

QUESTION 83

The Subject of Original Sin

Next we have to consider the subject of original sin.

On this topic there are four questions: (1) Is the subject of original sin the flesh or the soul in the first place? (2) If the soul, then is the soul the subject of original sin through its essence or through its powers? (3) Is the will the subject of original sin prior to the other powers? (4) Are certain powers of the soul especially infected, viz., the generative power, the concupiscible power, and the sense of touch?

Article 1

Does original sin exist more in the flesh than in the soul?

It seems that original sin exists more in the flesh than in the soul:

Objection 1: The flesh's resistance to the mind stems from the corruption of original sin. But the root of this resistance lies in the flesh; for in Romans 7:23 the Apostle says, "I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind." Therefore, original sin lies principally in the flesh (*in carne principaliter consistit*).

Objection 2: Each thing exists more in its cause than in its effect; for instance, heat exists more in the fire that gives warmth than in the water that has been heated. But it is through the carnal semen that the soul is infected with the infection of original sin. Therefore, original sin exists more in the flesh than in the soul.

Objection 3: We contract original sin from our first parent insofar as we existed in him as a seminal nature (*prout in eo fuimus secundum rationem seminalem*). But it was only the flesh that existed in him in this way and not the soul. Therefore, original sin exists not in the soul, but in the flesh.

Objection 4: The created rational soul is infused into the body by God. Therefore, if the soul were infected by original sin, it would follow that it was defiled at its creation or infusion. And so God, who is the agent of its creation and infusion, would be a cause of sin.

Objection 5: No wise man would pour a precious liquid into a vessel by which he knew that the liquid itself would be infected. But the rational soul is more precious than any liquid. Therefore, if the soul could be infected with original sin by its union with the body, then He who is Wisdom itself would never infuse the soul into such a body. However, He does indeed infuse it. Therefore, the soul is not defiled by the flesh. Therefore, original sin exists not in the soul, but in the flesh.

But contrary to this: The same thing is the subject both of virtue and of vice or sin, which is contrary to virtue. But the flesh cannot be the subject of virtue; for in Romans 7:18 the Apostle says, "I know that good does not dwell in me, i.e., in my flesh." Therefore, only the soul, and not the flesh, can be the subject of original sin.

I respond: There are two ways in which one thing can exist in another: (a) *as in a cause*, whether a principal or an instrumental cause, and (b) *as in a subject*.

Thus, the original sin of every man existed in Adam himself as in its first *principal cause*—this according to the Apostle in Romans 5:12 ("In him all have sinned"). On the other hand, original sin exists in bodily semen as in an *instrumental cause*, because it is through the semen's active power that original sin is passed down to the offspring along with human nature.

However, original sin can exist only in the soul as in a *subject* and cannot in any way exist in the flesh as in a *subject*. The reason for this is that, as was explained above (q. 81, a. 1), original sin is passed down from the will of the first parent to his descendants through a certain generative motion, in the same way that an actual sin flows from the motion of a man's will to his other parts. One can see in this latter sort of derivation that whatever proceeds from the motion of willing a sin to any part of the man that can in any way participate in the sin—either in the manner of a subject or in the manner of an

instrument—has the character of guilt. For instance, because of an act of willing gluttony, a desire for food comes to the concupiscible power, and the eating of the food comes to the hands and the mouth, which are instruments of the sin insofar as they are moved by the will toward the sin. By contrast, the further fact that it comes down to the nutritive power and the interior members of the body, which are not apt to be moved by the will, does not have the character of guilt.

So, then, since the soul is able to be the subject of guilt, whereas the flesh is not of itself (*de se*) the subject of guilt, it follows that whatever corruption from the first sin comes to the soul has the character of guilt, whereas whatever comes to the flesh has the character of punishment rather than the character of guilt. So, then, it is the soul, and not the flesh, that is the subject of original sin.

Reply to objection 1: As Augustine claims in *Retractationes*, in the passage in question the Apostle is talking about the man who has already been redeemed and who is freed from guilt but subject to punishment. And it is by reason of this punishment that sin is said to dwell in the flesh. Hence, what follows from this is only that the flesh is the subject of punishment and not that it is the subject of guilt.

Reply to objection 2: Original sin is caused by the semen as an instrumental cause. But it does not have to be the case that something exists more principally in its *instrumental* cause than in its effect; rather, it exists more principally only in its *principal* cause. And in this sense original sin existed more principally in Adam (*potiori modo fuit in Adam*), in whom it existed with the character of an actual sin.

Reply to objection 3: The soul of *this* man existed as a seminal nature in the sinner Adam not as in its *effective* principle, but as in its *disposing* principle. For the bodily semen that is handed down from Adam does not by its power effect the rational soul, but instead effects a disposition for it (*disponit ad eam*).

Reply to objection 4: The infection of original sin is caused solely by the sin of the first parent via carnal generation and is in no way caused by God. And so, since creation implies a relation of the soul to God alone, it cannot be said that the soul is defiled at its creation (*ex sua creatione inquinetur*).

By contrast, infusion implies a relation (a) to God as the one who infuses it and (b) to the flesh into which the soul is infused. Accordingly, it cannot be said that the soul is defiled because of its relation to God as the one who infuses it; rather, it is defiled only because of its relation to the body into which it is infused.

Reply to objection 5: The common good is preferred to a singular good. Hence, God in His wisdom does not set aside the universal order of things, viz., that such-and-such a soul should be infused into such-and-such a body, in order to avoid the singular infection of *this* soul—especially given that the nature of the soul is such that it begins to exist only in a body, as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 118, a. 3). Moreover, it is better for the soul to exist in this way in accord with its nature rather than not to exist in any way at all—especially because it is able to escape damnation through grace.

Article 2

Does original sin exist in the soul's essence prior to existing in its powers?

It seems that original sin does not exist in the soul's essence prior to existing in its powers:

Objection 1: The soul is apt to be the subject of sin to the extent that it can be moved by the will. But the soul is moved by the will only with respect to the soul's powers and not with respect to its essence. Therefore, original sin exists in the soul only with respect to its powers and not with respect to its essence.

Objection 2: Original sin is opposed to original justice. But original justice existed in some power of the soul, i.e., in a subject of virtue (*erat in aliqua potentia animae, quae est subiectum virtutis*). Therefore, original sin likewise exists in the powers of the soul more than in its essence.

Objection 3: Just as original sin flows from the flesh to the soul, so too it flows from the essence of the soul to its powers. But original sin exists more in the soul than in the flesh. Therefore, it likewise exists in the powers of the soul more than in its essence.

Objection 4: As has been explained (q. 82, a. 3), original sin is said to be concupiscence or sense desire (*concupiscentia*). But concupiscence exists in the powers of the soul. Therefore, so does original sin.

But contrary to this: As was explained above (q. 81, a. 1), original sin is said to be a sin of the nature. But as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 76, a. 6), it is with respect to its essence—and not with respect to its powers—that the soul is the form and nature of the body. Therefore, it is mainly with respect to its essence that the soul is the subject of original sin.

I respond: The principal subject of a sin is that aspect of the soul (*illud animae*) that the moving cause of the sin pertains to; for instance, if the cause that moves one to sin is sensory pleasure, which pertains to the concupiscible power as its proper object, then it follows that the concupiscible power is the proper subject of that sin.

Now it is clear that original sin is caused by way of origin. Hence, the aspect of the soul (*illud animae*) which is first attained to by a man's origin is the primary subject (*primum subiectum*) of original sin. But the origin attains to the soul as the terminus of generation, insofar as it is the form of the body. And as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 76, a. 6), this belongs to the soul with respect to its own essence. Hence, it is with respect to its essence that the soul is the primary subject of original sin.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained, just as the motion of one's own act of willing (*motio voluntatis alicuius propriae*) reaches the powers of the soul but not the soul's essence, so the motion of the first parent's will (*motio voluntatis primi generantis*) primarily reaches, by way of generation, the essence of the soul.

Reply to objection 2: Original justice likewise belonged in the first place to the essence of the soul, since it was a gift that was given by God to *human nature*, which the essence of the soul is related to prior to its powers. For the powers seem to pertain more to the *person*, insofar as they are the principles of one's personal acts. Hence, they are the proper subjects of actual sins, which are personal sins.

Reply to objection 3: The body is related to the soul as matter to form, where the form is prior in the order of perfection and nature even though it is posterior in the order of generation. On the other hand, the soul's essence is related to the soul's powers as a subject to its proper accidents, where the proper accidents are posterior both in the order of generation and also in the order of perfection. Hence, the two cases are not parallel.

Reply to objection 4: As was explained above (q. 82, a. 3), concupiscence is related to original sin as its matter and consequence (*se habet materialiter et ex consequenti in peccato originali*).

Article 3

Does original sin infect the will prior to infecting the other powers?

It seems that original sin does not infect the will prior to infecting the other powers:

Objection 1: Each sin belongs principally to the power by whose act it is caused. But original sin is caused by an act of the generative power. Therefore, it seems to belong more to the generative power among all the powers of the soul (*inter ceteras potentias animae*).

Objection 2: Original sin is handed down through the carnal semen (*per semen carnale*). But other powers of the soul are closer to the flesh (*propinquiores sunt carni*) than the will is; this is clear in the case of all the sentient powers, which make use of bodily organs. Therefore, original sin exists in

those powers more than in the will.

Objection 3: The intellect is prior to the will, since there is no act of willing except with respect to a good that is understood intellectually (*non est voluntas nisi de bono intellecto*). Therefore, if original sin infects all the powers of the soul, it seems that it first infects the intellect as something prior.

But contrary to this: Original justice is related in the first place to the will, since, as Anselm says in *De Conceptu Virginali*, original justice “is rectitude of the will.” Hence, it does not have to be the case that the generative power is the first subject of original sin.

I respond: There are two things to consider with regard to the infection of original sin:

The first is the infection’s *inherence in a subject*, and on this score, as has been explained (a. 2), the infection is related first to the soul’s essence.

Next, we have to consider the infection’s *inclination toward acting*, and on this score it is related to the powers of the soul. Therefore, it must be the case that it is first related to that power which has the first inclination toward sinning. But as is clear from what was said above (q. 74, aa. 1 and 2), this is the will. Hence, original sin is in the first instance related to the will.

Reply to objection 1: Original sin is caused in a man not by the *child’s* generative power, but by an act of the *parent’s* generative power. Hence, it need not be the case that the child’s own generative power is the first subject of original sin.

Reply to objection 2: Original sin has a twofold progression, one from the flesh to the soul and the other from the soul’s essence to its powers. The first progression follows the order of generation, whereas the second follows the order of perfection. And even though other powers—viz., the sentient powers—are closer to the flesh, still, because the will is closer to the soul’s essence as a higher power, the infection of original sin comes to it first.

Reply to objection 3: The intellect is prior to the will in the sense that it proposes the will’s object to it. But in another sense the will is prior to the intellect, viz., according to the ordering of the motion toward an act; and it is this motion that pertains to sin.

Article 4

Are the powers mentioned in the introduction, [viz., the generative power, the concupiscible power, and the sense of touch], more infected than the other powers?

It seems that the powers mentioned in the introduction, [viz., the generative power, the concupiscible power, and the sense of touch] are not more infected than the other powers:

Objection 1: The infection of original sin seems to belong more to the part of the soul that can in the first place be the subject of sin. But this is the rational part of the soul, and especially the will. Therefore, it is the will that is more infected by original sin.

Objection 2: No power of the soul is infected by guilt except insofar as it is able to obey reason. But as *Ethics 2* says, the generative power is not able to obey reason. Therefore, the generative power is not especially infected by original sin.

Objection 3: Among all the sensory powers it is the power of sight that is more spiritual and closer to reason, since, as *Metaphysics 1* points out, it exhibits more of the differences among things. But the infection of guilt exists in the first instance in reason. Therefore, the sense of sight is more infected than is the sense of touch.

But contrary to this: In *De Civitate Dei 14* Augustine says that the infection of original sin is especially apparent in the movement of the genitals, a movement that is not subject to reason. But genitals serve the generative power in sexual intercourse (*deserviunt generativae virtuti in commixtione sexuum*), in which the pleasure of touch exists, and this pleasure moves sensory desire to the highest

degree (*maxime concupiscentiam movet*). Therefore, the infection of original sin belongs especially to these three powers, viz., the generative power, the concupiscible power, and the sense of touch.

I respond: The corruption under discussion is customarily called an infection, and an infection is apt to be handed on to another; thus, contagious diseases such as leprosy and scabies are called infections.

Now as was explained above (q. 81, a. 1), the corruption of original sin is handed down through the act of generation. Hence, the powers that come together for this act are especially said to be infected. But an act of this sort serves the *generative power*, insofar as it is ordered toward generation, and has within itself the pleasure of *the sense of touch*, and this pleasure is the most powerful object (*maximum obiectum*) of the *concupiscible power*. Therefore, the infection of original sin belongs especially to these three powers, viz., the generative power, the concupiscible power, and the sense of touch.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained (a. 3), to the extent that original sin effects an inclination toward actual sins, it belongs especially to the will. But to the extent that it is passed down to offspring, it is proximately connected with the three powers in question and remotely connected with the will.

Reply to objection 2: The infection of actual sin (*infectio actualis culpae*) belongs only to the powers that are moved by a sinning will. But the infection of original sin flows not from the will of the one who contracts original sin, but through his nature's origin, which the generative power serves. And it is in this sense that the infection of original sin exists in the generative power.

Reply to objection 3: The sense of sight belongs to the act of generation only through a remote disposition, viz., insofar as the concupiscible species is apparent through the sense of sight. But the pleasure is brought to completion in the sense of touch. And this is why the infection is attributed more to the sense of touch than to the sense of sight.