

# SAINT THOMAS ON SANCTIFYING GRACE AND ORIGINAL JUSTICE

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF A RECENT CONTROVERSY

CYRIL VOLLERT, S.J.

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE

St. Marys, Kan.

The value of the Thomistic definition of original sin as the privation of original justice depends largely upon the significance of the term "original justice." But what is the doctrine of St. Thomas on the obscure and difficult problem of the nature of primitive justice, and especially what is the relation of sanctifying grace to original justice? Few theological questions have stirred up such spirited debate thus far in the twentieth century as the problem of this relationship. Besides numerous references to the controversy in the newer manuals and the review sections of learned periodicals, several books and over thirty articles have been published on the subject. The sharpest period of the debate, which has extended over the past twenty-five years and more, occurred during the decade from 1921 to 1931. At present there is a lull to the discussion, if not a complete cessation. No adequate, objective survey of the controversy has yet appeared, and nothing at all, so far as I know, in the English language. True, several brief accounts have been published,<sup>1</sup> but these were either too early to take in later developments of the controversy, or are too incomplete or sketchy to be of much utility.

Such debate fortunately often serves, by bringing to light texts, interpretations and arguments, omitted or obscured by disputants with a preconceived thesis, to clarify the problem and thus assist at promoting the quest for truth. My purpose, accordingly, is to examine this controversy by reviewing the principal arguments advanced by both sides, with the intention of determining with some firmness the doctrine of St. Thomas on the relation between sanctifying grace and original justice. Though the reader may not entirely agree with my appraisal of the results of the controversy, he will at any rate have gained an understanding of the importance of the question and of the point at issue.

But before this study is begun two preliminary observations are called for. First, we should note that the discussion is by no means a matter of mere academic interest, an arid closet debate among theologians in search of topics for erudite articles. The subject of the controversy is of consid-

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. among others: J. Coppens, *Une controverse récente sur la nature du péché originel*, in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 1 (1924) 185-191; V. Van Crombrugge, *De relatione quae existit inter Iustitiam Originalem et Gratiam Sanctificantem*, in *Collationes Gandavenses* 13 (1926) 110-114; A. Von Hove, *Heiligmakende gratie en oorspronkelijke gerechtigheid*, in *Collectanea Mechliniensia* 4 (1930) 423-435; same author, *De Erfzonde*, Brussels, 1936, p. 140-147.

erable dogmatic import, because of the corresponding notion of original sin, which is defined by St. Thomas, and is generally understood by modern theologians, as the privation of original justice; consequently, lest the notion of original sin itself remain vague and indefinite, the character of original justice must be clearly grasped. From a further standpoint the subject is of some moment; that is, now that the question has been opened, it will undoubtedly occupy more and more the attention not only of speculative theologians, but of historians of medieval and subsequent theological thought.<sup>2</sup>

A second observation concerns the importance of determining exactly what the issue is. Failure to abide by this basic rule of polemics has resulted, as regards the present case, in much needless confusion and futile argumentation. We should note accordingly that perhaps no modern theologian identifies absolutely original justice with sanctifying grace. All concur that the preternatural gifts of integrity, immortality, extraordinary knowledge, etc., pertain in some way to original justice. There is consequently a distinction between original justice and sanctifying grace, and this is a real, not merely a logical, distinction. We may take this as definitely conceded by all the theologians participating in the discussions. The whole question is this: what *kind* of real distinction, according to St. Thomas, is there between sanctifying grace and original justice—is it a real, *adequate* distinction, such as exists between an efficient cause and its effect; or is it a real, but *inadequate* distinction, such as exists between a part and the whole, or between a formal cause and the subject which it informs? In other words, in the view of St. Thomas, does original justice formally include sanctifying grace, or does it not? This is the point at issue; hence any demonstrations or interpretations of texts advanced to prove merely a real distinction, unless this supposes an adequate distinction, are of the nature of an *ignoratio elenchi*.

With the subject of discussion thus clearly focussed, we can conveniently proceed to our task, a comparative study of the evidence and argumentation adduced by both sides. For the attainment of this object I propose

---

<sup>2</sup>Already a number of such studies, mostly of a preliminary character, have been made. Besides references to be given in the course of this article, which deals only with the doctrine of St. Thomas, cf. J. Bittremieux, *L'essence du péché originel d'après Lessius*, in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 49 (1922) 315-325; *De instante collationis Adamo iustitiae originalis et gratiae: doctrina S. Bonaventurae*, in *Eph. Theol. Lov.* 1 (1924) 168-173; *Iustitia originalis et gratia sanctificans: doctrina Cajetani*, in *Eph. Theol. Lov.* 6 (1929) 633-654; Laurent, O.P., *Quelques notes concernant la pensée de Sylvestre de Ferrare et de Cajetan sur la Justice originelle*, in *Revue Thomiste* 33 (1928) 428-441; A. Fernandez, O.P., *Iustitia originalis et gratia sanctificans, juxta D. Thomam et Cajetanum*, in *Divus Thomas* (Plac.) 34 (1931) 129-146 and 341-360; L. Teixidor, S.J., *Suárez y S. Tomás*, in *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 15 (1936) 67-82. A. Slomkowski, *Relatio gratiam sanctificantem inter et iustitiam originalem secundum doctrinam S. Augustini*, in *Collectanea Theologica* 18 (1937) 32-52. In later articles I hope to examine the teachings of some of the Angelic Doctor's immediate disciples on this important matter.

to examine five capital questions, under which all the important arguments can be grouped.

1. *Is a real, adequate distinction demanded by the doctrine of St. Thomas that original justice is a gift to nature, while sanctifying grace is a gift to the person?*

The first important study of the doctrine of St. Thomas on the relation between sanctifying grace and original justice was published in 1915 by R. M. Martin, O.P.,<sup>3</sup> who argued that the *Summa Contra Gentiles* teaches an adequate distinction between the two, since original justice pertains essentially to the natural order. For the Angelic Doctor explicitly says that the first sin of the first man deprived him not only of a personal good, namely grace, but also of a good pertaining to common nature; for human nature was so instituted in the beginning that the inferior faculties were perfectly subjected to the reason, and the reason to God, and the body to the soul, God by His grace supplying what was wanting to nature. And this good, which goes by the name of original justice, was conferred upon the first man in such wise that it was to have been passed on to his posterity along with human nature.<sup>4</sup>

Martin points out that in human nature there are many elements: body, soul, substance, faculties, and the inclinations proper to each of these elements. The body and the corporal senses do not tend toward the same end as the soul with its faculties. Evidently, a nature so constituted is imperfect; it would be more perfect if the various component parts were aligned in hierarchic order, so that the inferior elements would be under the influence of the superior, and would tend to the same end, the end proper to human nature. In this case the senses would never resist reason and will, and these latter faculties would be wholly subject to the first principle of nature, that is, God.<sup>5</sup>

Such a hierarchical subjection would belong, in itself, entirely to the natural order, *in linea naturae*; it would not pertain to the supernatural order, though it would complete and crown the natural edifice. Such is the teaching of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. This hierarchical subjec-

<sup>3</sup>The origins of the controversy may be said to go back to the year 1911; for in that year Father Martin, writing in the *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, p. 825, complained that Cesare Manzoni in his recently published *Compendium Theologiae Dogmaticae*, Vol. II, wrongly quotes St. Thomas as defining original sin to be privation of sanctifying grace. Martin could find no such definition in St. Thomas, who invariably holds that original sin is the defect or privation of original justice; and surely the two do not mean the same thing to Aquinas, for he distinguishes grace and original justice as cause and effect.

<sup>4</sup>*Contra Gent.* 4, §2 ad 1.

<sup>5</sup>R. M. Martin, O.P., *La doctrina sobre el pecado original en la "Summa contra Gentiles,"* in *La Ciencia Tomista* 10 (1915) 397.

tion, of course, does not proceed from any natural cause, but is the effect of a higher principle, divine grace. In this happy state Adam was created; and the gift of original justice, precisely because it was in itself a perfection of the natural order, was to have been transmitted along with nature to all the descendants of Adam.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, reasons Martin, we learn from St. Thomas that original justice consists of three elements, with a triple subjection: the reason was absolutely subject to God, the lower faculties followed in all things the lead of the reason, and the body was entirely dependent on the soul. But original justice so conceived is clearly distinct from sanctifying grace. For sanctifying grace is, according to Aquinas, a *personal* gift, conferred on each individual in particular, while original justice is a common gift, a prerogative added to human *nature*, as we read in the response to the first objection: actual sins deprive the person of grace, while the sin of Adam deprived him not only of this personal good, grace, but further of a good pertaining to the whole of nature.<sup>7</sup>

Canon J. Bittremieux, Professor at the University of Louvain, arrived at the same conclusion from a study of other works of the Angelic Doctor,<sup>8</sup> in which original justice is exhibited as a perfection of nature, consisting in the perfect harmony of human nature, in that the reason is subject to God, the inferior powers of the soul to the reason, and the body to the soul; of these three subordinations the first is the cause of the second, and the second of the third. Quite different is the notion of sanctifying grace, which is also a divine gift, but of the supernatural order. Unlike original justice, grace is not a perfection affecting nature as such, but is above nature, since it is essentially supernatural, is the principle of merit for eternal life, is a participation in the divine life.<sup>9</sup> Hence, while original justice is a gift accorded to nature, grace is a strictly personal gift: the term of spiritual generation is the perfection of the *person*; the merit of

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 398.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 398-399. The italics in the citation from *Contra Gent.* 4, 52 ad 1 are Martin's: "Peccata igitur actualia . . . adimunt aliquod bonum *personae* peccantis, puta *gratiam* . . . Primum autem peccatum primi hominis non solum peccantem destituit *proprio et personali bono*, scilicet *gratia* . . . sed etiam *bono ad naturam communem pertinente*."

<sup>8</sup>*II Sent.* d.20, q.2, a.3; d.32, q.1, a.1, ad 1; *De Malo* 5, 1; *Contra Gent.* 4, 52 corp. et ad 3; *Summa Theol.* I, q.95, a.1; I-II, q.85, a.3; *Ad Rom.* c.5, lect. 3; *Compend. Theol.* cc. 191, 192.

<sup>9</sup>J. Bittremieux, *La distinction entre la justice originelle et la grâce sanctifiante d'après Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, in *Revue Thomiste* 26 (1921) 125-126. As evidence for his description of grace Bittremieux cites the *Summa* I-II, q.111, a.4; II-II, q.24, a.3 ad 2; I-II, q.110, a.4. It is only fair to add that these texts deal with the nature of sanctifying grace in itself, prescinding entirely from the question of sanctifying grace in relation to original justice. It is further to be remarked that the author's statement: "Or deux réalités d'ordre si différent ne sauraient être identiques" is poorly worded, as no one holds a brief for their identity.

Adam's penance was not transferred to others, since its principle was *grace* given to him *personally*; original sin destroyed the transferable good of *nature*, while actual sins destroy *personal grace*, which cannot pass to posterity.<sup>10</sup> The sin of Adam is at once a personal sin and a sin of nature: personal, in that it deprived him of sanctifying grace; a sin of nature, in that it despoiled him and his posterity of the good belonging to nature. Hence in our first father, before the fall, there were two distinct gifts: the personal gift of sanctifying grace, and the gift pertaining to the whole of human nature, original justice.<sup>11</sup>

J.-B. Kors, O.P., whose important book<sup>12</sup> appeared in 1922, does not add much to this argument as developed by his predecessors. He does point out, however, that Martin was wrong in asserting<sup>13</sup> that the *Commentary on the Sentences* of St. Thomas does not treat explicitly of the relation between sanctifying grace and original justice. It is manifest, affirms Kors, that in the *Sentences* Aquinas expressly distinguishes the two gifts; for the Saint describes a twofold justice: original justice by which man was subjected to God, and gratuitous justice by which man was enabled to elicit meritorious acts.<sup>14</sup> This, insists Kors, is beyond question; sanctifying grace is a personal gift, original justice is a prerogative of nature; for according to St. Thomas Adam through penance could recover the gifts bestowed on him for the performance of personal acts, namely grace and the virtues; but he could not recover those gifts which had been conferred upon the whole human race, such as immortality and the submission of the lower faculties to the reason.<sup>15</sup>

To illustrate the definitive doctrine of St. Thomas, Kors bases an argument on certain expressions in which the Angelic Doctor says that God bestowed original justice upon man because of the divinity of the rational soul, supplying by this gift what was lacking to human nature.<sup>16</sup> Original

<sup>10</sup>II *Sent.* d.32, q.1, a.2 ad 3; *De Malo* 4, 6 ad 19; *Ad Rom.* c.5, lect. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Bittremieux, *art. cit.*, p. 127-129.

<sup>12</sup>*La Justice Primitive et le Péché Originel d'après S. Thomas*, Vol. II of the "Bibliothèque Thomiste," Kain, 1922, reprinted Paris, 1930. Seldom has a learned work been so frequently quoted, so enthusiastically praised and vigorously attacked as this dissertation, which Father Kors presented for the doctorate at the University of Fribourg. The book is divided into two parts. The first, an historical inquiry into the development of the doctrine of primitive justice and original sin from St. Augustine to St. Thomas, is designed to establish continuity between the teaching of St. Thomas and preceding theological thought. In the second part Kors undertakes a doctrinal study of Aquinas on the relation between original justice and sanctifying grace, and with many arguments concludes to an adequate distinction between the two.

<sup>13</sup>In *La Ciencia Tomista* 11 (1915) 225: "Nada hallamos de explícito en el Comentario sobre las Sentencias tocante á las relaciones y á la diferencia entre la gracia y la justicia original."

<sup>14</sup>II *Sent.* d.20, q.2, a.3.

<sup>15</sup>Kors, *op. cit.*, p. 90. The argument is based on II *Sent.*, d.29, q.1, a.2 ad 5.

<sup>16</sup>*Ad Rom.* c.5, lect. 3.

justice, accordingly, though surpassing the forces of nature, is not out of proportion to the dignity of the soul; sanctifying grace, however, does to an infinite degree surpass the dignity of the soul, seeing that it belongs essentially to the supernatural order. The mode of expression employed by St. Thomas clearly supposes therefore a formal distinction between sanctifying grace and original justice.<sup>17</sup>

This interpretation, insists Bittremieux, is confirmed by the description of the manner in which the two gifts are received: grace is *infused*, according to St. Thomas, while original justice was to have been *transmitted* along with nature by way of heredity. To this conclusion Bittremieux comes after an examination of the terms *transfundi*, *traduci*, *derivari*, *propagari*, *transire ad posteros*, as they occur in many texts of St. Thomas. Since sanctifying grace is a purely personal perfection it cannot be transmitted by generation, but original justice, a gift accorded by God to nature, could in this manner be communicated.<sup>18</sup>

The first to reply to this argument based on the distinction between the *donum naturae* and the *donum personae* was J. Van der Meersch, who in an article closely paralleling the exposition of Canon Bittremieux re-examined the passages from St. Thomas cited by the latter and Martin, but arrived at a quite different conclusion. We must determine, he declares, in what sense the *Contra Gentiles* refers to the triple subjection as *donum naturae* and to sanctifying grace as *donum personae*. These terms are used, he replies, because the triple subjection is a perfection which does not in itself transcend human nature, and so could be transmitted along with human nature as an accident thereof; while sanctifying grace, an entitatively supernatural perfection, does transcend nature, and hence cannot be transmitted with nature in the same sense as the gift of integrity. And since sanctifying grace is given to enable man to elicit meritorious acts, which are personal acts, it is rightly from this viewpoint termed a personal gift as opposed to a gift to nature. But if we consider the *intention of God* in bestowing both these gifts, we cannot say that St. Thomas teaches that grace was given to the first man as an individual rather than as the human principle of nature; St. Thomas nowhere denies that gratuitous justice was given to the whole human race in Adam.<sup>19</sup>

Professor J. Naulaerts of the Grand Seminaire de Malines similarly asserts that to avoid such quibbles we must note that grace and rectitude of reason constituted in Adam at once a good of nature and a personal good, just as his first sin was both a personal sin and a sin of nature.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Kors, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>18</sup>*Revue Thomiste* 26 (1921) 129, 130.

<sup>19</sup>J. Van der Meersch, *De distinctione inter justitiam originalem et gratiam sanctificantem*, in *Collationes Brugenses* 22 (1922) 429-431. Cf. the similar view of Garrigou-Lagrange in *Angelicum* 2 (1925) 69.

<sup>20</sup>*Quid est justitia originalis?*, in *La Vie Diocésaine* 12 (1923) 554.

According to E. Hugon, O.P.,<sup>21</sup> the proposition that sanctifying grace was a gift conferred on human nature is evident, once we concede that man was created in the state of grace. For St. Thomas says that in the hypothesis that man was created in grace, gratuitous justice was seemingly bestowed on human nature, and hence with the propagation of nature grace would always be infused.<sup>22</sup> This opinion St. Thomas favored as a young man.<sup>23</sup> In the *Summa* however he unreservedly states that Adam was created in grace, and so without misgivings asserts that grace was a gift to human nature to be transmitted with nature, so that if children were born in original justice, they would be born also in the state of grace.<sup>24</sup>

G. Huarte, S.J., who previously to Hugon had suggested the same argument, proposes another: in the *Summa* St. Thomas considers the objection that grace cannot be transmitted by generation, but is infused by God alone, and hence children would not have been born in the state of justice.<sup>25</sup> To this the Angelic Doctor replies: since the root of original justice consists in the supernatural subjection of the reason to God, which is effected by grace, children necessarily, if born in original justice, must have been born also with grace; but grace would not on this account be natural, because it would not have been handed on by virtue of seminal generation, but would have been conferred on man the instant he received a rational soul.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, reasons Huarte, it avails nothing to say that St. Thomas in speaking of original justice uses the terms *transfunditur*, *traducitur*, *derivatur*, *propagatur*, *transit ad posteros*, while in connection with grace he employs the word *infunditur*. For St. Thomas by no means denies that grace would have been transmitted (*transfundenda*) to posterity; all he denies is that it would have been transmitted *per virtutem seminis*. Hence, because this is impossible, grace is said to be infused by God; because however grace would have been infused by God whenever nature was propagated by generation, in this sense it can be termed a gift bestowed on human nature.<sup>27</sup> Even in the opinion of those who argue for an adequate distinction, sanctifying grace must be thus transmitted, for it is in their theory the efficient cause of original justice, which they say is transmitted with nature.<sup>28</sup>

The same view is stated still more clearly by A. Vandenberghe. The gift of grace, he says, belonging as it does to the divine order, is not con-

<sup>21</sup>*De Gratia Primi Hominis*, in *Angelicum* 4 (1927) 377.

<sup>22</sup>*ISent.*, d.20, q.2, a.3

<sup>23</sup>"Hoc tamen probabilis est," *ibid.*, d.29, q.1, a.2.

<sup>24</sup>*Summa Theol.*, I, q.100, a.1, ad 2.

<sup>25</sup>*Summa Theol.*, I, q.100, a.1.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, ad 2.

<sup>27</sup>G. Huarte, S.J., *De distinctione inter iustitiam originalem et gratiam sanctificantem*, in *Gregorianum* 5 (1924) 193-194.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 195. Cf. similar argumentation by J. Stufler, S.J., in *Zeitschrift für Kat. Theol.* 47 (1923) 80.

nected with nature as an accident of nature, but is immediately produced by God alone. Nevertheless it can be said to be given to *nature*, to be transmitted with nature, in as much as the term of the generative act of the parents was to have been a human being elevated to the supernatural plane. Hence St. Thomas to express the difference between the preternatural gifts and grace *with regard to the mode of infusion*, at times refers to grace as a *personal* gift, in opposition to the preternatural gifts which are invariably called *dona naturae*.<sup>29</sup>

As a result of this discussion we are perfectly safe in concluding that the argument based on St. Thomas' usage of the terms *donum naturae* and *donum personae* by no means proves a real, *adequate* distinction between original justice and sanctifying grace.

2. *Is a real, adequate distinction taught by St. Thomas in as much as he considers sanctifying grace the efficient cause of original justice?*

If sanctifying grace is the efficient cause of original justice, this necessarily of course implies an adequate distinction between the two. That such is the true mind of St. Thomas was argued by Father Martin at the very outset of the controversy. According to *Contra Gentiles*, he declared, original justice consisted in a triple subjection: the reason was wholly submitted to God, the inferior faculties were in all things under the dominion of the reason, the body was completely dependent on the soul. Since such subjection cannot be the effect of any natural cause, it must proceed from a higher principle, and this is sanctifying grace, as the Angelic Doctor teaches when he states that God by grace supplies what nature is incapable of accomplishing in this regard.<sup>30</sup>

In similar fashion Bittremieux pleads for an adequate distinction between sanctifying grace and original justice on account of their relationship of cause and effect. St. Thomas clearly affirms that grace is the cause of original justice in a categorical statement in the *Summa Theologica*,<sup>31</sup> from which we learn that the subjection of the reason to God in the state of original justice was due to the supernatural gift of grace; and since this subjection of the reason to God is the cause of the subjection of the inferior powers to the reason and of the body to the soul, sanctifying grace

<sup>29</sup>A. Vandenberghe, *De Peccato Originali*, in *Collationes Brugenses* 38 (1938) 38 note 1.

<sup>30</sup>*La Ciencia Tomista* 10 (1915) 398. Martin cites *Contra Gent.* 4, 52: "sua gratia supplente quod ad hoc perficiendum natura minus habebat"; also ad 1: "De per gratiam supplente id quod ad hoc deerat per naturam."

<sup>31</sup>*Summa Theol.* I, q.95, a.1: "Erat enim haec rectitudo secundum hoc, quod ratio subdebatur Deo, rationi vero inferiores vires, et animae corpus. Prima autem subiectio erat causa et secundae et tertiae . . . illa prima subiectio, qua ratio Deo subdebatur, non erat solum secundum naturam, sed secundum supernaturale donum gratiae; non enim potest esse quod effectus sit potior quam causa."



is the cause of the whole of original justice. In another passage St. Thomas replaces the word *cause* with *root*<sup>32</sup>: the root of original justice consists in the supernatural subjection of the reason to God. This supernatural subjection effected by grace (in the supernatural order) is accordingly the cause of the whole of original justice, and thus also of the subjection, *in linea naturali*, of the will to God. Thus sanctifying grace had in our first parents a twofold effect: in the supernatural order this effect was the supernatural subjection of the will to God; in the natural order, the effect was the rectitude of the whole of nature.<sup>33</sup>

A somewhat clearer exposition of the function of grace as the cause of original justice is provided by Kors. Grace is required, he explains, because the complete submission of the body to the soul and of the sensitive appetites to the rational appetite and the reason surpasses the forces of nature. Hence the reason, to dominate the inferior powers, required an additional, and a supernatural, force. This came from sanctifying grace; only grace could assure the supernatural and habitual subjection of the will to God, precisely because God alone can exert an intrinsic influence upon the human will. Hence with reason St. Thomas asserts that man was created in the state of grace. From all this follows the conclusion that grace was the efficient cause of original justice; and in fact St. Thomas nowhere says that the rectitude of the first state consisted in the possession of sanctifying grace, but that it required grace as its *radix*.<sup>34</sup>

Against this interpretation the defenders of an inadequate distinction recognize, of course, that there is a relationship of causality between sanctifying grace and original justice, but they contend that grace is not the efficient, but the *formal* cause, and hence is formally included in the essence of original justice, according to the Thomistic dictum: *Causa formalis simul est cum suo effectu formali, qui est esse hoc, et non esse contrarium*. To this A. Michel of the Institute Catholique, Lille, adds that the form is the incomplete principle, *ens quo*, by which a subject becomes this or that subject. Thus in Adam sanctifying grace had the formal effect of rendering him, and in him human nature, perfectly just, with a justice that excluded all revolt of the reason against God, and of the inferior powers against reason, and of the body against the soul.<sup>35</sup>

According to Van der Meersch St. Thomas teaches that sanctifying grace is not only included in original justice, but constitutes its principal element. For not only does the Saint state explicitly: "original justice included

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, q. 100, a.1 ad 2: "radix originalis iustitiae . . . consistat in subiectione supernaturali rationis ad Deum, quae est per gratiam gratum facientem."

<sup>33</sup>*Revue Thomiste* 26 (1921) 131-135.

<sup>34</sup>*La Justice Primitive et le Péché Originel*, p. 137-139.

<sup>35</sup>A. Michel, *La Grâce sanctifiante et la Justice originelle*, in *Revue Thomiste* 26 (1921) 428.

sanctifying grace,<sup>36</sup> but he further declares that he holds the opposite opinion to be false. For, since original justice primarily consisted in the subjection of the mind to God—and this can be stable only through grace—original justice is impossible without grace.<sup>37</sup> St. Thomas, then, holds that sanctifying grace is included in the concept of original justice, therefore that it is an intrinsic element thereof. Why does he hold this? Because without grace original justice, which “primarily consists in the subjection of the human mind to God,” cannot be constant. There is question here of *habitual* subjection, which cannot be securely effected without a supernatural habit, namely sanctifying grace; and hence the Angelic Doctor concludes that original justice is a title to the beatific vision, since he who is constituted in original justice is supernaturally turned toward God. Thus grace is seen to be the *formal cause* of the subjection of the intellect and will to God in the state of original justice.<sup>38</sup>

More clearly still does St. Thomas advocate this relation of formal causality in the *Summa*, where he teaches that since the root of original justice consists in the supernatural subjection of the reason to God, which is brought about through sanctifying grace, it is necessary to conclude that if children were born in original justice, they must be born also with grace.<sup>39</sup> Thus the *radix* of original justice is the supernatural subjection of the reason to God, a subjection which is effected by sanctifying grace; in other words, grace is the formal cause of such subjection. Sanctifying grace, therefore, since it is the root of original justice, is embraced in the concept of original justice; for the root is an element intrinsic to the plant, and is included in the concept of the plant. Original justice consequently is indeed really distinct from grace, but *inadequately*.<sup>40</sup>

This reasoning is not accepted by J. Coppens, who remarks that St. Thomas never mentions grace as exercising a formal causality, but rather explains original integrity as a *redundance* resulting from the sanctifying grace conferred upon Adam.<sup>41</sup> If we distinguish with St. Thomas the preternatural subjection of the higher faculties to the divine law and their supernatural union with God, we see that these are two distinct realities, perfectly conceivable as independent of each other. It follows that original justice includes only the natural subjection. Coppens admits, however, that St. Thomas in several passages mentions the state of original justice as including not only the gift of integrity but also of sanctifying grace.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup>*De Malo*, q.4, a.2 ad 1, e tertia serie obiectionum: “originalis iustitia includit gratiam gratum facientem.”

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, q.5, a.1 ad 13.

<sup>38</sup>*Collationes Brugenses* 22 (1922) 506-507.

<sup>39</sup>*Summa Theol.*, I, q.100, a.1 ad 2.

<sup>40</sup>*Collationes Brugenses* 22 (1922) 510-511.

<sup>41</sup>*De Malo*, q.3, a.7: “fiebat quaedam perfectionis redundancia in alias vires.” In this context, however, there is absolutely no mention of grace; what St. Thomas says is this: “Sicut autem ex originali iustitia, per quam voluntas Deo coniungebatur, fiebat quaedam perfectionis redundancia in alias vires, ita . . .” etc. There is nothing in this article, entitled “Utrum ignorantia sit peccatum,” which in any way touches the present discussion.

<sup>42</sup>*Eph. Theol. Lov.*, 1 (1924) 190.

The interpretation favored by Kors and Bittremieux is inadmissible, insists Huarte, since it implies a twofold orientation toward God, one in the supernatural, the other in the natural order—a doctrine foreign to the teaching of St. Thomas. The reason why grace is termed the root of original justice is obvious: from the subjection of the mind to God formally through grace arose the subjection of the inferior faculties to God and of the body to the soul. This connection however between sanctifying grace and the other prerogatives of original justice is not *ex natura rei*, but results from a special dispensation of Providence; hence in the justification of the sinner and in regeneration by baptism grace is indeed restored, but not the remaining gifts of original justice.<sup>43</sup>

Among other arguments adduced to show that in the state of original justice sanctifying grace formally subjects the reason and will to God in the supernatural order, Huarte proposes one based upon a passage from St. Thomas which declares that in baptism original justice is restored to the extent that the superior part of the soul is united with God, but not to the extent that the lower powers are subordinated to the reason.<sup>44</sup> Hence we may formulate this syllogism: by baptism original sin is forgiven and original justice restored not indeed completely, but inasmuch as the superior part of the soul is united to God as it was in our first parents prior to their sin; in baptism this is effected formally through sanctifying grace; therefore also in original justice the soul was formally subjected to God through grace.<sup>45</sup>

Against this entire line of reasoning A. Van Hove protests that we stand here in the presence of two different concepts: subjection of the soul to God—a subjection which perfects man *in linea naturae*—does not imply elevation to the supernatural order, for notwithstanding a close mutual bond, *subiectio rationis ad Deum* is not the same as *consortium divinae naturae*. And it does not follow that man has a twofold end; for the more easily to attain the supernatural end, man's reason and will can receive a special gratuitous gift which frees them from every inordinate motion, but which is not in itself supernatural.<sup>46</sup>

Nor does the argument from the parallel of infusion of grace in baptism impress Van Hove. For baptism directs man's soul to God not in the same manner as in the preternatural subjection of the soul to God in the hypothesis according to which this is the formal element of original justice, but in a better and more exalted manner. We have regained more from

<sup>43</sup>*Gregorianum* 5 (1924) 187-188.

<sup>44</sup>*De Malo*, q.4, a.2 ad 2 ex ultima serie obiectionum: "iustitia originalis restituitur in baptismo quantum ad hoc quod superior pars animae coniungitur Deo, per cuius privationem inerat reatus culpae, sed non quantum ad hoc quod rationi subiciantur inferiores vires."

<sup>45</sup>*Gregorianum*, loc. cit., p. 188-189.

<sup>46</sup>*De Erfzonde*, p. 143.

grace than a recovery of original justice as such.<sup>47</sup> And so we can understand how St. Thomas dares to say that baptism restores original justice: the meaning is that baptism turns the will back to God and thus completely removes the sinfulness of the privation of original justice.<sup>48</sup>

A strong argument against the view of sanctifying grace as efficient cause of original justice is suggested by R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., who in recalling the statement of St. Thomas that *gratia gratum faciens includitur in ratione iustitiae originalis*, continues: but that which is included *in ratione alicuius* is surely not the efficient cause, otherwise God would be included *in ratione creaturae*. So it cannot be maintained that grace, which is called the *radix* of original justice, was only the *radix externa*; for St. Thomas insists that original justice pertained above all to the essence of the soul.<sup>49</sup> Therefore original justice was primarily the entitative habit of sanctifying grace, since assuredly there were not *two* entitative habits in the essence of the soul, namely the habit of natural integrity and the habit of sanctifying grace.<sup>50</sup> The statement, then, of St. Thomas that grace was the root of original justice favors the interpretation of an inadequate distinction, for the root is an intrinsic thing, as for example the root of a tree is a part of the tree. Thus, just as the essence of the soul is the *radix* of the soul's faculties, so sanctifying grace which is included in original justice is the *radix* thereof. Original justice therefore consisted in this triple subjection: subjection of the mind to God, especially through the theological virtues; of the inferior faculties to the reason, principally through the moral virtues; and of the body to the soul, because of the privilege of immunity from pain and death.<sup>51</sup>

Hugon similarly points out that a *radix* which is included *in ratione alicuius* cannot be extrinsic, but is the intrinsic, formal cause; and rightly, he says, does St. Thomas employ the term *radix*, for sanctifying grace was not the whole of original justice, which embraced other gifts also.<sup>52</sup>

From the foregoing debate on the causal function of sanctifying grace, the conclusion would seem to be that St. Thomas regarded grace as the formal principle of original justice, and hence that the two are really but inadequately distinct, *velut pars a toto*. Van Hove's insistence on the distinction between the concepts *subiectio rationis ad Deum* and *consortium*

<sup>47</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 155. Van Hove refers to II *Sent.*, d.32, q.2, a.2: "cum remaneat in natura facultas ad recuperandum illud quod deperditum est, vel aliquid eo excellentius." There is nothing in this passage to indicate that this "aliquid excellentius" is other in *kind* rather than *degree* from "illud quod deperditum est"; or on the other hand, that it may not refer to the eventual life of glory. <sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>49</sup>*Summa Theol.*, I-II, q.83, a.2 ad 2: "originalis iustitia pertinebat primordialiter ad essentiam animae."

<sup>50</sup>Cf. the same argument which Naulaerts had previously proposed in *La Vie Diocésaine* 12 (1923) 553, with slightly different emphasis.

<sup>51</sup>*Angelicum* 2 (1925) 140-142.

<sup>52</sup>*Angelicum* 4 (1927) 376.

*divinae naturae* argues no more than that sanctifying grace is not the same as original justice. The nature of sanctifying grace in itself, pre-scinding from its function in original justice, is indeed admirably represented as the *consortium divinae naturae*; but this does not exclude the view that in the complexus of gifts called original justice grace is the formal cause of the supernatural *subiectio rationis ad Deum*.

3. Is a real, adequate distinction taught by St. Thomas on the ground that he considers sanctifying grace a "*conditio sine qua non*" of original justice?

As we have repeatedly seen, St. Thomas clearly manifests his opinion that sanctifying grace is included in the concept of original justice. His argument runs thus: original justice consists principally in the subordination of the intellect to God; this subordination however cannot remain constant without grace; therefore grace is necessary for the existence of original justice.<sup>53</sup> Father Kors, for all that, affirms that it is not apparent precisely in what sense the Angelic Doctor here understands the relation between grace and original justice: is grace the formal element, or the efficient cause, or only a *conditio sine qua non* of original justice? In the argument just proposed Kors inclines to the opinion that grace is a mere condition required for the stability of original justice, although he recognizes that other texts indicate a causal function on the part of grace.<sup>54</sup>

With somewhat greater firmness, in spite of the inconsistency with his contention that grace is the efficient cause of original justice, Kors considers sanctifying grace as a *conditio sine qua non* of original justice when he comes to the problem of the transmission of primitive justice. The difficulty is this: since the rectitude of our nature is impossible without grace, grace would have been demanded by the fact of generation, and therefore in the state of original justice grace would have been propagated along with nature. To this objection he replies: grace would not have been demanded by virtue of generation, for generation would have required only a nature endowed with rectitude. That grace is a condition required for the possession of rectitude is accidental; in the species, grace would have been no more than a *conditio sine qua non*. Hence original justice would have pertained to the propagated nature, but not so sanctifying grace, which is a personal gift. God would have given grace to each person at birth, so as to procure for him that which would have been his due by virtue of generation, namely original justice.<sup>55</sup>

To this reasoning Garrigou-Lagrangé replies simply that grace cannot be merely an extrinsic *conditio sine qua non*, for it exercises a *positive in-*

<sup>53</sup>*De Malo*, q.5, a.1 ad 13.

<sup>54</sup>*La Justice Primitive et le Péché Originel*, p. 93.

<sup>55</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 140-141.

<sup>56</sup>*Angelicum* 2 (1925) 140.

fluence, in as much as the subjection of the intellect and will to God *firma esse non potest nisi per gratiam*. This habitual subjection is the formal effect of the infused virtue of charity, which proceeds from grace.<sup>56</sup>

It is evident that this particular argument is of little use for the solution of our problem, nor has it found favor with the advocates of the adequate distinction.

4. *Is an adequate distinction taught by St. Thomas on the ground that original justice is a disposition for sanctifying grace?*

According to Bittremieux an adequate distinction is demanded by the doctrine set forth in an article of extreme importance in *De Malo*,<sup>57</sup> where St. Thomas teaches explicitly that while sanctifying grace is necessary for the attainment of supernatural beatitude, original justice is required not that man be immediately directed to his supernatural end, but that his complex nature, composed as it is of intellectual and sensual elements, be constituted in perfect harmony, so as thus to be disposed (negatively of course) for the reception of sanctifying grace.<sup>58</sup> Original justice consequently disposed man for the communication of grace, as grace disposes him for the beatific vision. God, after endowing man with the wonderful harmony of original justice, crowned His work by infusing into man's soul the supernatural gift of sanctifying grace. Since, then, original justice is only a *negative* disposition in the natural order, the two gifts must be entirely distinct.<sup>59</sup>

Bittremieux anticipates the obvious objection: in this doctrine original justice is at the same time a disposition for the reception of grace, and is caused by grace; is this not contradictory? How can original justice be at once a disposition and an effect with regard to grace?<sup>60</sup> We have here, he answers, simultaneity of time, but not of nature; on the part of original justice there is priority in the field of material causality, while on the part of grace there is priority in the field of efficient causality.<sup>61</sup>

This difficulty is attacked by Kors in somewhat different fashion. It suffices to observe, he explains, that in every substantial change the final

<sup>57</sup>*De Malo*, q. 5, a. 1 corp.: "hoc auxilium, quo continetur corpus sub anima, et vires sensitivae sub mente intellectuali, est quasi *dispositio* quadam ad illud auxilium, quo mens humana ordinatur ad videndum Deum et ad fruendum ipso." Bittremieux underscores the word *dispositio*, and comments: "négativement, cela s'entend."

<sup>58</sup>*Revue Thomiste* 26 (1921) 126-127. <sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 135. <sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 139. In a footnote Bittremieux cites *De Veritate*, q. 28, a. 8: "Et est simile in rebus naturalibus de dispositione quae est necessitas ad formam, quae quodammodo praecedit formam substantialem, scilicet secundum rationem causae materialis. Dispositio enim materialis ex parte materiae se tenet; sed alio modo, scilicet ex parte causae formalis, forma substantialis est prior, in quantum perficit et materiam, et accidentia materialia," apparently not noticing how fatal to his theory is this passage, which has to do with *formal*, not *efficient* causality.

dispositions of matter with regard to the new form proceed from this form itself; hence we must distinguish between remote dispositions (*dispositiones praeviae*) and proximate dispositions (*dispositiones ultimae*). The final dispositions of matter, which are necessary only at the instant of the appearance of the new form, can result from the form itself. It is thus that original justice is at once an effect of sanctifying grace and a disposition for this grace.<sup>62</sup>

Concerning this whole doctrine Stufler tartly remarks that if rectitude of nature is a disposition for grace, it cannot be an effect of grace, for an effect presupposes its cause, but does not dispose to it. And to escape the inconsistency of a vicious circle, it avails nothing to apply the Thomistic theory of mutual causality and substantial change, wherein the *dispositio ultima* results from the form itself; for according to Kors grace is related to original justice not as form to matter, but as efficient cause to effect.<sup>63</sup>

As to the passage from *De Malo* which Bittremieux quotes to substantiate his reading of the thought of St. Thomas, Michel offers this explanation: one of the emanations of sanctifying grace was the preternatural gift of integrity, which was so intimately united to its principle that it called necessarily for grace. It is when St. Thomas speaks of original justice as a synonym for the gift of integrity that he represents it as a disposition for grace. Thus is explained a difficulty in terminology which is advanced as a reason demanding an adequate distinction.<sup>64</sup>

But it is Father Huarte who goes to the root of the problem. The whole difficulty vanishes, he shows, if we but look at the response to the thirteenth objection in the same article from which Bittremieux drew his argument. The question at issue is whether the punishment of original sin is privation of the beatific vision. Against this proposition St. Thomas cites the objection: "Original sin is the privation of original justice; but the beatific vision is not due to a person possessing original justice, since such a one can lack grace; therefore neither to original sin corresponds the privation of the beatific vision."<sup>65</sup> In other words, since a person in the state of original justice can lack the title to the beatific vision anyway, we cannot

<sup>62</sup>*La Justice Primitive et le Péché Originel*, p. 139.

<sup>63</sup>*Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 47 (1923) 80-81.

<sup>64</sup>*Revue Thomiste* 26 (1921) 429. Cf. L. Teixidor, S.J., *Una cuestión lexicográfica. El uso de la palabra, justicia original, en Santo Tomás de Aquino*, in *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 6 (1927) 337-376 and 8 (1929) 23-41. Teixidor concluded from his lengthy lexicographical study that St. Thomas uses the term "original justice" in various senses, sometimes comprehending in it more meaning than at others; but that in its full significance it includes grace as well as integrity. Teixidor has no doubt that for St. Thomas sanctifying grace is the principal element in original justice as this term is employed in the definition of original sin.

<sup>65</sup>*De Malo*, q.5, a.1, object. 13.

say that privation of the beatific vision is due to the loss of original justice.

To this objection St. Thomas replies: "This reasoning proceeds according to the opinion of those who hold that sanctifying grace is not included in the concept of original justice; which I for my part think is false. But even supposing this opinion, still the argument does not conclude; because, even if original justice did not include grace, nevertheless it was a pre-requisite disposition for grace; and hence whatever is opposed to original justice is opposed to grace."<sup>66</sup>

From this response, continues Huarte, it is altogether clear that in the *corpus* of the article (in which Bittremieux found his text) St. Thomas reasons according to the opinion of those who hold that grace is not included in original justice, not according to his own opinion; because even prescindendo from his own opinion he could still show how the loss of the beatific vision would be the fitting punishment of original sin. But in the response to the thirteenth objection, where he touches on the relation between original justice and grace, he explicitly affirms that grace is included in original justice, and solves the difficulty in accordance with this doctrine.<sup>67</sup>

Besides, the proponents of the adequate distinction in their endeavor to explain how grace can be at one and the same time both prior and posterior to original justice say that the ultimate disposition for a form and the form itself are temporally simultaneous. However, this mutual priority can obtain only between the *ultimate* disposition and the form, not between the form and more remote dispositions, which can exist independently of the form, and so cannot result from the form. But the adversaries make the disposition in question the *very remotest of all*, for they expressly assert that it is merely *negative*.<sup>68</sup>

In view of these reasons, the argument based on the function of original justice as disposition for sanctifying grace seems to possess no force whatever for establishing an adequate distinction between the two.

5. *Must we conclude that St. Thomas taught an adequate distinction between grace and original justice, because thus original justice and original sin can be more easily explained?*

This argument is perhaps best outlined by A. Van Hove in his recent

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, ad 13: "Ad decimumtertium dicendum, quod ratio illa procedit secundum opinionem ponentium quod gratia gratum faciens non includatur in ratione originalis iustitiae; quod tamen credo esse falsum . . . Sed tamen praedicta opinione supposita, adhuc ratio non concludit; quia, licet originalis iustitia gratiam non includeret, tamen erat quaedam dispositio quae praexigebatur ad gratiam; et ideo quod contrariatur originali iustitiae, contrariatur etiam gratiae."

<sup>67</sup>*Gregorianum* 5 (1924) 202-203.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 203-204. \*



book on Original Sin, although it is urged also by others who plead for the adequate distinction. In the hypothesis of such a distinction between sanctifying grace and original justice, thinks Van Hove, we can furnish a better account not only of the doctrine of St. Thomas, but of all that other theologians, the definitive declarations of the Church, and the intrinsic character of the dogma itself present concerning original sin.

Now original sin is a real sin, that is, a turning away from God to creatures. Unlike other sins, however, original sin is not committed but inherited. But how is it possible for us to inherit from Adam a sinful nature? Because we, on account of Adam's sin, are deprived of a gift which Adam possessed and which we possessed in him, a gift which directed Adam and the whole of human nature to God. Deprived now of this gift, we are turned from God, hence sinners.

What was this gift? Of course, it was not a purely natural gift, for our nature is not essentially different from what it was before the sin. Therefore original sin must consist in the privation of a gift which God had freely added to human nature. Such a gift could hardly have been strictly supernatural, that is, it could not well have been sanctifying grace, which seems too exalted, too transcendent for it to be once and for all granted to the race, and transmitted to men by natural propagation.<sup>69</sup>

On the other hand, the transmission of original sin is more readily conceived if it is held to consist in the privation of a merely preternatural gift, which did not raise Adam to a new, supernatural order, but only perfected him in the sphere of his nature. Let us suppose then such a gift whereby Adam's will was directed to God and subjected to God's law, a gift which at the same time perfectly regulated the lower faculties, so that they could not impede his orientation toward God. By sin Adam's will was turned from God; and this aversion from God, along with the turning of the sense powers to the creature, transmitted to the whole of mankind, is original sin.<sup>70</sup>

This preternatural gift could have been naturally transmitted, and thus we can also understand the transmission of original sin, privation of the gift. To be sure, God would have had to intervene directly at the generation of each man so as to communicate this preternatural gift, just as in each instance He must create the soul. For the gift is an ornament of the soul, and thus would not be directly handed on by physical generation. Still we may say that it would have been communicated from man to man by generation, for there would have been on the part of nature an exigency for such preternatural subjection to God; and this would have been possible, since the gift by definition is only a natural ornament,

<sup>69</sup>*De Erfzonde*, p. 156-158.

<sup>70</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 159.

in the sense that it is the completion of a natural perfection. And thus it would have been transmitted by nature.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand a *supernatural* ornament, a participation in the divine nature, is too exalted to be subject to a natural exigency: natural propagation cannot be the disposing cause of a supernatural exigency.<sup>72</sup>

Consequently, since original sin is transmitted by generation, it must be the privation of a gift which also could be thus transmitted. This being easier for Van Hove to understand of a preternatural than of a supernatural gift, he inclines to the opinion that original sin is the privation only of this preternatural gift whereby the higher faculties were subject and turned to God.<sup>73</sup>

If one chooses to hold that original justice was to have been thus propagated by natural generation, Van Hove is correct in contending that in the theory he champions this is more readily explained. But that such is not the teaching of St. Thomas has been convincingly argued by the opponents of this hypothesis.<sup>74</sup> The transmission of primitive justice and original sin, however, is not the only problem in this obscure matter. As Vandenberghe points out with reason, *culpability* or voluntariety is the principal difficulty in the mystery of original sin. For it does not suffice simply to say that Adam lost original justice for himself and his posterity, and thus all are born in the state of privation of original justice. It remains further to explain how this privation makes us real *sinner*s, how it is truly a sin, as we are taught by revelation.<sup>75</sup> And we must not overlook the fact that by privation of original justice man exists in a state of aversion from God, his *supernatural* last end.<sup>76</sup> This is evidently much better explained in the theory according to which original justice formally includes sanctifying grace.

At any rate, facility of explanation is hardly a criterion of truth where dogma and mystery are involved. But whatever validity there be in such a mode of reasoning, the interpretation that St. Thomas taught a real, but inadequate distinction between sanctifying grace and original justice explains with consistency and without recourse to devious argumentation all the data that the great Doctor has gathered from the founts of revelation, and is more in accord with the parallelism of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, on which the Saint has written so excellent a commentary. The opposite theory, on the other hand, falls short of accounting satisfactorily for the character of *sin* in original sin, which it represents as merely

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 160. Van Hove bases this presentation on *De Malo*, q.4, a.1.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>74</sup>Cf. above, p. 7-10.

<sup>75</sup>*Collationes Brugenses* 38 (1938) 37, note 1.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

the privation of integrity, a preternatural thing, and involves the seemingly insuperable difficulty of showing the mutual relationship between sanctifying grace and original justice as cause and effect, which effect is at once a disposition to its efficient cause.

From the investigations incited by the controversy, it is clear that the definition of original sin as simply the *privation of sanctifying grace* can no longer be said to be the definition proposed by St. Thomas. This is altogether certain. To St. Thomas original sin is the *privation of original justice*, for it deprives man not only of sanctifying grace, but further of integrity, immortality, and the remaining gifts which constitute the state of primitive justice.

The view of the doctrine of St. Thomas fostered by Fathers Martin, Bittremieux, Kors, Van Hove and their few supporters is not likely to influence opinion in this matter to any great extent outside the circle of their immediate disciples. Although the texts cited by them, together with the arguments thence derived, at first sight seem to exhibit some suasive force, the studies shortly thereafter made by such able theologians as Fathers Van der Meersch, Huarte, Garrigou-Lagrangé, Hugon and others appear to have demonstrated that the interpretation according to which sanctifying grace is the formal cause of original justice, and is consequently really but *inadequately* distinct from original justice, is more conformable to the teaching of St. Thomas and to objective truth.

