

B.A.S.I.C.

Brothers And Sisters In Christ

The Augsburg Confession: Article 19 Of the Cause of Sin

By Pastor Nathanael Mayhew

At first it may seem that this article is rather unimportant compared to other articles contained in the Augsburg Confession. Is an explanation of such a basic doctrine unnecessary? As we look ahead to the Roman Confutation on this article, we find that the Roman theologians did not disagree with this article, stating: "The nineteenth article is likewise approved and accepted." As a result, the Apology on this article is also short, simply reaffirming what was stated in the Confession. Although there was no disagreement concerning this doctrine between the Catholics and the Lutherans at that time, many errors have been propagated concerning the cause of sin.

Where did sin come from? Who is the devil? What is the role of God in connection with sin? We will be considering these and other questions related to the content of Article 19, and searching the Scriptures for God's answers.

Where did sin come from?

When we discussed Original sin (Article 2) we traced sin back to the fall of Adam and Eve. But this article causes us to go back even farther. The sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was caused by the seduction of the devil in the form of a serpent.

"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden"?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'" (Genesis 3:1-5).

The apostle John makes it clear that the serpent who deceived Eve was the devil:

"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

As a result of the temptation by the devil, many people will be lost, condemned to hell. For this reason Jesus describes him as a murderer:

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his

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own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

Our Lutheran forefathers began this article by declaring that God is not the cause of sin, rather the devil and our own sinful flesh is the cause: *"It is also taught among us that although almighty God has created and still preserves nature, yet sin is caused in all wicked men and despisers of God by the perverted will. This is the will of the devil and of all ungodly men; as soon as God withdraws His support, the will turns away from God to evil."*

Who is the devil?

Polls show that about 60% of American adults deny the existence of the devil! Even the majority of professing Christians deny that the devil is a real personal being! Scripture is clear about the existence of the devil and his purpose. Scripture warns that the devil is:

- Dangerous and on the prowl - ***"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8-9).***
- Deceitful and crafty - ***"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).***
- He disguises himself to look good - ***"For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).***
- At work in the world leading people into all kinds of sin - ***"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:1-2).***

Those who think that the devil is not real, and that he is only a symbol of evil are ignorant

and foolish. John writes: ***"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19).*** He is the very source of evil and sin in the world and his primary goal is to lead people away from God and away from the true knowledge of Christ as our Savior from sin.

The devil and his evil angels are at work leading people away from the truth through the intrusion of error within the teachings of the visible church as John says:

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth" (1 John 4:1-3).

The devil is also at work through the Anti-Christ to lead people from the truth:

"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.... And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 8-10).

The devil is very real and a dangerous adversary for every human being. The reality of the devil and his role in connection with sin does

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not excuse sin or relieve human beings of their responsibility for it (think of Adam's blaming of Eve and Eve's "the devil made me do it" plea). In spite of the work of the devil our guilt and our responsibility for sin remains (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

What is the role of God in connection with sin?

Some would like to make God responsible for sin. But God's will is in complete opposition to sin and the devil. David writes:

"You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the blood-thirsty and deceitful man" (Psalm 5:4-6).

Although God hates sin, he does permit sin and evil in the world. In connection with the rebellion of His Old Testament people the LORD says:

"But My people would not heed My voice, And Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, To walk in their own counsels" (Psalm 81:11-12).

The above passage refers to unbelievers, but we all know that God allows evil to come upon believers as well. No one is immune from the effects of sin, but at times we might wonder why God allows bad things to happen to His children. One example from the Old Testament would be the man Job whom God allowed to be tested by the devil for the purpose of strengthening his faith (Job 1-2, 42). James reminds us that God is not to blame for troubles in our life:

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am

tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed" (James 1:13-14).

Conclusion

Much more could be said about sin and its cause. Knowing that the devil is very real and that he is after us can at times cause us to despair. By ourselves we don't stand a chance against the attacks of the devil and the struggles with our own sinful flesh. Our sin already condemns us! John writes: ***"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning."*** But do not lose hope! John continues: ***"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).***

At times we may feel like we are powerless against the devil, but the LORD has given us all that we need to defend against his attacks. Paul tells us to trust in the Lord, our defender: ***"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:10-11).***

Thanks be to our gracious God whose Word defends us from the attacks of the devil, and keeps us on the narrow way. May He continue to be with us until the end!

What is the religion of love? Part 1

By David Koenig

Sometimes we hear the unenlightened say that Islam is a religion of love. These people either have not read much in the Koran or are, I am sorry to say, simply lying. Just consider the following from Islam's own holy book.

Islam teaches:

Sura 4:101 – [unbelievers] are the Muslim's "inveterate enemies"

Sura 9:5 – Muslims are to "arrest them, besiege them and lie in ambush everywhere" for them.

Sura 4:90 – "seize them and put them to death wherever you find them, kill them wherever you find them, seek out the enemies of Islam relentlessly".

Sura 2:193 – "Fight them until Islam reigns supreme".

Sura 8:12 – "Cut off their heads, and cut off the tips of their fingers".

Our Lord Jesus told us to forgive seventy times seven and to love our enemies and pray for them. In India where I worked for some years generally you did not find riots and killings happening at the hands of Christians. The Hindus and Moslems fought each other. The Christians were not the killers but the killed. In Nigeria where I lived for

eleven years whenever reports came from the Muslim north it was of Muslims killing Christians. Many Christian churches were burned over the years and few mosques. One of our pastors in Tanzania wrote against Islam and found himself the object of an assassination attempt. Now in Liberia where we hope to do more outreach the Muslims are starting to move in. What do you think will result over time?(Bat Ye'or has written on dhimmitude which in Arabic means protected, but in actuality portrays the non-Muslim in a Muslim society as oppressed and is akin to second class citizens and slavery.)

While the CLCI has Indian pastors who are converted Muslims, this is not seen very much. Let us pray that we and our sister churches are able to reach out to the Muslims more with the true religion of love.

Investigate for Yourself which is THE Religion of Love. See the chart on the next page.

Taken from Stephen H./Life Challenge Africa Oct./98)

KORAN**BIBLE****GOD**

Allah is one – 37:35
 He has no son – 112:1-4
 His followers are like slaves – 19:93
 He fills hell with men 11:119
 No care, no love only mercy!

God is one – Deut. 6:4
 He has a son – Is. 9:6, Mat. 3:17
 The believers are His children -I John 3:1
 His wish is that everybody may be saved –
 2 Pet. 3:9; I Tim. 2:4

ANGELS

Angels warn mankind – 16:2

They serve believers – Heb. 1:14

SPIRITS

Muslims fear them – 112

Christians were given power over them to
 cast them out - Mat 10:1

BOOKS

Koran as last revelation sent down from
 heaven. “nazil”, one writer.

66 books: 39 in OT and 27 in N.T. sent
 down from heaven 40 writers. Inspiration:
 2 Tim. 3:16f Nothing to be added – Rev.
 22:18 Prophecy and fulfillment!

JUDGMENT

Everybody will be judged according to his
 deeds – 3:185; 2:62

But in Jesus is no condemnation John 3:18;
 Rom 8:1

SIN

Allah is not touched by man’s sin 4:107

God loves sinners – Rom. 5:8, but HE hates
 sin – Zech. 8:17

Allah even is the reason for sin – 13:17;

Human nature is the reason for sin – Jas.
 1:13-15

FORGIVENESS

Allah forgives whom he wills – 3:129; but
 not unbelievers – 4:18
 even Muhammad was not sure of forgive-
 ness of his sins – 46:9

Only through the blood of Jesus is forgive-
 ness of sin – Acts 4:12, Eph. 1:7.
 There is assurance for forgiveness of sin –
 John 5:24; Rom 8:1f.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

It needs good deeds to enter it – 4:57

God grants life after death as a gift. – Rev.
 21:27 “those whose names are written in
 the Lamb’s book of life”.

HEAVEN

It has a physical perspective (wine and vir-
 gins) 56:12-24

It has a spiritual perspective – Rom. 14:17

HELL

It is prepared for demons and mankind to-
 gether – 11:119

It was originally prepared for the devil and
 his angels – Mat. 25:41

Also believers will enter it for some time –
 19:70-72

Only unrepentant sinners will be found
 there – Rev. 21:8