

Critique of the article "Saving Original Sin from the Secularists" by Richard Coleman

"Sin" is not a popular word outside of the Christian church, and in some cases is not even popular inside the church. Humanity does not like to think of itself as flawed, does not like to face conviction, and has a tendency to rebel against any mention of flaws. Indeed, we are constantly trying to improve ourselves with cosmetics, fashion, surgery, and biotechnology. However, this only pushes the acceptance of sin further away—which should be reversed because "Christian theologians have steadfastly insisted that sin tells us something fundamental about the human condition" (Coleman, 395). It is "a Christian doctrine that makes an assertion about our fundamental human nature" (395). Thus, should we be ignorant of something that is key in our human composition?

The biggest challenge Coleman mentions—with which I concur—is the world's focus on "self." Between cosmetic surgery, biotechnology, and the ever-addictive fashion industry, it is very clear that "the temptation to remake ourselves is at the heart of who we are" (402-403). It is all-too-easy to get caught up in the world's quest for evolution and self-awareness, but none of these things account for sin—nor do they make up for righteousness. "We cannot choose...to have faith or choose to be righteous" (395). We ourselves cannot affect our salvation, only the acceptance of it. In addition, to accept sin is to accept the existence of God, and this can be an additional stumbling block for the people of the world (395). If there is no God, there is no sin. If there is no sin, there is no God. Many people are happy with that conclusion these days; if they deny one, they deny the other, and they feel rid of any sort of spiritual obligation or beliefs. Essentially, they then feel they can believe whatever they want.

We, just as Adam and Eve, do not particularly like to own up to our mistakes and often prefer a defensive position when confronted or convicted. For the world to acknowledge original sin, it would have to accept that we cannot "do the good [we want] to do," and that we do "the evil [we did] not intend to do" (402). Yet our human nature clashes with the acceptance of sin.

Because of this, grace is all the more precious, for to receive grace is to acknowledge and repent from sin, which goes against our very nature. This is why we have Christian theologians, pastors, and teachers—“to show why an understanding of human nature matters, and what the consequences are if we have it wrong” (396). It is good, then, that the focus of the gospel is on Jesus—on saving grace and forgiveness and redemption of sins—now perhaps more than ever.

It is imperative, that we stick to the Word of God in that we accept original sin as well as redemption. We must “hold fast to the truth that the remedy for our sinful nature is the free gift of God’s grace as revealed and effected in Jesus Christ” (395). We must deny ourselves and accept that we are flawed, but loved by a Kinsman Redeemer.

Resources

Coleman, Richard J. "Saving Original Sin from the Secularists." *Theology Today* 70, no. 4 (2014): 394–406.