



The New Seekers' hit "Look What They've Done to My Song" is the Music Bag feature on Page 11B.

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO ORIGINAL SIN?

In Catechisms

By FR. CARL J. PFEIFER, SJ.

Someone recently asked me if I still believed in Original Sin. I replied that I did. "But how can you, an educated man of the twentieth century, believe such a thing?" "Well," I answered, "of all the Church's teachings I find this one of the easiest to believe simply because I am an educated man alive in the tortured world of the seventies."

I went on to explain something of the difference of approach in the newer religion texts, which reflect another aspect of development in doctrine within the Church. Since the time the Baltimore Catechism was revised in 1941 a wealth of knowledge has been uncovered that makes possible,

even necessitates, a rethinking of the Church's teaching about Original Sin.

Development is a sign of life and health as long as it is in continuity with the Church's tradition. The Vatican Council II states very clearly that the "tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down" (Constitution on Divine Revelation, No. 8).

Most of us adult Catholics learned about Original Sin simply as a truth or doctrine taught by the Church. We learned the words, perhaps imagined it as a stain on the soul, and reflect-

ed on it in the context of the story of Adam and Eve found in the Bible.

Why is the human situation seemingly caught in a whirlpool of evil from which it cannot fully free itself? The Church's developing doctrine of Original Sin is an attempt to make sense out of questions like these, questions that well up out of human experience. The doctrine is not an abstract truth to be memorized as much as an effort, guided by the Holy Spirit, to penetrate the mystery of human misery and evil in a world which is under the constant care of a gracious God.

Faced with the constant human struggle between the powers of selfishness and the call to generosity, the writers of Genesis attempted in the story of the Fall, to make sense out of the experience.

Much later, the story of Adam and Eve was interpreted in terms of a philosophy which had its roots in ancient Greece. The idea of cause and effect allowed for a more sophisticated understanding of the Genesis account. Adam's sin caused an effect in himself and because we are all descendants of him, in all of us. These ill effects

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In Modern Life

By FR. CARL J. PETER

There is something out of kilter in the human condition today. Or more accurately, a greater number are coming to recognize it. The dramatist expresses it, philosophers speak of it, the man on the street is appalled at its appearance. But what is this phenomenon that such different observers are attempting to articulate?

It is evil, indeed an evil that affects the individual human being without his being responsible for it, just because he lives in the world he does. Before he consents to it, or struggles against it, or takes any stance at all in its regard, it is there; it confronts him.

Some are born into an environment in which it is all but impossible for them to develop a strong and healthy body without help from outside.

All are born into a state of dependence on others, without whom they are helpless.

From a moral point of view many, far too many, come at birth or even before it into a

situation where true human affection is lacking, where justice itself is almost never experienced, where generosity and self-sacrifice are absent, where the one law is to take as much as one can while giving as little as one is forced to. Such a context affects a human being before he or she can react to it freely, maturely, and responsibly. This is an all but universally admitted fact today. It is attested to by Christians and by those who honestly profess themselves to be otherwise.

This is why and where the Christian should speak of Original Sin in the first year of another decade. Maybe a new word to describe it is needed if misinterpretation is to be avoided. If this is really so, one should be found that will convey better both what Christians meant and what they believed in long before that term became commonplace.

In particular it must be remembered that in this context the adjective "original" was not intended to refer exclusively to

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