

Nothing if not original

Islam is not original. Mohammed looted and abused stories from Judaism and Christianity, just as he and his cronies looted and abused women and other chattels from caravans. So if it isn't original, is it nothing? There is certainly an emptiness at the heart of Islam. Indeed it is: [The Spectator](#), at least not in so many words:

My worry about Islam, as a religion but also as a growing influence on our culture, isn't that it's violent but that it doesn't believe in original sin.

Now I can see that this isn't going to be a popular camp. Most sensible types revolt at the thought of original sin. It's medieval. It conjures in the public mind a picture of some spittle-flecked pervert in a dog collar making children cry. The idea that Adam and Eve screwed up so badly that their descendants are all fatally flawed seems both unpleasant and unfair. In Islam's creation story, Adam makes a blunder, but is forgiven and restored to God's right hand. Islamic man is therefore born not weak and fallen but perfect, a suitable companion for Allah. This, to a 21st-century mind, might seem the better way.

I disagree. I'm not evangelising, or lobby-ing for a literal interpretation of Genesis. But it seems to me that a nation, a civilisation, which has at its heart the idea that we're all fallen is gentler than one that doesn't. Moreover, as creation stories go, I think it's a far better explanation for humanity; for the way we all behave.

Original sin puts us all in the same boat. It means that no one gets too big for their boots, because we all know we're riddled with besetting sins. It means that we should care for the weak not just because we're told to, but because there but for the grace of God goes everyone.

[...]

The Muslim idea of man as perfect or perfectible is, by contrast, a real bore. Instead of tending towards peace, or the great 'oneness' that Islam aims for, it ends up being divisive. If man can be perfect, there's no excuses for those who have hit the buffers. Worse, it means, inevitably, that some will cast themselves as sinless and set up as judges of the rest. In Islam, because man is perfect, there are those without sin who can cast the first stone, and no one will dare tell them otherwise. You'd need original sin for that.

“Some”? Like Mohammed. And what is perfect may not be questioned. Because Mohammed said so, and his followers will kill you if you do. No conscience will prevent them – a conscience is only for the consciously flawed. And you need original sin for that.

In January, President Al Sisi of Egypt called for a ‘religious revolution’ in Islam. He said: ‘Is it possible that 1.6 billion people [Muslims] should want to kill the rest of the world’s inhabitants – that is 7 billion – so that they themselves may live? Impossible... I am telling you, you cannot feel it if you remain trapped within this mindset. You need to step outside of yourselves to be able to observe it and reflect on it from a more enlightened perspective.’ This was seen as a very progressive speech.

But Sisi’s difficulty is that there really isn’t much in the Quran to suggest that Allah gives a hoot for non-believers. Muslims are encouraged to forgive one another, but it is not required to forgive infidels, the apostate or people who blaspheme. We’re not all in it together.

[...]

I’ve been reading some imams online who use the idea of original sin as a proof of Christianity’s idiocy. Look, say the imams, these Christian fools believe that babies are sinful. How stupid is that? But it’s far from stupid, the idea that we’re all flawed. In fact I’d say it’s both a spiritual and a scientific fact.

Allah requires slaves, not children, and Islam, like all totalitarian ideologies, requires blind obedience. There is no argument, no development, no love and absolutely no jokes. And no tunes. Talking of which, is your Sin Original? A teaching moment from Tom Lehrer – see what I did there?