with Adam's sin. Since we are a corporate reality in Adam, we share in the consequences of his disobedience, but since as believers we are also a corporate reality in Christ ("body of Christ"--1 Cor 12:27) we share in the benefits of his righteousness: "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience, many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19). The scripture does not explain the exact process through which this is accomplished: it simply declares that it is so. To speculate on the mechanics of how

Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness are passed on to human beings means to try to define an existential mystery which the scripture does not define.

The Biblical View Of Sin

To explain the biblical view of sin, it is necessary to consider several distinct elements which contribute to the understanding of the complex nature of sin.

1. Sin Is A Moral Element

The moral character of sin is indicated by most of the names used in the scripture to designate sin. In the old testament sin is designated by as *chattah* which means missing the mark; as *pesha* which refers to a positive transgression of the law; as *asham* which means guilt; as *mahal* which means unfaithfulness, treason, the same idea is expressed by the corresponding NT words for sin such as *hamartia*, *adikia*, *anomia*. These and other terms indicate that sin is not something passive, such as a physical defect beyond our control, but is an active opposition to God, a willful choice of evil (Gen 3:1-6; Rom 1:18-22; 1 John 3:4).

2. Sin Is Absolute In Its Character

Sin is presented in the scripture not as a relative but as an absolute reality. A person does not become gradually a sinner by diminishing his goodness but by a radical turning to sin. There is no neutral ground. Either a person is on the right side or on the wrong side (Matt 10:32-33; 12:30; Luke 11:23; James 2:10).

3. Sin Is Relational

Sin exists in relation to God and his will, thus it is rightly defined as "lack of conformity to the law of God." Since the essence of the law is love to God and love to fellow beings, sin manifests itself in willful opposition, hostility toward God and fellow beings whether it be in thought, word, or deed (James 2:9, Rom 2:12-14; 1 John 3:4).

4. Sin Includes Both Guilt And Pollution

a. Guilt is the acknowledgment of the violation of a law or moral requirement which makes the person liable to punishment.

b. Pollution is the corruption of the moral nature, known also as depravity, which we experience both as the result of Adam's sin and of our personal sinning. As a result of Adam's sin, we are born with a corrupt nature, that is, with inclination or bias toward evil (PS 51:5; job 14:4; Eph 2:3). As a result of personal willful sinning, our physical, moral, and spiritual nature becomes increasingly depraved, producing what Paul calls the "works of the flesh": "immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like" (Gal 5:19-21). The scope of divine forgiveness includes not only the release from the deserving condemnation but also the cleansing from the pollution of sin (1 John 1:9).

5. Sin Originates In The Mind

Sin originates in the thinking process of our personality. In biblical psychology this is identified with the "heart" which is viewed as the intellectual, volitional center of the whole being. Jesus, for example, said: "out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man" (Matt 15:19-20; cf Luke 6:45; Jer 17:9). Immoral acts are conceived in the mind and executed through the will. Thus thinking on what is just, lovely, worthy or praise and virtuous (Phil 4:8) prevents the mind from planning evil.

6. Sin Includes Both Overt Acts And Hidden Intent

Sin consists not only in external immoral acts but also in internal evil intents or dispositions. Before sin expresses itself in evil deeds, it manifests itself in evil thoughts. Jesus clarified in his sermon on the mount that God regards as sin not only the consummated evil act but also the cherished evil thought. The sixth commandment is transgressed not only by murdering a person but also by nourishing hostility or hate toward an individual (Matt 5:21, 22, 27, 28, 31, 32).

7. Sin Is Essentially Selfishness

To define the essential nature of sin is not easy, because sin manifests itself in such forms as disobedience, pride, unbelief, hate, violence, lust, etc. A common source of all these manifestations is selfishness. It is the inordinately, exaggerated love of self which leads a person to put selfish interests ahead of God's concerns.

Sin Can Become Unpardonable

1. Open And Persistent Rejection Of Christ

The gospels speak of the "sin against the Holy Spirit" as being unforgivable. This sin is described as "speaking against the Holy Spirit" (Matt 12:32). The context of the passage refers specifically to some Pharisees who attributed to the devil himself the power of the Holy Spirit manifested in Christ's miracles (v. 28), while knowing fully well that such a charge was false. It is important to note that such a charge was made in spite of increasingly clear evidence given by Christ regarding his divinity (DA 213, 538).

The unpardonable sin of "apostasy" mentioned in Hebrews (6:4-6; 10:26) is not a single act of transgression, but as a continuous deliberate renouncement of Christ, refusal of salvation and rejection of the Holy Spirit (Heb 10:26,29). This leads to the searing of the conscience to the impressions of the Holy Spirit. The reason sin cannot be forgiven is not because of any unwillingness on God's part, but because the person who has committed it has no longer any desire to be forgiven. Thus any person haunted by the fear of having committed the unpardonable sin is worrying unnecessarily, because the very concern is conclusive evidence against it. The person who has committed the unpardonable sin no longer worries about it, because his conscience has been seared to the influence of the Holy Spirit and he has no desire to be forgiven.

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