

St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology

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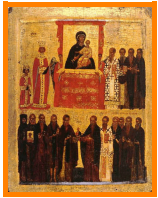
Home of the Orthodox Study Bible: Septuagint Old Testament and New Testament

August 2010

Dear Friend of St. Athanasius Academy:

"THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT."

Is sin nature an acceptable excuse before God?



An idea often heard is that when man fell and was cast from Paradise, his God-created good nature, became changed into what is referred to as "sin nature". Sadly for some, this becomes a convenient scapegoat of, "Don't blame me, it's not my fault. Blame Adam." This view all but makes the words of John the Baptist spiritually fruitless – Luke 3:3. A Baptism of Repentance for what?

Sin Nature: Did Flip Wilson have it right?

To justify this they use: Romans 5:12, "...through one man "sin" entered the world and from this "death" spread to all mankind, because all sinned." The phrase "all sinned" is used to confirm a sin nature. Another is, Jer. 17:9 (KJV), which calls the heart deceitful and desperately wicked. For final proof they will use, Rom. 7:18 (KJV): "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing..."

Admittedly without the Orthodox faith and Septuagint, these verses can be perplexing. If indeed one holds this view of sin nature, does this not minimize the role of repentance and reduces baptism to a mere dip in the pool.

So what does the Church teach?

Orthodoxy is founded in Holy Scripture – The Septuagint Old and New Testament; the Apostles; and the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

- 1) Belief alone is not sufficient. We need to hear the Word of the Lord and in love, respond to Him and His Word – the One Who created us – Luke 8:21.
- 2) We are created good, being in His likeness and image – Genesis 1:31.
- 3) Nothing in creation can change this good nature, for nature is unchangeable – St. John of Damascus. Therefore a sin nature by definition, cannot be changed.
- 4) Instead, sin like a cold, is an accident and not a nature. Why? Because sin is subject to change, and comes and goes. Sin resides within our nature, but is not the nature itself. Thus one may be humbled and return to God – Joel 2:12-13; Zech. 1:3.
- 5) Sin is a personal choice, our willful misuse of the natural law God placed within us. We sin when purposing contrary to this law. This choosing includes all mankind. Rom. 2:12-16 confirms and indicates sin by choice, not by sin nature.

An Academic Community of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

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- 6) Self-importance turns us away from the love of God – His Word, His Will, His Way, and His Walk – James 1:14. This results in our choosing poorly in response to temptations, death, the devil, and the fallen ways of this world. Again, sin by choice, not by nature.
- 7) Sins can be forgiven. But we must choose to repent and turn back to God as a sacrifice to Him Who sacrificed His life for us, first – Romans 12:1-2.
- 9) The correct translation of Jeremiah 17:5 is found in the [OSB-Old and New Testament](#). The heart is not deceitful. Instead, “The heart is deep beyond all things, and it is the man.” The right text and translation does matter, as we discovered in translating the Septuagint into usable English. We need to learn it.

Baptism not Sin Nature

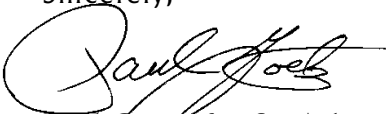
What about Scripture? Acts 16:25-33, shows a family being baptized who in fear and trembling, asked, “... what must I do to be saved?” Belief was not sufficient for salvation. How about the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:27-38. He was preached the good news and later asked Philip, “Behold, here is water: what prevents me from being baptized?”

It is not possible for John the Baptist to have a sin nature and yet proclaim, “...a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”. Nor possible to believe Jesus and Son of God, fully God / fully man, having a sin nature. Equally foolish is Peter having a sin nature when declaring, “Repent and be Baptized in the name of Jesus Christ ...” (Acts 2:38).

We hope it is clear. Sin nature makes our relationship with the Lord precarious and clouds our appreciation of the redeeming power of His Baptism, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, and the Light of Transfiguration. Instead let us sustain the fullness of our faith – our hope in the resurrection and life in the world to come. Let us also be comforted in knowing we can turn to God to have our sins forgiven and pardoned, as we draw closer to Him and His love for us.

In His Hope and Peace.

Sincerely,



Paul Goetz for St. Athanasius Academy

SPECIAL REQUEST

We need your help. We settled a lease buy-out with GE for \$6,500 – 65% less than actual value. Plus we now own an excellent copy machine.

Please help us. Thank-you.

The Orthodox faith – its philosophy and theological teachings – as handed down by the Apostles, confirmed by Holy Scripture, the Seven Ecumenical Councils, and lived by His Church.

This faith is the guidepost to the: [OSB: OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT](#)

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