

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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OF THE PUNISHMENTS OF THE FIRST MAN'S SIN (TWO ARTICLES)

We must now consider the punishments of the first sin; and under this head there are two points of inquiry: (1) Death, which is the common punishment; (2) the other particular punishments mentioned in Genesis.

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Whether death is the punishment of our first parents' sin?

Objection 1: It would seem that death is not the punishment of our first parents' sin. For that which is natural to man cannot be called a punishment of sin, because sin does not perfect nature but vitiates it. Now death is natural to man: and this is evident both from the fact that his body is composed of contraries, and because "mortal" is included in the definition of man. Therefore death is not a punishment of our first parents' sin.

Objection 2: Further, death and other bodily defects are similarly found in man as well as in other animals, according to Eccles. 3:19, "The death of man and of beasts is one, and the condition of them both equal." But in dumb animals death is not a punishment of sin. Therefore neither is it so in men.

Objection 3: Further, the sin of our first parents was the sin of particular individuals: whereas death affects the entire human nature. Therefore it would seem that it is not a punishment of our first parents' sin.

Objection 4: Further, all are equally descended from our first parents. Therefore if death were the punishment of our first parents' sin, it would follow that all men would suffer death in

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than others. Therefore death is not the punishment of the first sin.

Objection 5: Further, the evil of punishment is from God, as stated above (FP, Question [48], Article [6]; FP, Question [49], Article [2]). But death, apparently, is not from God: for it is written (Wis. 1:13): "God made not death." Therefore death is not the punishment of the first sin.

Objection 6: Further, seemingly, punishments are not meritorious, since merit is comprised under good, and punishment under evil. Now death is sometimes meritorious, as in the case of a martyr's death. Therefore it would seem that death is not a punishment.

Objection 7: Further, punishment would seem to be painful. But death apparently cannot be painful, since man does not feel it when he is dead, and he cannot feel it when he is not dying. Therefore death is not a punishment of sin.

Objection 8: Further, if death were a punishment of sin, it would have followed sin immediately. But this is not true, for our first parents lived a long time after their sin ([Gn. 5:5](#)). Therefore, seemingly, death is not a punishment of sin.

On the contrary, The Apostle says ([Rm. 5:12](#)): "By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death."

I answer that, If any one, on account of his fault, be deprived of a favor bestowed on him the privation of that favor is a punishment of that fault. Now as we stated in the FP, Question [95], Article [1]; FP, Question [97], Article [1], God bestowed this favor on man, in his primitive state, that as long as his mind was subject to God, the lower powers of his soul would be subject to his rational mind, and his body to his soul. But inasmuch as through sin man's mind withdrew from subjection to God, the result was that neither were his lower powers wholly subject to his reason, whence there followed so great a rebellion of the carnal appetite against the reason: nor was the body wholly subject to the soul; whence arose death and other bodily defects. For life and soundness of body depend on the body being subject to the soul, as the perfectible is subject to its perfection. Consequently, on the other hand, death, sickness, and all defects of the body are due to the lack of the body's subjection to the soul.

It is therefore evident that as the rebellion of the carnal appetite against the spirit is a punishment of our first parents' sin, so also are death and all defects of the body.

Reply to Objection 1: A thing is said to be natural if it proceeds from the principles of nature. Now the essential principles of nature are form and matter. The form of man is his rational soul, which is, of itself, immortal: wherefore death is not natural to man on the part of his form. The matter of man is a body such as is composed of contraries, of which corruptibility is a necessary consequence, and in this respect death is natural to man. Now this condition attached to the nature of the human body results from a natural necessity, since it was necessary for the human body to be the organ of touch, and consequently a mean between objects of touch: and this was impossible, were it not composed of contraries, as the Philosopher states (De Anima ii, 11). On the other hand, this condition is not attached to the adaptability of matter to form because, if it were possible, since the form is incorruptible, its matter should rather be incorruptible. In the same way a saw needs to be of iron, this being suitable to its form and action, so that its hardness may make it fit for cutting. But that it be liable to rust is a necessary result of such a matter and is not according to the agent's choice; for, if the craftsman were able, of the iron he would make a saw that would not rust. Now God Who is the author of man is all-powerful, wherefore when He first made man, He conferred on

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS164.html](#); however, was withdrawn through the sin of our first parents. Accordingly death is both natural on account of a condition attaching to matter, and penal on account of the loss of the Divine favor preserving man from death [*Cf. FS, Question [85], Article [6]].

Reply to Objection 2: This likeness of man to other animals regards a condition attaching to matter, namely the body being composed of contraries. But it does not regard the form, for man's soul is immortal, whereas the souls of dumb animals are mortal.

Reply to Objection 3: Our first parents were made by God not only as particular individuals, but also as principles of the whole human nature to be transmitted by them to their posterity, together with the Divine favor preserving them from death. Hence through their sin the entire human nature, being deprived of that favor in their posterity, incurred death.

Reply to Objection 4: A twofold defect arises from sin. One is by way of a punishment appointed by a judge: and such a defect should be equal in those to whom the sin pertains equally. The other defect is that which results accidentally from this punishment; for instance, that one who has been deprived of his sight for a sin he has committed, should fall down in the road. Such a defect is not proportionate to the sin, nor does a human judge take it into account, since he cannot foresee chance happenings. Accordingly, the punishment appointed for the first sin and proportionately corresponding thereto, was the withdrawal of the Divine favor whereby the rectitude and integrity of human nature was maintained. But the defects resulting from this withdrawal are death and other penalties of the present life. Wherefore these punishments need not be equal in those to whom the first sin equally appertains. Nevertheless, since God foreknows all future events, Divine providence has so disposed that these penalties are apportioned in different ways to various people. This is not on account of any merits or demerits previous to this life, as Origen held [*Peri Archon ii, 9]: for this is contrary to the words of Rm. 9:11, "When they... had not done any good or evil"; and also contrary to statements made in the FP, Question [90], Article [4]; FP, Question [118], Article [3], namely that the soul is not created before the body: but either in punishment of their parents' sins, inasmuch as the child is something belonging to the father, wherefore parents are often punished in their children; or again it is for a remedy intended for the spiritual welfare of the person who suffers these penalties, to wit that he may thus be turned away from his sins, or lest he take pride in his virtues, and that he may be crowned for his patience.

Reply to Objection 5: Death may be considered in two ways. First, as an evil of human nature, and thus it is not of God, but is a defect befalling man through his fault. Secondly, as having an aspect of good, namely as being a just punishment, and thus it is from God. Wherefore Augustine says (Retract. i, 21) that God is not the author of death, except in so far as it is a punishment.

Reply to Objection 6: As Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xiii, 5), "just as the wicked abuse not only evil but also good things, so do the righteous make good use not only of good but also of evil things. Hence it is that both evil men make evil use of the law, though the law is good, while good men die well, although death is an evil." Wherefore inasmuch as holy men make good use of death, their death is to them meritorious.

Reply to Objection 7: Death may be considered in two ways. First, as the privation of life, and thus death cannot be felt, since it is the privation of sense and life. In this way it involves not pain of sense but pain of loss. Secondly, it may be considered as denoting the corruption which ends in the aforesaid privation. Now we may speak of corruption even as of generation in two ways: in one way as being the term of alteration, and thus in the first instant in which life

[Donate bitcoin.](#) St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS164.html](#) | way corruption may be taken as including the previous alteration: thus a person is said to die, when he is in motion towards death; just as a thing is said to be engendered, while in motion towards the state of having been engendered: and thus death may be painful.

Reply to Objection 8: According to Augustine (Gen. ad lit. [*De Pecc. Mer. et Rem. i, 16. Cf. Gen. ad lit. ii. 32]), "although our first parents lived thereafter many years, they began to die on the day when they heard the death-decree, condemning them to decline to old age."

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Whether the particular punishments of our first parents are suitably appointed in Scripture?

Objection 1: It would seem that the particular punishments of our first parents are unsuitably appointed in Scripture. For that which would have occurred even without sin should not be described as a punishment for sin. Now seemingly there would have been "pain in child-bearing," even had there been no sin: for the disposition of the female sex is such that offspring cannot be born without pain to the bearer. Likewise the "subjection of woman to man" results from the perfection of the male, and the imperfection of the female sex. Again it belongs to the nature of the earth "to bring forth thorns and thistles," and this would have occurred even had there been no sin. Therefore these are unsuitable punishments of the first sin.

Objection 2: Further, that which pertains to a person's dignity does not, seemingly, pertain to his punishment. But the "multiplying of conceptions" pertains to a woman's dignity. Therefore it should not be described as the woman's punishment.

Objection 3: Further, the punishment of our first parents' sin is transmitted to all, as we have stated with regard to death ([Article \[1\]](#)). But all "women's conceptions" are not "multiplied," nor does "every man eat bread in the sweat of his face." Therefore these are not suitable punishments of the first sin.

Objection 4: Further, the place of paradise was made for man. Now nothing in the order of things should be without purpose. Therefore it would seem that the exclusion of man from paradise was not a suitable punishment of man.

Objection 5: Further, this place of the earthly paradise is said to be naturally inaccessible. Therefore it was useless to put other obstacles in the way lest man should return thither, to wit the cherubim, and the "flaming sword turning every way."

Objection 6: Further, immediately after his sin man was subject to the necessity of dying, so that he could not be restored to immortality by the beneficial tree of life. Therefore it was useless to forbid him to eat of the tree of life, as instanced by the words of Gn. 3:22: "See, lest perhaps he... take... of the tree of life... and live for ever."

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which are most of all ascribed to God in Scripture, according to Ps. 144:9, "His tender mercies are over all His works." Therefore God is unbecomingly described as mocking our first parents, already reduced through sin to unhappy straits, in the words of Gn. 3:22, "Behold Adam is become as one of Us, knowing good and evil."

Objection 8: Further, clothes are necessary to man, like food, according to 1 Tim. 6:8, "Having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content." Therefore just as food was appointed to our first parents before their sin, so also should clothing have been ascribed to them. Therefore after their sin it was unsuitable to say that God made for them garments of skin.

Objection 9: Further, the punishment inflicted for a sin should outweigh in evil the gain realized through the sin: else the punishment would not deter one from sinning. Now through sin our first parents gained in this, that their eyes were opened, according to Gn. 3:7. But this outweighs in good all the penal evils which are stated to have resulted from sin. Therefore the punishments resulting from our first parents' sin are unsuitably described.

On the contrary, These punishments were appointed by God, Who does all things, "in number, weight, and measure [*Vulg.: 'Thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight.']" (Wis. 11:21).

I answer that, As stated in the foregoing Article, on account of their sin, our first parents were deprived of the Divine favor, whereby the integrity of human nature was maintained in them, and by the withdrawal of this favor human nature incurred penal defects. Hence they were punished in two ways. In the first place by being deprived of that which was befitting the state of integrity, namely the place of the earthly paradise: and this is indicated ([Gn. 3:23](#)) where it is stated that "God sent him out of the paradise of pleasure." And since he was unable, of himself, to return to that state of original innocence, it was fitting that obstacles should be placed against his recovering those things that were befitting his original state, namely food (lest he should take of the tree of life) and place; for "God placed before... paradise... Cherubim, and a flaming sword." Secondly, they were punished by having appointed to them things befitting a nature bereft of the aforesaid favor: and this as regards both the body and the soul. With regard to the body, to which pertains the distinction of sex, one punishment was appointed to the woman and another to the man. To the woman punishment was appointed in respect of two things on account of which she is united to the man; and these are the begetting of children, and community of works pertaining to family life. As regards the begetting of children, she was punished in two ways: first in the weariness to which she is subject while carrying the child after conception, and this is indicated in the words ([Gn. 3:16](#)), "I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions"; secondly, in the pain which she suffers in giving birth, and this is indicated by the words ([Gn. 3:16](#)), "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth." As regards family life she was punished by being subjected to her husband's authority, and this is conveyed in the words ([Gn. 3:16](#)), "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power."

Now, just as it belongs to the woman to be subject to her husband in matters relating to the family life, so it belongs to the husband to provide the necessaries of that life. In this respect he was punished in three ways. First, by the barrenness of the earth, in the words ([Gn. 3:17](#)), "Cursed is the earth in thy work." Secondly, by the cares of his toil, without which he does not win the fruits of the earth; hence the words ([Gn. 3:17](#)), "With labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life." Thirdly, by the obstacles encountered by the tillers of the soil, wherefore it is written ([Gn. 3:18](#)), "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS164.html](#) the confusion they experienced at the rebellion of the flesh against the spirit; hence it is written ([Gn. 3:7](#)): "The eyes of them both were opened; and... they perceived themselves to be naked." Secondly, by the reproach for their sin, indicated by the words ([Gn. 3:22](#)), "Behold Adam is become as one of Us." Thirdly, by the reminder of their coming death, when it was said to him ([Gn. 3:19](#)): "Dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return." To this also pertains that God made them garments of skin, as a sign of their mortality.

Reply to Objection 1: In the state of innocence child-bearing would have been painless: for Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xiv, 26): "Just as, in giving birth, the mother would then be relieved not by groans of pain, but by the instigations of maturity, so in bearing and conceiving the union of both sexes would be one not of lustful desire but of deliberate action" [*Cf. FP, Question [98], Article [2]].

The subjection of the woman to her husband is to be understood as inflicted in punishment of the woman, not as to his headship (since even before sin the man was the "head" and governor "of the woman"), but as to her having now to obey her husband's will even against her own.

If man had not sinned, the earth would have brought forth thorns and thistles to be the food of animals, but not to punish man, because their growth would bring no labor or punishment for the tiller of the soil, as Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. iii, 18). Alcuin [*Interrog. et Resp. in Gen. lxxix], however, holds that, before sin, the earth brought forth no thorns and thistles, whatever: but the former opinion is the better.

Reply to Objection 2: The multiplying of her conceptions was appointed as a punishment to the woman, not on account of the begetting of children, for this would have been the same even before sin, but on account of the numerous sufferings to which the woman is subject, through carrying her offspring after conception. Hence it is expressly stated: "I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions."

Reply to Objection 3: These punishments affect all somewhat. For any woman who conceives must needs suffer sorrows and bring forth her child with pain: except the Blessed Virgin, who "conceived without corruption, and bore without pain" [*St. Bernard, Serm. in Dom. inf. oct. Assum. B. V. M.], because her conceiving was not according to the law of nature, transmitted from our first parents. And if a woman neither conceives nor bears, she suffers from the defect of barrenness, which outweighs the aforesaid punishments. Likewise whoever tills the soil must needs eat his bread in the sweat of his brow: while those who do not themselves work on the land, are busied with other labors, for "man is born to labor" ([Job 5:7](#)): and thus they eat the bread for which others have labored in the sweat of their brow.

Reply to Objection 4: Although the place of the earthly paradise avails not man for his use, it avails him for a lesson; because he knows himself deprived of that place on account of sin, and because by the things that have a bodily existence in that paradise, he is instructed in things pertaining to the heavenly paradise, the way to which is prepared for man by Christ.

Reply to Objection 5: Apart from the mysteries of the spiritual interpretation, this place would seem to be inaccessible, chiefly on account of the extreme heat in the middle zone by reason of the nighness of the sun. This is denoted by the "flaming sword," which is described as "turning every way," as being appropriate to the circular movement that causes this heat. And since the movements of corporal creatures are set in order through the ministry of the angels, according to Augustine (De Trin. iii, 4), it was fitting that, besides the sword turning every way, there should be cherubim "to keep the way of the tree of life." Hence Augustine says (Gen. ad

Reply to Objection 6: After sin, if man had ate of the tree of life, he would not thereby have recovered immortality, but by means of that beneficial food he might have prolonged his life. Hence in the words "And live for ever," "for ever" signifies "for a long time." For it was not expedient for man to remain longer in the unhappiness of this life.

Reply to Objection 7: According to Augustine (Gen. ad lit. xi, 39), "these words of God are not so much a mockery of our first parents as a deterrent to others, for whose benefit these things are written, lest they be proud likewise, because Adam not only failed to become that which he coveted to be, but did not keep that to which he was made."

Reply to Objection 8: Clothing is necessary to man in his present state of unhappiness for two reasons. First, to supply a deficiency in respect of external harm caused by, for instance, extreme heat or cold. Secondly, to hide his ignominy and to cover the shame of those members wherein the rebellion of the flesh against the spirit is most manifest. Now these two motives do not apply to the primitive state. because then man's body could not be hurt by any outward thing, as stated in the FP, Question [97], Article [2], nor was there in man's body anything shameful that would bring confusion on him. Hence it is written ([Gn. 2:23](#)): "And they were both naked, to wit Adam and his wife, and were not ashamed." The same cannot be said of food, which is necessary to entertain the natural heat, and to sustain the body.

Reply to Objection 9: As Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. xi, 31), "We must not imagine that our first parents were created with their eyes closed, especially since it is stated that the woman saw that the tree was fair, and good to eat. Accordingly the eyes of both were opened so that they saw and thought on things which had not occurred to their minds before, this was a mutual concupiscence such as they had not hitherto."