



Statement

from

His Eminence Anba Roufail

***.....Concerning the issue of
inheriting Adam's sin.....***

Translated by George Ishack,
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I do hope that we do not indulge in **".....disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith."** (1 Timothy 1:4)

Life is too short to permit a re-examination of issues which have long been settled in holy synods recognized by our Church.

Our time would be much better spent praying, praising, and rejoicing in Christ, as well as in righteous shepherding and teaching.

The issue of inheriting Adam's sin was settled by condemning Pelagius, his disciple Cœlestius, and their followers, when they decried the inheritance of Adam's sin, and propagated the heresy purporting that children do not need to be baptized, and that baptism of children is not for the forgiveness of sins.

According to Canon 2 of *"The Canons of the Synod of Carthage - Early Church Texts," Synod of May 418, Translated By The Right Rev. Charles Joseph Hefele, D.D. & Henry Nutcombe Oxenham:*

"If any man says that new-born children need not be baptized, or that they should indeed be baptized for the remission of sins, but that they have in them no original sin inherited from Adam which must be washed away in the bath of regeneration, so that in their ease the formula of baptism 'for the remission of sins' must not be taken literally, but figuratively, let him be anathema; because, according to Romans 5:12, the sin of Adam has passed upon all."

The Council (Synod) of Ephesus (431 A.D.), chaired by Pope Cyril, Pillar of the Faith, supported the decrees cited in the message issued by the Carthaginian Council. This message, in turn, was communicated to Pope Celestine I of Rome, advising him of what had transpired at the Synod of Ephesus, hence:

From *The Seven Œcumenical Councils — Philip Schaff (Labbe and Cossart, Concilia, Tom. III., col.659; also in Migne, Pat. Lat. [reprinted from Galland., Vett. Patr., Tom. ix.], Tom. L., Ep. xx., col.511.)*

"When there had been read in the holy Synod what had been done touching the deposition of the most irreligious Pelagians and Cœlestines, of Cœlestius, and Pelagius, and Julian, and Præsidius,

and Florus, and Marcellian, and Orontius, and those inclined to like errors, we also deemed it right that the determinations of your holiness concerning them should stand strong and firm. And we all were of the same mind, holding them deposed."

The reader is also referred to:

- *"Doctrinal Theology in the Seven Sacraments of the Church,"* Vol. 3, Page 53, by Anba Gregorios,
- *"Compendium of Church Canons,"* Pages 338 & 339, by Ananias Cassab, and
- *"Rules Governing the Age of Synods,"* Page 126, by Hegumen Salib Sourial.

The Synod of Ephesus also issued edicts, detailed in the first and fourth Canons, excommunicating Cœlestius, Pelagius' disciple, and anyone accepting them and their doctrines; hence:

From the *Third Œcumenical Synod at Ephesus, A.D.431* (see also: *"Compendium of Church Canons,"* Page 338 and *"Rules Governing the Age of Synods,"* Page 131:

Canon 1:

"If a metropolitan has separated himself from this holy and Œcumenical Synod, and has joined that assembly of apostates (the Conciliabulum), or shall hereafter join them, or has agreed with Cœlestius (= the Pelagians), or shall agree, he has no more jurisdiction over the bishops of his province, and is already (by the previous sentence on John and his adherents) excluded and suspended by the Synod from all church communion. It is further the duty of the bishops of the province themselves, and the neighbouring metropolitans, who are orthodox, to see to his total deposition from the episcopate."

Canon 4:

"If any of the clergy shall apostatize, and either privately or publicly hold with Nestorius or Cœlestius, the Synod decides that they also shall be deposed."

Our Faith concerning this issue may be summed up as follows:

"We were in Adam when he sinned. Thus we became, in him, dead and corrupt sinners."

In Sub-section 48, Article II, Chapter 19 of his *"Discourse II against the Arians,"* St. Athanasius the Apostolic says:

"And such was the original formation of the quadrupeds, and of birds, and fishes, and cattle, and plants; thus too has the race made after God's Image come to be, namely men; for though Adam only was formed out of earth, yet in him was involved the succession of the whole race."

St. Cyril the Great said in his interpretation of John (22:18):

"Since we sinned in Adam first and foremost, and trod underfoot the Divine commandment."

"In olden times we were defeated and fallen in Adam."

"Through ingestion we were defeated in Adam." (interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel, Sermon 12).

"We were complicit in Adam's disobedience, and we were punished because of his sins. The curse covered all, and wrath extended to his seed."

(Worship and adoration in spirit and truth, Article 11.)

We became sinners in Adam before our existence as persons, nevertheless we were in him, according to our forefathers' sayings; we thus became complicit in Adam's disobedience.

Consequently, and by the same token, due to no credit on our part, we acquire Christ's righteousness, His triumph over death, and the pouring of His life within us.

Upon uniting with Christ, the soul's Groom, through baptism and the Holy Eucharist, we become righteous in Him through His righteousness, alive through His life, and incorrupt through His eternal life poured within us. This is coupled with the necessity of continuing our union with Him unto the end, through our ecclesiastic life, which includes continual repentance, prayer, and spiritual struggle in Christ.

Our Lord Christ treated what had afflicted humanity in Adam.

Let us therefore rejoice in what Christ did for us, and let us not waste our life in unconstructive debates.

Our Church does not teach that, as persons, we participated in Adam's sin; rather, we became sinners in him - not with him, because we did not exist at that time.

Just as we became sinners in Adam without, personally, having committed a particular sin, we also become righteous in Christ without claiming any credit, except accepting Faith in Christ, and uniting with Him through baptism and the Holy Eucharist.

Failing to believe that we have become sinners in Adam, how can we accept justification through Christ?

Some might ask: "Do we incur punishment for something we have not done?"

The answer is given in the Holy Bible and in the forefathers' teachings.

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned--" (Romans 5:12)

"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:18 & 19)

"For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:21 & 22)

Our Church's liturgies attest to the same Faith:

"When we disobeyed Your holy commandment, we were banished from the paradise of delight.

"You forbade me to eat from one plant. But I ate out of my own free will...

"I willfully neglected Your law, and nonchalantly ignored Your comandments.

"I reaped for myself the death sentence.

"None is righteous, even if their life on earth were but a single day."

Adam's sin may be considered to be part of the expressions "sins that we acquired through others," recited during the prayers for Unction of the Sick, as well as "sins that we have committed unwillingly."

We have sinned in Adam from the perspective of the human nature which he bore, not from the personal perspective, since we did not exist then.

St. Cyril the Great said, *"Mankind's entire human nature became sinful in the person who was created first (Adam) but it was subsequently completely justified in Christ."* (Sermon 42, interpretation of the Gospel according to St. Luke.)

"....for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus....." (Romans 3:23 & 24)

St. Cyril the Great teaches us thus, from his interpretation of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans:

*"What is our relationship with Adam's sin? Why are we considered responsible for his sin, when we had not even been born when he committed it? Did not God say, **"Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin"** (Deuteronomy 24:16)? How, then, shall we defend this dogma? I say, the soul that sins dies. We have become sinners, due to Adam's disobedience, as follows: after Adam's fall into sin, he succumbed to corruption, and unclean carnal lusts inundated his body's nature.*

Simultaneously, the law of evil developed in our body members. Since our nature contracted the disease of sin, due to one person's disobedience - Adam - many became sinful. This is not because they sinned with Adam - they had not existed then; rather, this is because they have the same nature as Adam's, which fell under the law of sin. Consequently, and precisely in the same fashion that human nature acquired the corruption frailness due to disobedience, and was swept by evil desires, the same nature has been subsequently liberated through Christ, Who was sinless, and Who obeyed God the Father."

Inheritance of sin and death should not be interpreted or understood in the biological or genetic sense; analogously, we cannot explain our

acquisition of salvation and eternal life biologically or genetically. Rather, these should be taken in their true spiritual sense. We were in Adam when he sinned - therefore his sin and its consequences adhered to us, according to the expression of St. Cyril the Great (the sin which adhered to us through the original sin - interpretation of John 19:1 - 3.) Consequently, we are justified through Christ's righteousness, and we live through His life, without any biological or genetic interpretation.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:19)

This is because mankind's entire nature became sinful in the person who was created first (Adam) but it has subsequently been completely justified in Christ (St. Cyril the Great's Sermon 42, interpretation of the Gospel according to St. Luke.)

Sin, righteousness, death and life, are not materially tangible. From this perspective, "inheritance" should not be perceived biologically or genetically, neither in the domain of sin, nor in the realm of righteousness.

Sin is a state of disobedience to God; we inherit this state at birth: ***"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."*** (Psalm 51:5)

Due to Adam's fall, sin, and death, we are born with a fallen, sinful, dead nature. We thus need to be united with Christ to acquire in Him righteousness, life and resurrection.

Such is our Church's Faith, that we received from our forefathers.

Anyone having a different opinion, may discuss it scientifically, in an atmosphere of love, within the boundaries of the theologic institutions, away from people's babble.