

## St. Thomas Aquinas

# The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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### OF THE FIRST MAN'S SIN (FOUR ARTICLES)

We must now consider the first man's sin which was pride: and (1) his sin; (2) its punishment; (3) the temptation whereby he was led to sin.

Under the first head there are four points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether pride was the first man's first sin?
  - (2) What the first man coveted by sinning?
  - (3) Whether his sin was more grievous than all other sins?
  - (4) Which sinned more grievously, the man or the woman?
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### Whether pride was the first man's first sin?

**Objection 1:** It would seem that pride was not the first man's first sin. For the Apostle says ([Rm. 5:19](#)) that "by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners." Now the first man's first sin is the one by which all men were made sinners in the point of original sin. Therefore disobedience, and not pride, was the first man's first sin.

**Objection 2:** Further, Ambrose says, commenting on Lk. 4:3, "And the devil said to Him," that the devil in tempting Christ observed the same order as in overcoming the first man. Now Christ was first tempted to gluttony, as appears from Mt. 4:3, where it was said to Him: "If thou

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**Objection 3:** Further, man sinned at the devil's suggestion. Now the devil in tempting man promised him knowledge ([Gn. 3:5](#)). Therefore inordinateness in man was through the desire of knowledge, which pertains to curiosity. Therefore curiosity, and not pride, was the first sin.

**Objection 4:** Further, a gloss [\*St. Augustine, Gen. ad lit. xi] on 1 Tim. 2:14, "The woman being seduced was in the transgression," says: "The Apostle rightly calls this seduction, for they were persuaded to accept a falsehood as being true; namely that God had forbidden them to touch that tree, because He knew that if they touched it, they would be like gods, as though He who made them men, begrudged them the godhead..." Now it pertains to unbelief to believe such a thing. Therefore man's first sin was unbelief and not pride.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Ecclus. 10:15): "Pride is the beginning of all sin." Now man's first sin is the beginning of all sin, according to Rm. 5:12, "By one man sin entered into this world." Therefore man's first sin was pride.

**I answer that,** Many movements may concur towards one sin, and the character of sin attaches to that one in which inordinateness is first found. And it is evident that inordinateness is in the inward movement of the soul before being in the outward act of the body; since, as Augustine says (De Civ. Dei i, 18), the sanctity of the body is not forfeited so long as the sanctity of the soul remains. Also, among the inward movements, the appetite is moved towards the end before being moved towards that which is desired for the sake of the end; and consequently man's first sin was where it was possible for his appetite to be directed to an inordinate end. Now man was so appointed in the state of innocence, that there was no rebellion of the flesh against the spirit. Wherefore it was not possible for the first inordinateness in the human appetite to result from his coveting a sensible good, to which the concupiscence of the flesh tends against the order of reason. It remains therefore that the first inordinateness of the human appetite resulted from his coveting inordinately some spiritual good. Now he would not have coveted it inordinately, by desiring it according to his measure as established by the Divine rule. Hence it follows that man's first sin consisted in his coveting some spiritual good above his measure: and this pertains to pride. Therefore it is evident that man's first sin was pride.

**Reply to Objection 1:** Man's disobedience to the Divine command was not willed by man for his own sake, for this could not happen unless one presuppose inordinateness in his will. It remains therefore that he willed it for the sake of something else. Now the first thing he coveted inordinately was his own excellence; and consequently his disobedience was the result of his pride. This agrees with the statement of Augustine, who says (Ad Oros [\*Dial. Questions. lxxv, qu. 4]) that "man puffed up with pride obeyed the serpent's prompting, and scorned God's commands."

**Reply to Objection 2:** Gluttony also had a place in the sin of our first parents. For it is written ([Gn. 3:6](#)): "The woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold, and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." Yet the very goodness and beauty of the fruit was not their first motive for sinning, but the persuasive words of the serpent, who said ([Gn. 3:5](#)): "Your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as Gods": and it was by coveting this that the woman fell into pride. Hence the sin of gluttony resulted from the sin of pride.

**Reply to Objection 3:** The desire for knowledge resulted in our first parents from their inordinate desire for excellence. Hence the serpent began by saying: "You shall be as Gods,"

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**Reply to Objection 4:** According to Augustine (Gen. ad lit. xi, 30), "the woman had not believed the serpent's statement that they were debarred by God from a good and useful thing, were her mind not already filled with the love of her own power, and a certain proud self-presumption." This does not mean that pride preceded the promptings of the serpent, but that as soon as the serpent had spoken his words of persuasion, her mind was puffed up, the result being that she believed the demon to have spoken truly.

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## Whether the first man's pride consisted in his coveting God's likeness?

**Objection 1:** It would seem that the first man's pride did not consist in his coveting the Divine likeness. For no one sins by coveting that which is competent to him according to his nature. Now God's likeness is competent to man according to his nature: for it is written ([Gn. 1:26](#)): "Let us make man to our image and likeness." Therefore he did not sin by coveting God's likeness.

**Objection 2:** Further, it would seem that man coveted God's likeness in order that he might obtain knowledge of good and evil: for this was the serpent's suggestion: "You shall be as Gods knowing good and evil." Now the desire of knowledge is natural to man, according to the saying of the Philosopher at the beginning of his *Metaphysics* i, 1: "All men naturally desire knowledge." Therefore he did not sin by coveting God's likeness.

**Objection 3:** Further, no wise man chooses the impossible. Now the first man was endowed with wisdom, according to *Ecclus.* 17:5, "He filled them with the knowledge of understanding." Since then every sin consists in a deliberate act of the appetite, namely choice, it would seem that the first man did not sin by coveting something impossible. But it is impossible for man to be like God, according to the saying of *Ex.* 15:11, "Who is like to Thee among the strong, O Lord?" Therefore the first man did not sin by coveting God's likeness.

**On the contrary,** Augustine commenting on *Ps.* 68:5 [*\*Enarr. in Ps. 68*], "Then did I restore [Douay: 'pay'] that which I took not away," says: "Adam and Eve wished to rob the Godhead and they lost happiness."

**I answer that,** likeness is twofold. One is a likeness of absolute equality [*\*Cf. FP, Question [93], Article [1]*]: and such a likeness to God our first parents did not covet, since such a likeness to God is not conceivable to the mind, especially of a wise man.

The other is a likeness of imitation, such as is possible for a creature in reference to God, in so far as the creature participates somewhat of God's likeness according to its measure. For Dionysius says (*Div. Nom.* ix): "The same things are like and unlike to God; like, according as they imitate Him, as far as He can be imitated; unlike, according as an effect falls short of its cause." Now every good existing in a creature is a participated likeness of the first good.

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in the foregoing Article, it follows that he coveted God's likeness inordinately.

It must, however, be observed that the proper object of the appetite is a thing not possessed. Now spiritual good, in so far as the rational creature participates in the Divine likeness, may be considered in reference to three things. First, as to natural being: and this likeness was imprinted from the very outset of their creation, both on man---of whom it is written ([Gn. 1:26](#)) that God made man "to His image and likeness"---and on the angel, of whom it is written (Ezech. 28:12): "Thou wast the seal of resemblance." Secondly, as to knowledge: and this likeness was bestowed on the angel at his creation, wherefore immediately after the words just quoted, "Thou wast the seal of resemblance," we read: "Full of wisdom." But the first man, at his creation, had not yet received this likeness actually but only in potentiality. Thirdly, as to the power of operation: and neither angel nor man received this likeness actually at the very outset of his creation, because to each there remained something to be done whereby to obtain happiness.

Accordingly, while both (namely the devil and the first man) coveted God's likeness inordinately, neither of them sinned by coveting a likeness of nature. But the first man sinned chiefly by coveting God's likeness as regards "knowledge of good and evil," according to the serpent's instigation, namely that by his own natural power he might decide what was good, and what was evil for him to do; or again that he should of himself foreknow what good and what evil would befall him. Secondarily he sinned by coveting God's likeness as regards his own power of operation, namely that by his own natural power he might act so as to obtain happiness. Hence Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. xi, 30) that "the woman's mind was filled with love of her own power." On the other hand, the devil sinned by coveting God's likeness, as regards power. Wherefore Augustine says (De Vera Relig. 13) that "he wished to enjoy his own power rather than God's." Nevertheless both coveted somewhat to be equal to God, in so far as each wished to rely on himself in contempt of the order of the Divine rule.

**Reply to Objection 1:** This argument considers the likeness of nature: and man did not sin by coveting this, as stated.

**Reply to Objection 2:** It is not a sin to covet God's likeness as to knowledge, absolutely; but to covet this likeness inordinately, that is, above one's measure, this is a sin. Hence Augustine commenting on Ps. 70:18, "O God, who is like Thee?" says: "He who desires to be of himself, even as God is of no one, wishes wickedly to be like God. Thus did the devil, who was unwilling to be subject to Him, and man who refused to be, as a servant, bound by His command."

**Reply to Objection 3:** This argument considers the likeness of equality.

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**Whether the sin of our first parents was more grievous than other sins?**

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For Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xiv, 15): "Great was the wickedness in sinning, when it was so easy to avoid sin." Now it was very easy for our first parents to avoid sin, because they had nothing within them urging them to sin. Therefore the sin of our first parents was more grievous than other sins.

**Objection 2:** Further, punishment is proportionate to guilt. Now the sin of our first parents was most severely punished, since by it "death entered into this world," as the Apostle says ([Rm. 5:12](#)). Therefore that sin was more grievous than other sins.

**Objection 3:** Further, the first in every genus is seemingly the greatest (Metaph. ii, 4 [\*Ed. Diel. i, 1]). Now the sin of our first parents was the first among sins of men. Therefore it was the greatest.

**On the contrary,** Origen says [\*Peri Archon i, 3]: "I think that a man who stands on the highest step of perfection cannot fail or fall suddenly: this can happen only by degrees and little by little." Now our first parents were established on the highest and perfect grade. Therefore their first sin was not the greatest of all sins.

**I answer that,** There is a twofold gravity to be observed in sin. one results from the very species of the sin: thus we say that adultery is a graver sin than simple fornication. The other gravity of sin results from some circumstance of place, person, or time. The former gravity is more essential to sin and is of greater moment: hence a sin is said to be grave in respect of this gravity rather than of the other. Accordingly we must say that the first man's sin was not graver than all other sins of men, as regards the species of the sin. For though pride, of its genus, has a certain pre-eminence over other sins, yet the pride whereby one denies or blasphemes God is greater than the pride whereby one covets God's likeness inordinately, such as the pride of our first parents, as stated ([Article \[2\]](#)).

But if we consider the circumstances of the persons who sinned, that sin was most grave on account of the perfection of their state. We must accordingly conclude that this sin was most grievous relatively but not simply.

**Reply to Objection 1:** This argument considers the gravity of sin as resulting from the person of the sinner.

**Reply to Objection 2:** The severity of the punishment awarded to that first sin corresponds to the magnitude of the sin, not as regards its species but as regards its being the first sin: because it destroyed the innocence of our original state, and by robbing it of innocence brought disorder upon the whole human nature.

**Reply to Objection 3:** Where things are directly subordinate, the first must needs be the greatest. Such is not the order among sins, for one follows from another accidentally. And thus it does not follow that the first sin is the greatest.

**Objection 1:** It would seem that Adam's sin was more grievous than Eve's. For it is written ([1 Tim. 2:14](#)): "Adam was not seduced, but the woman being seduced was in the transgression": and so it would seem that the woman sinned through ignorance, but the man through assured knowledge. Now the latter is the graver sin, according to Lk. 12:47,48, "That servant who knew the will of his lord... and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." Therefore Adam's sin was more grievous than Eve's.

**Objection 2:** Further, Augustine says (De Decem Chordis 3 [\*Serm. ix; xcvi de Temp.]): "If the man is the head, he should live better, and give an example of good deeds to his wife, that she may imitate him." Now he who ought to do better, sins more grievously, if he commit a sin. Therefore Adam sinned more grievously than Eve.

**Objection 3:** Further, the sin against the Holy Ghost would seem to be the most grievous. Now Adam, apparently, sinned against the Holy Ghost, because while sinning he relied on God's mercy [\*Cf. Question [21], Article [2], Objection [3]. St. Thomas is evidently alluding to the words of Peter Lombard quoted there], and this pertains to the sin of presumption. Therefore it seems that Adam sinned more grievously than Eve.

**On the contrary,** Punishment corresponds to guilt. Now the woman was more grievously punished than the man, as appears from Gn. 3. Therefore she sinned more grievously than the man.

**I answer that,** As stated ([Article \[3\]](#)), the gravity of a sin depends on the species rather than on a circumstance of that sin. Accordingly we must assert that, if we consider the condition attaching to these persons, the man's sin is the more grievous, because he was more perfect than the woman.

As regards the genus itself of the sin, the sin of each is considered to be equal, for each sinned by pride. Hence Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. xi, 35): "Eve in excusing herself betrays disparity of sex, though parity of pride."

But as regards the species of pride, the woman sinned more grievously, for three reasons. First, because she was more puffed up than the man. For the woman believed in the serpent's persuasive words, namely that God had forbidden them to eat of the tree, lest they should become like to Him; so that in wishing to attain to God's likeness by eating of the forbidden fruit, her pride rose to the height of desiring to obtain something against God's will. On the other hand, the man did not believe this to be true; wherefore he did not wish to attain to God's likeness against God's will: but his pride consisted in wishing to attain thereto by his own power. Secondly, the woman not only herself sinned, but suggested sin to the man; wherefore she sinned against both God and her neighbor. Thirdly, the man's sin was diminished by the fact that, as Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. xi, 42), "he consented to the sin out of a certain friendly good-will, on account of which a man sometimes will offend God rather than make an enemy of his friend. That he ought not to have done so is shown by the just issue of the Divine sentence."

It is therefore evident that the woman's sin was more grievous than the man's.

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pride. Wherefore her ignorance did not excuse, but aggravated her sin, in so far as it was the cause of her being puffed up with still greater pride.

***Reply to Objection 2:*** This argument considers the circumstance of personal condition, on account of which the man's sin was more grievous than the woman's.

***Reply to Objection 3:*** The man's reliance on God's mercy did not reach to contempt of God's justice, wherein consists the sin against the Holy Ghost, but as Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. xi [\*De Civ. Dei xiv, 11]), it was due to the fact that, "having had no experience of God's severity, he thought the sin to be venial," i.e. easily forgiven [\*Cf. FS, Question [89], Article [3], ad 1].