

One of my favourite stories in the Old Testament is the Adam and Eve stories with their attempts to explain the origins of the world, the universe, and the beginnings of humanity. There are two stories and both are very different. These stories went out of fashion because people thought they were literal accounts of creation, rather than a theological discourse on the consequences of sin.

However, I was reading an article recently which seemed to suggest that these ancient biblical texts may be much nearer the truth than we had hitherto believed. There are some interesting new theories that mankind may have originated in Africa, and that the DNA pool can be traced back to about four people. So it's quite amazing that originally there might well have been a very small group of people, and the Old Testament stories could well have a lot of wisdom, and indeed truth to teach us today.

But of course, St Paul brings out the theology of the Old Testament. He says that Adam is a symbol, a symbol of the whole of Mankind, with all our good and bad points. He says that Eve is the symbol of our flawed nature – it's a mystery we can't understand, and we have tended to call this flaw, 'Original Sin' or as some theologians call it, the original flaw. And again, it's much deeper than that – no 'sin' was committed between two people – and 'woman' certainly wasn't, and isn't more 'flawed' than 'man.'

St Paul points to Jesus as the new Adam. Jesus was born without original sin/flaw – but being fully human He knew the damage of sin, and was a model for us in resisting temptation. Through our Baptism we receive that miracle of grace, if we co-operate with it, which far outweighs that flaw. Confirmation and the other sacraments, are the further means of grace, which continue to strengthen us on our earthly pilgrimage.