

CURRENT THEOLOGY

THE THEOLOGY OF ORIGINAL SIN: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

BRIAN O. McDERMOTT, S.J.

Weston School of Theology, Mass.

Ten years ago a very helpful survey of recent Roman Catholic reflection on original sin appeared in the pages of this journal.¹ In his review James Connor, S.J., first summarized what he took to be the principal factors which have influenced Catholic thinking on the subject in recent years and which made it imperative that theologians re-examine the received understanding of the doctrine. He indicated the influence of personalist and existentialist philosophy, the discoveries of modern biblical scholarship, the extension of the historical-critical method from Scripture to the statements of the magisterium, and, finally, the reawakened Christocentricity of Catholic theology. Connor followed this background sketch with a critical examination of seven recent hypotheses that have been suggested by Catholic theologians.

I would like to assume the background depicted by Connor as providing the still-prevailing suppositions of much of the more recent discussion and examine the contributions of a number of Catholic theologians who either have offered a major contribution to the field or have advanced or modified their position since 1967.²

For the sake of clarity, I shall divide the authors into two major categories: those theologians who admit the existence of original sin as something distinct from personal sin and those who deny that original sin is a distinct fact or power in human life.

ORIGINAL SIN AS A DISTINCT REALITY

Karl-Heinz Weger

In his *Theologie der Erbsünde*, Karl-Heinz Weger takes as his starting point the "traditional" understanding of original sin as it has developed in its essentials since the Council of Trent.³ The principal focus of his study is original sin in us, so that *peccatum originale originans* does

¹ J. L. Connor, "Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches," *TS* 29 (1968) 215-40.

² Several other surveys by Roman Catholic authors are the following: L. Sabourin, "Original Sin Reappraised," *BTB* 3 (1973) 51-81; H. Haag, "The Original Sin Discussion, 1966-1971," *JES* 10 (73) 259-89; A. Schmied, "Konvergenzen in der Diskussion um die Erbsünde," *Theologie der Gegenwart* 17 (1974) 144-56. In addition, most of the authors discussed below include appraisals of the work of other contemporary theologians in the area of original-sin research.

³ K. H. Weger, *Theologie der Erbsünde, mit einem Exkurs 'Erbsünde und Monogenismus' von Karl Rahner* (Freiburg: Herder, 1970).

not play a significant role in his hypothesis. Crucial to Weger's enterprise is his distinction between a fundamental statement of the faith (the core of a dogmatic statement) and the presuppositions within the dogma which may or may not be revealed truth. Among the deepest concerns of the doctrine, which must be disengaged from an antiquated world view, Weger finds the following: (a) human freedom is taken seriously, for each human person decides who he is unto finality, and in this sense each person is a true beginning within human history; (b) yet human freedom is understood to be profoundly conditioned, for it is burdened by history and to this extent the person is not simply a fresh beginning within history; (c) the negative dimension of human life which the Church designates as original sin does not proceed from the Creator, nor is it the punitive consequence of others' sins; rather, it is always the expression and embodiment of a universal condition of guilt which is revealed in all its breadth and depth at the same time that it is overcome by the redemptive act of God in Christ.⁴

Weger takes pains to explain in what sense original sin is real guilt. Like theologians before him who wish to remain faithful to Trent, Weger needs to show how an involuntary state can pertain to the moral-religious order and be a genuine negative qualification within that order. First, Weger distinguishes between the transcendental offer of grace which God always and everywhere offers to humankind, invisibly but unfailingly, and the categorical or spatiotemporal mediation of that offer through other human beings. Within this horizon original sin is the privation of God's divinizing and sanctifying grace insofar as, contrary to the will of the self-communicating Creator, that grace is not communicated historically to the individual person because of the sinfulness of others. This privation of historically mediated grace is true guilt and not a mere absence of grace, because the privation of God's own holiness in a creature who is totally ordered to that holiness is not comparable to the lack of a finite good. Whereas no finite reality belongs to the moral order until it is appropriated by human freedom, God's own Pneuma is able to sanctify a person even prior to his exercise of freedom, so that the lack of the infinitely holy Spirit of God, a lack which is contrary to God's will, is a religious-moral qualification of the creature's freedom. This condition is one of unholiness, a contradiction between vocation and predicament, and so can be called real, but analogous, guilt.⁵

By taking this approach to the problem of the guilt character of original sin, Weger is able to express the relation between the individual and the sin of the first human(s) and the individual and the sins of those who constitute his initial situation. What is transmitted or trans-

⁴ *Ibid.* 13-31.

⁵ *Ibid.* 17-19.

ferred to a person is not the actual sinfulness of another, since personal sinfulness essentially involves personal responsibility, which is inalienable; what is transmitted is a negative determination of the individual's situation as a person, the historical privation of that to which he is (transcendentally) oriented in his deepest being. In Rahnerian terms, Weger can define original sin as the privation of the categorical supernatural existential, which is a condition of guilt because it exists in moral contradiction to the abiding transcendental supernatural existential, that deepest shape our hearts have acquired because, prior to our choice, God invisibly offers His own infinite life to us as our supreme *raison d'être*.⁶

Faithful to the tradition, Weger asserts that original sin is transmitted *generatione non imitatione*. Generation here does not, of course, refer to Augustine's sin-tainted procreative act, nor, more importantly, does it signify a biological connection between "Adam" and his descendants. Rather it refers to the process by which a new human being enters the human world, a process which only begins at birth, and which attains its first morally important threshold when the child enters the human world in personal solidarity through its first authentic moral choice. One belongs to humankind through birth *and* interpersonal relations, and the latter have a history. Weger is consistent, then, when he avows that original sin is not a static given at birth, but an intrinsically historical dimension of being-human in a sinful world. As an *Existential* or intrinsic situation of our freedom, original sin grows as our participation in sinful humanity grows.⁷

Weger's nuanced treatment of the intrinsic character of others' decisions in an individual's life lends support to his position. As a child grows, the decisions of others shape the child, they form part of the fabric of the child's being. These decisions are not external, but rather real determinants of the situation of the child's freedom. Any portrayal of a person as someone who simply stands over against his situation as a set of possible objects of choice does not do justice to the fundamental truth that, to a real degree, we are what others decide for us. While not the last word about us, this is an abidingly true insight into our social nature.

The understanding of original sin developed by Weger is relativized by his appreciation of Christ's redemptive work. The prepersonal sinfulness of each individual is but the dark side of the story of salvation. Although the will of the self-communicating Creator has been frustrated by the sin of humanity, and birth into the human world is not of itself entrance into a situation of sanctification (and so, of authentic and complete humanization), still God has reversed the pattern of sin and

⁶ Ibid. 134-35.

⁷ Ibid. 166.

death by entering into history and establishing a radically new and irrevocable beginning, a new humanity, through His Son. The historical or categorical mediation of divinizing and sanctifying grace is now accomplished through Jesus Christ and his Church, and this occurs universally, as redemptive grace available to all men and women. Thus a prepersonal condition of justification and sanctification is available to us, and this categorical mediation of grace is the fruit of Christ's redemption.

As the sacrament of God's eschatological victory in Christ, baptism is the wholly efficacious mediation of salvation. Communicated *ex opere operato*, Christ's grace, as baptismal grace, is manifest in its eschatological irrevocability and fulness. Weger emphasizes that, in the adult, baptismal grace affects the person as both offered grace and accepted grace, whereas in the child this grace is intrinsically present and effective only in the mode of offer. Grace in the mode of offer is completely oriented to becoming grace in the mode of acceptance. If there is an analogy between original sin and personal sin, all the more is there an analogy of continuity and difference existing between baptismal grace in the infant and baptismal grace in the morally developed human person.

When he poses the problem, what advantage a baptized child has over the unbaptized, Weger's answer is succinct: the baptized child belongs to the Church, belongs to the community which enjoys in word and sacrament the indefectible presence of Christ alive in the explicit faith of that community. Belonging to his community, the child is affected by Christ's redemptive grace as an intrinsic *Existential* or abiding dimension of the child's situation; baptism conquers the fundamental orientation to sin and death which is the state of those untouched by Christ, and grants a new fundamental orientation to the child, an orientation to life, love, and service.⁸

Two additional aspects of Weger's understanding of original sin call for attention: the relationship between original sin and personal sin, and the meaning of concupiscence.

One of the deepest truths about ourselves revealed by Christ's redemption is that every human being not only becomes a sinner through sinning but also sins because he or she is a sinner. Original sin is misunderstood if it is separated from personal sin, since in the latter the true nature of original sin declares and realizes itself. In serious sin the human person freely allies himself with his own negative *Existential*, appropriates it and embodies it in his situation so that the privation of grace becomes self-willed bondage, a bondage that reaches beyond the individual by becoming part of the situation of others' freedom. The

⁸ Ibid. 168-69.

chosen unfreedom of personal sin is rooted in an unchosen unfreedom at the heart of the person which is effected by others' choices. The doctrine of original sin, when properly understood, means that the Christian can recognize and be grateful for the depth of liberation wrought by Christ, without at the same time finding excuse in original sin for the self-chosen enslavement.⁹

Concupiscence is a theological term that bears two meanings. On the one hand, the term designates the tension existing in me as a creature composed of spirit and matter, person and nature, freedom and the determinisms shaping the situation of that freedom. I am a creature who has been given to myself with all my spontaneous drives and tendencies, both spiritual and physical. And I am someone who is called to create myself, by unifying these drives and tendencies by giving them a freely chosen direction. This tension is the natural concupiscence of a creature called to become a free person (one) through and in the givens of my life (the many).

On the other hand, the term can express the condition of this complex creature insofar as I belong to a sinful human history, which, in spite of the sin, is totally oriented to nothing less than God's own holy life.¹⁰ For Weger, there is no real difference in the unjustified between original sin and this negative concupiscence.¹¹ Morally and religiously speaking, the unjustified person is disordered in all dimensions of his existence to the extent that he is untouched by Christ's grace. In the justified, concupiscence must be distinguished from original sin, because now the person belongs fundamentally not to the world of sin but to the new humanity in Christ, although concupiscence remains because in a real but not fundamental way the justified person still remains part of a human history that is also a history of sin. Justification involves the fundamental but not total transference of a person from the world of sin and death into the world of grace, and so Weger refinds Trent's conviction that baptism remits original sin but does not remove concupiscence.

The last part of Weger's volume consists of a lengthy excursus by Karl Rahner on monogenesis and polygenesis, and this can serve as an opportunity to turn our attention to Rahner's understanding of original sin.

Karl Rahner

For almost fifteen years Rahner held onto the doctrine of monogenesis. Recently his thinking on the subject has reversed itself, and he now suggests a form of polygenesis which he feels can serve the understanding of original sin even better than the traditional view of humankind's

⁹ *Ibid.* 141-45.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 155-58.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 156-57. Weger feels that Trent allows this identification.

beginning. Rejecting a polyphyletic origin of the race as contrary to its unity, Rahner posits a single original group at the beginning. The group constituted a physical-historical unity. Four considerations lend support to this contention: (a) the unity of the physical and biotic habitat, (b) the unity of its ancestral animal population, (c) the unity of concrete human-personal intercommunication existing among the first humans, and (d) the unity that is given to the group by virtue of its unitary supernatural orientation to Christ.¹² Unlike monogenesis, polygenism takes seriously the basic anthropological fact that the human person cannot exist as a solitary individual, that coming to freedom is always a social as well as personal adventure.

Against this background, Rahner sees the first sin as perpetrated by one or more members of this original group, and as an event which qualifies the situation of the entire group as well as its successors. Because he takes the beginning of human freedom on the collective as well as the individual level to be special and not simply homogeneous with subsequent acts of freedom, Rahner is able to call the beginning of human freedom not simply a chronological point of departure but an origin, a *principium* that is the law and controlling power under which the subsequent phases of history develop. The origin of human history is irrecoverable and irrevocable, and for this very reason it has perpetual influence on what follows. The beginning of human freedom is forever behind us, of the past, and yet also in some way always present to and in us.¹³

By stressing the unique beginning of human history, Rahner wants to correct the incomplete notion of original sin as the sin of the world, since this biblical concept, when exploited in systematic theology, obscures the fact that the historical origin of the sin of the world is not similar to it in nature in all respects. In addition, he does not see how one can maintain that original sin understood as the categorical privation of sanctifying grace is transmitted *generatione non imitatione* unless one allows for a unique beginning to the history of sin. In effect, what Rahner is doing is stripping the notion of *generatio* of everything which does not express the real unity of a *person* with the one human race.¹⁴

Rahner's understanding of the nature of original sin is substantially the same as Weger's—which is not surprising when one realizes how much of a Rahnerian Weger is. For Rahner, the doctrine of original sin expresses the truth that, contrary to the will of the self-communicating Creator, derivation of the human person from and his unity with the single human race is not the basis and medium of his justification and

¹² Rahner, "Erbsünde und Monogenismus" (n. 3 above) 197.

¹³ Ibid. 193.

¹⁴ Ibid. 203.

sanctification by God's self-gift.¹⁵ The absence of that holiness which is an existential modality imparted by God's own holiness in His Pnuma prior to the concrete conditions of individual existence, inasmuch as this was intended to be mediated through human descent but in fact is not—this is rightly called a state of sinfulness. The positive and saving dimension of the doctrine is the good news that Jesus Christ and his Church are now the basis *and* medium of that divine self-communication which is grace of forgiveness as well as grace of sanctification.

Rahner also speaks of original sin as an abiding *Existential* or fundamental situation of human existence which is present prior to the free self-disposition of the person. This *Existential* is historical in origin, having its source in the sins of others. This *Existential* is in a dialectical (but unequal) relation to another *Existential*, that of being objectively redeemed by Christ. Rahner insists that original sin must not be thought of as more universal or efficacious than Christ's redemption, and we do not have to see it as temporally prior to (objective) redemption in us. Paul's "before and after" must be demythologized to a certain extent. "Catholic theology would certainly need to view more clearly than is usually the case this objectively redeemed condition antecedent to faith and sacrament, in a Pauline way, as an existential intrinsically characterizing man."¹⁶ This *Existential* is an intrinsic structural element in the human person even prior to justification.

One point in which Rahner has gone further than Weger is in regard to the question of infant baptism. In 1974 Rahner expressed wonderment that in the course of time baptism has been made a restrictive law of salvation. While medieval theologians felt free to conceive of a natural sacrament for the pre-Christian era, they seemed to allow infants, in the new and greater covenant, to wander about in limbo. "They let God's saving will, which is said to be universal and infralapsarian, stumble on its own law of baptism, and if the normal kind of baptism does not operate, they forbid the grace from operating beyond the baptismal rite."¹⁷ Rahner asks why these theologians did not conceive of a means of

¹⁵ In our Christocentric universe Christ is the ground of God's self-communication, yet God intended that self-communication to be mediated by membership in the human community as such. The emergence of sin means that grace is grounded in *and mediated* by Christ as Redeemer (ibid. 188 and n. 17).

¹⁶ Art. "Original Sin," *Sacramentum mundi* 4 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969) 331. Rahner speaks of original sin and being redeemed as two existentials of the human situation in regard to salvation, "which at all times determine human existence" (ibid. 330). But one can ask whether original sin here referred to is identical with his definition of original sin, or is actually the sin of the world which Christ's redemption does not remove but does limit and ultimately conquer.

¹⁷ Karl Rahner, *Vorfragen zu einem ökumenischen Amtsverständnis* (Freiburg: Herder, 1974) 37.

salvation for infants analogous to the natural sacraments, which would be conceived of in relation to the essence of the Church. He asks: "Can't we value any human gesture of acceptance into the human community as such a natural sacrament, if and insofar as it received this significance as a saving sign from the essence of the Church as the primordial sign of grace in the world, and to which the Church, the sign of God's mercy in the world, gives this meaning in the determinate context in which every person stands?"¹⁸ To be sure, natural sacraments had their effect *ex opere operantis*. But still they had their effect, and a natural sacrament in the wider field of influence of the eschatologically victorious Church even has an *ex opere operato* effect, because even the ordinary sacraments have this effect from that source.

It is clear that this "deabsolutizing" of sacramental baptism will, if accepted by other theologians, place the whole discussion of infant baptism, its significance and necessity, in a new light.

Charles Baumgartner

Baumgartner finds in Paul's understanding of sin the biblical basis for the later doctrine of original sin.¹⁹ Deepening the Old Testament view of sin as the negative form of solidarity embracing the entire human race, Paul sees every human being radically incapable of doing good apart from the grace of Christ. This radical impotency is due to the power of sin, which has entered the world through the sins of men and women from the beginning. The double face of sin for Paul is the interior enslavement of sin that affects one's freedom before it expresses itself in particular acts, and the personal sins which, apart from Christ's redeeming grace, inevitably but freely express and actualize that enslavement and give it yet wider scope in human relationships.

But why does the tradition call this condition "sin" which freedom, when it awakens to concrete choices, finds already there all along? Baumgartner answers that a *condition* of freedom which inevitably but freely leads to personal sin is, in the moral-religious order, already a state of separation from God and a state of contradiction to the vocation to union with God that is inscribed from the beginning in the deepest core of every human person.²⁰ This state, antecedent to choice, is real but analogous guilt, thus lying midway between personal guilt and natural defect. Original sin is not simply an absence of grace, a condition of "not-yet-graced," but a condition or situation which, left to itself, is a perduring and deepening condition of estrangement from the self-communicating God. While, strictly speaking, original sin consists in

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Le péché originel* (Paris: Desclée, 1969) 77-88.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 19-23.

the radical impotency to do the good because of the privation of sanctifying grace, there is in addition to this a kind of inclination to evil which, however, is not an active, personal inclination. Here Baumgartner seems to be moving beyond Weger and Rahner's notion that original sin consists only in a situation of privation, by adding a dimension that tries to do justice to Augustine's idea that original sin is an *aversio a Deo*, without attributing voluntariety, and thus personal culpability, to that *aversio*. This inclination does not come from the privation of grace except in an indirect way. Without Christ's grace it is impossible for the person to unify and direct his multiple spontaneous tendencies, both spiritual and sensible, to his supernatural goal. Because grace is, for Baumgartner, the principle of both natural and supernatural unity and love, its privation results in a certain declivity in the heart of the person, a misdirection that, in a world of sin, is indeed a *fomes peccati*.²¹

Trent's teaching regarding original sin exhibits two central concerns for Baumgartner. Against the Pelagians and Neo-Pelagians it asserts the existence of original sin, without giving a precise definition. Against the Reformers Trent highlights the radical efficacy of baptism and so prepares the ground for the decree on justification. Paul and Trent are united in their fundamental conviction that all humankind and all aspects of every individual are under the dominion of sin because of their own fault, and this from the beginning. The power of sin entered history through human fault and that power expands throughout history through human fault. The prepersonal dominion of sin is never chemically pure, a reality shut up in itself, but a power which documents itself in freely committed sins. Here we have a truth whose significance is only known in the confession of sins: we have sinned, and our sin comes from us, not as God's good creation, but as willing conspirators with a dark power to which we both discover ourselves subject and want to be subject.²² In short, sin posits itself *and* we do the positing. This paradox is one that cannot be resolved into a greater, "higher" clarity, but is revealed to Christian conscience in the very act of confession. Herein lies the stubbornness of the doctrine of original sin, and Baumgartner is alive to its perennial truth, even after all demythologizing has done its purifying and renovating work.

Unlike the Reformers, the Roman Catholic doctrine does not take original sin to be a fundamental active *habitus* of sin. Rather it is a mode of existence, a *mise en situation* of freedom, a pure state of "being situated" that is interpersonal and due exclusively to the sins of others. Baumgartner approves of Schoonenberg's theology of original sin wherein this prepersonal situation of freedom is closely related to the biblical notion of sin of the world. Schoonenberg has performed a scriptural (but not biblicalizing) critique of the classical doctrine of the Schools,

²¹ *Ibid.* 23.

²² *Ibid.* 85.

since Scripture (principally in Romans) sees the sin(s) at the beginning of human history mediated to us by the sins occurring between then and now. The notion of a direct, immediate relation between the sin of "Adam" and our sinful condition is foreign to Scripture but prevalent in later teaching.²³

Yet Schoonenberg's idea that original sin becomes truly universal only at Christ's death (a position which the Dutch theologian now rejects as well), as well as his view that the first sin(s) in human history are homogeneous with all later sins and thus of no special significance, are both unacceptable to Baumgartner. Even if one does not picture the beginning of human history as a paradise constituted by special, visible endowments, the fact that the first sin was not a sin in solidarity with other sins is of profound importance. The entrance of sin into history happened once as an absolute beginning, and the entrance of sin into the world through all subsequent personal sins is only a relative beginning of the story of sin, and it is always sin-in-solidarity-with-sin. Here Baumgartner sides with Rahner over against Weger and Schoonenberg, without, however, like Rahner, developing a hypothesis about the beginning.

The very last page of Baumgartner's study contains a telling sentence in which he expresses a suspicion that haunts all situationist views of original sin. "As has been rightly said, the Catholic doctrine of original sin is nothing else but an effort to define the theological status of humankind outside of Christ. It is therefore an abstract view of the concrete person whose history is not only a history of perdition, but a history of salvation. The substance of the faith consists essentially in belief in the mystery of the universal redemptive act of Christ."²⁴ It is precisely this admission which will lead some theologians to deny the very existence of original sin.

Maurizio Flick and Zoltan Alszeghy

In 1972 Flick and Alszeghy of the Gregorian University published their *Il peccato originale*, the culmination of many years of scholarship which is documented in a series of articles published since 1957.²⁵

The volume reverses the order of presentation which has dominated treatment of the doctrine in the past. Christology, rather than original sin, is the fundamental axis for the doctrine of salvation and, rather than deducing Christ's significance from original sin, the theologian should proceed from the universal need for Christ and the fact that Christ is the savior of all, in order to determine the nature of original sin.

Flick-Alszeghy conceive original sin as the dialogal alienation from

²³ *Ibid.* 147-53.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 165.

²⁵ *Il peccato originale* (Brescia: Queriniana, 1972).

God and other human beings effected by lack of participation in the divine life, which in turn is produced by a free human initiative preceding every free act of an individual in present-day humanity.²⁶ The principal element in their understanding is personalistic; for they emphasize the affective or dynamic incapacity to choose God as *the* good in one's life, an involuntary connivance with sin which inevitably but freely expresses and actualizes itself in personal sin unless one is liberated by Christ's grace.²⁷ Complementing the personalistic aspect of the doctrine is an ontic moment. The condition designated by original sin involves the privation of uncreated and created grace. While the ontic element is not primary, it is indispensable. The change wrought by baptism cannot be equated with a change simply in the situation or ambience of the person; it involves an alteration in the religious direction of the person at the core of his being, and such a change implies a reversal of an ontic dimension of original sin.²⁸

A third element in Flick-Alszeghy's concept of original sin is historical and communitarian: the dynamic, affective incapacity for dialogue with God and others involves a radical solidarity of the individual with the whole human race. Called by God to be mediators of grace, human beings as such are unable to live out their vocation because of the power of sin at work in their lives. Now, by virtue of Christ, the Church is the sector in the world where this mediation occurs, yet the Church remains a sector of the world and is not coextensive with it.²⁹

With respect to *peccatum originale originans*, our authors allow only an etiological knowledge of the concrete manner in which sin entered human history. It is not a matter of faith that the first human being sinned or that the first sin was the act of the "father" of the whole human race. Solidarity in sin does not depend on physical descent. The first sin, no matter who committed it, does have a special status, however, since it is the absolute beginning of human sinfulness. On the other hand, it is not necessary to conceive the human condition prior to sin as phenomenologically different from the present. Sin lost for us a virtuality which would have led progressively and more rapidly to the

²⁶ Ibid. 370.

²⁷ Ibid. By subordinating the privational aspect of original sin to the personalist, Flick and Alszeghy recall Baumgartner's presentation of original sin as involving a kind of inclination of the will to evil, or moral disorientation, a "captive heart." "The sin of one person cannot constitute others as sinners, even those who do not have the use of reason, if it does not bring about in them a kind of involuntary connivance with that sin, which consists in a disorder of the will, orientated to personal sins" (ibid. 277). By making this consideration central, Flick and Alszeghy move beyond the situationalist understanding of original sin, for which original sin as *privatio gratiae*, a passive condition, is the axis of reinterpretation.

²⁸ Ibid. 274-77.

²⁹ Ibid. 305-35.

development of all our capacities. The entrance of sin into the world has rendered this development impossible without grace, and perilous and difficult, yet possible, with grace.³⁰

The condition which the term "original sin" expresses can be complemented by using other expressions, but our authors think that the traditional term will always have a place in Christian vocabulary. "Adherence to the reign of sin and death," "incapacity to orient existence to God," can signify the same truth with other words. The beginning of human sin can be called the "sin of humanity" or the "sin of man," since these names leave in the shadow the question of the number of persons who sinned at the beginning as well as the precise function of the first sin(s). The phrase "sin of the world," although biblical in origin, is less happy from a systematic viewpoint, since it designates all sins, thus implying that they all have the same structure, while "sinful situation of individuals" can refer too easily to sin through imitation of bad example.

The incapability of dialogue with God, which is at the heart of original sin, consists of the impossibility of loving God above all things, the impossibility of making a fundamental option for God as the absolute horizon of one's life, and the impossibility of dialogue with God.³¹ The second aspect is simply a deepening of the first (which, in turn, is a valid legacy from St. Thomas). The last dimension expresses the lack of ontic solidarity or similitude between God and the person affected by original sin, which makes it impossible for the one subject to sin's power to hear and effectively respond to God's summons, voiced through creation, to become a son or daughter of the Father.

Because original sin affects the person prior to the exercise of free choice, it is not sin save in a derivative, analogous sense. Because it involves a moral disorder in the will, it is not sin in a merely metaphorical sense.³² Finally, by virtue of its intimate relation to personal sin, original sin is truly sin; for through it we participate in the world's failure to correspond to its original vocation to be mediator of salvation for all those born of human stock.

Flick-Alszeghy take exception to Neo-Scholasticism's conception of concupiscence as well as to Karl Rahner's. The former saw it as an inclination to determinate values, or the spontaneity of determinate tendencies, while Rahner judges concupiscence to consist in the difficulty involved in personalizing one's own existence according to the

³⁰ *Ibid.* 314-18.

³¹ *Ibid.* 284-304.

³² The involuntary connivance with the sins of others which is a primary aspect of original sin allows one to call original sin "sin," since such connivance gives original sin the necessary immanence in the person to allow it to qualify as sin (*ibid.* 276). Thus there is an analogy of proper proportionality between original sin and personal sin.

exigencies of *any* fundamental option. For our authors, concupiscence is not a determinate, actual appetite but a difficulty internal to the human person which exists even when no appetite is actuated: the difficulty, namely, which attends the fundamental option for God as it tries to penetrate both intensively and extensively one's psychic life. Original sin and concupiscence are distinct, as incapability and difficulty are distinct.³³

Sharon MacIsaac

The phenomenological starting point of a theology of original sin, writes MacIsaac, has often been supplanted in theological essays on the subject by a shift of emphasis onto hypothetical and deductive elements.³⁴ The human condition is diseased by a "cumulative, premeditated perversity," and here lies the experiential starting point for fruitful theological reflection on the depth dimension of sin. MacIsaac wants to relate the central preoccupations of the Catholic tradition with the psychoanalytic findings of Sigmund Freud, in order to avail herself of the more assured of his findings to discover the concrete shape of that "premeditated perversity."

MacIsaac employs St. Thomas' definition of original sin: For him, its formality consists in the loss of original justice, and its materiality resides in concupiscence; yet she faults the tradition because in it the unconscious, collective, and premeditated factors from which every act issues have been neglected and most attention has been given to the conscious, discrete actions of the individual. "This book is rooted in the conviction that the kind of sinful reality referred to by the terms *peccatum originale originatum* and the sin of the world bears primarily on man as unconscious." By providing a richer phenomenological basis for theological reflection on original sin, MacIsaac hopes to move the whole discussion forward.³⁵

Three major themes organize her exploration of Freud: the fact and nature of humankind's constitutive self-alienation, the instinctual origins of psychic activity, and the sexual instincts and their evolution. The psychic dualism at work in each person—the conscious and unconscious—is the basis of concupiscence. "The same resistance to elucidation attends the one and the other, and for the same profound reasons."³⁶ Sin, not just pathology, enters the picture when this dualism is related to God.

The good news in Christ is that the formality of original sin has been changed, so that the right relationship of each person is restored in the

³³ Ibid. 345–60.

³⁴ Sharon MacIsaac, *Freud and Original Sin* (New York: Paulist, 1974) 1.

³⁵ Ibid. 4.

³⁶ Ibid. 105.

redeeming Christ. The healing of concupiscence, however, is a gradual and, on this side of death, never completed process; for we realize our justification in the context of a still sinful world. The findings of Freudian psychology, therefore, bear on the materiality of original sin, the difficulties involved in actualizing personal and social integration. The narcissistic-altruistic ambivalence in each of us appears at every stage of our growth. Concupiscence is self-alienation which is rooted in appetitive autonomy, and this is operative to the extent that the ego is not master in its own house. In a sinful world the person transcends fatal enclosure in a merely biological and instinctive self only through the expansion of his consciousness, the liberating power of growing self-understanding and self-appropriation in community. This self-alienation is of itself natural to us, and not sin. "The confusion between natural and sinful dualism implicitly assumes that self-alienation is not properly human. It evidences a deep-seated reluctance to include the fact of the unconscious . . . at the radical level of theological foundations."³⁷

The paradise of classical theological speculation bears testimony to a profound malaise with the idea that humanity involves some form of self-alienation.³⁸ From another angle, Luther's sense of sin, which was global and pervasive, expressed an inability to distinguish between the instinctual and the personally culpable in one's own life, with God, self, and others. Luther was incapable of moral neutrality in the face of concupiscence in the sense of properly human self-alienation or dualism.³⁹ There is an ambivalence in us which is definitely not sin nor even necessarily the consequence of sin, but the result of our composite reality as spirit/body, freedom/structure, conscious/unconscious.

MacIsaac applauds the work of those theologians such as Dubarle, Schoonenberg, and Hulsbosch which virtually identifies sin of the world and original sin. She points out, however, that Scripture was concerned with the spiritual status of adults who had already submitted voluntarily to the pernicious influence of sin, whereas the doctrine of original sin emphasizes the real existence of a state of sinfulness which is not voluntary. The notion of sin of the world implies a personal collusion with the sin of one's situation, and so refuses to be simply identified with original sin as classically understood.

Moreover, original sin has been conceived as the same in all, but the sin of the world affects each person differently. Here MacIsaac finds Thomas' distinction helpful. Formally, all people have the same deprivation of original justice and the same relation to the cause of this deprivation in the past. But the way in which the environment affects

³⁷ *Ibid.* 110-11.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 111.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 111-12.

each person is different, as is the somatic and psychic structure of each individual.⁴⁰

MacIsaac is content with a few indications about original sin drawn from classical and contemporary authors, without pursuing them in any critical or hermeneutical way. Her chief contribution consists in offering us, via Freud, a phenomenology of concupiscence. If one were to agree with those Catholic theologians who conclude that, due to the universal salvific influence of Christ and the Church, original sin is not a concrete reality in the world, then MacIsaac's contribution would be all the more significant, because in that perspective the negative existential of every human being consists in natural concupiscence as it is intrinsically affected by its presence in a sinful (and redeemed) world. At that point Sigmund Freud may have much to tell us.

Pierre Grelot

Pierre Grelot's work on original sin and redemption is an expanded version of a series of articles on the psychoanalytic "reduction" of these two fundamental Christian realities.⁴¹ The French exegete correlates the reflections of the later Freud (*Totem and Taboo*, *Moses and Monotheism*, and *The Future of an Illusion*) with the Pauline understanding of sin and redemption, particularly as it finds expression in the Epistle to the Romans.

Grelot finds a homology, a structural similarity, between the Christian understanding of original sin as a "sin of origins" and Freud's myth of parricide, and between Paul's drama of divided human existence and Freud's concept of the oedipal conflict as an essential aspect of the genesis of the ego. In unfolding this homology, Grelot is not urging that Freud can shed decisive light on the Christian understanding of sin and salvation, but he does contend that any legitimate correlations between the psychoanalytic and Christian experiences of guilt and liberation are precious, because they indicate ways in which the Freudian view, considered as a philosophy of the human person, can be widened and corrected by the biblical view, while the correlations indicate as well that the biblical view is deeply in touch with the experience of the human condition and has a saving word to address to that condition.⁴²

Grelot joins three stages of the Pauline theology of sin with the later Freud: the Pauline conception of religious culpability, Paul's understanding of human alienation, and the representations of God generated by a sinful conscience. These aspects of Pauline thought are allowed to

⁴⁰ Ibid. 117-23.

⁴¹ Pierre Grelot, *Péché originel et la rédemption, à partir de l'épître aux Romains* (Paris: Desclée, 1973) 5.

⁴² Ibid. 54.

encounter Freud's ideas of the dream of the death of the father, which for the originator of psychoanalysis functions as the key to understanding the origins of guilt and the construction of the self as autonomous through the rejection of creation by another (heteronomy).⁴³ Grelot views Christ's death as the event which transforms the relation of human beings to the Father-God, making possible a new filial relation to God which, through the creativity of divine love, allows full freedom precisely by means of a completely new filial relation.

From the viewpoint of the doctrine of original sin, Grelot's book is not a new contribution to the theological literature attempting a hermeneutical transformation of the doctrine. Rather, it is a direct confrontation of Paul and Freud, in which the focus of interest is Paul's idea of the concupiscent, divided self before God rather than original sin as a distinct reality such as we have come to know it in its later, postbiblical form.

THE DENIAL OF ORIGINAL SIN AS A DISTINCT REALITY

Urs Baumann

A former student of H. Haag, Baumann develops in his published doctoral dissertation a conception of original sin which runs completely counter to those theologians who view it as the prepersonal sinful situation of the human race.⁴⁴ For Baumann, the ultimate and only meaning of the doctrine is "the unconditional validity of the *sola gratia* of God's saving acts."⁴⁵ The doctrine exposes the abyss of sin in the light of the depth of God's liberating grace.

Baumann proposes an exclusively existential-historical account of sin, an account which is always mindful that the discovery of that dimension of ourselves which "original sin" designates is expressed in the confession of the Christian community: "Lord, we have sinned, forgive us." The central axis of Baumann's reflections is the human person and his inalienable responsibility and guilt and his radical need for redemption. His critique of the Roman Catholic tradition of original sin is stinging: he accuses it of moralism, legalism, a superficial empiricism, and biologism!⁴⁶ He rejects what he calls the empirical principle operating in Roman Catholic thinking on the subject, that is, the persistent and misguided attempt to provide an objective, empirical ground for our sinful condition. The three forms which this principle has taken are all negated: the historical and biotic linking of "Adam" and his posterity, the evolutionary explanation, and the sociological interpretation. Two functions of the traditional doctrine which Baumann

⁴³ Ibid. 156-98.

⁴⁴ Urs Baumann, *Erbsünde? Ihr traditionelles Verständnis in der Krise heutiger Theologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1970).

⁴⁵ Ibid. 265.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 76-79, 268.

hopes to preserve are the recognition of the universality of (personal) sin and the appreciation of the power of sin as more than a moralistic or juridical reality.

Baumann builds his case on a profound personalism. The core of the human person cannot be objectified, that is, reduced to determinisms or situations, and all talk of sin and guilt is talk about that mysterious core. Sin has to do with the transempirical relation of God and the human person. The basic incomprehensibility and groundlessness of sin may not be circumvented by having recourse to original sin as an empirical principle.⁴⁷ Rather, the doctrine of original sin tells us about the radicality, totality, and universality of personal sin. Radicality: all sinful activity is rooted in the inalienable freedom of the person, and all particular sinful acts are the concrete embodiment of a radical perversion and godlessness. Totality: if the root of personal existence is perverted and godless, then the whole person is affected. This means that at the deepest level the person as a religious-moral being is not free, and the only freedom possible to him is in the realm of civil society; and the beginning of this sin in an individual is inaccessible to reflex consciousness. Finally, the doctrine indicates the universality of sin: sin embraces all human beings by embracing each person totally. This solidarity in sin is the dark underside of the unity of the human race which flows from the unitary Christian vocation. "The zenith of personalness is revealed: the individual stands before God as individual for the whole, and the whole stands in individuals before God."⁴⁸ Solidarity in sin is a theological solidarity which has nothing to do, in any theologically relevant way, with biological, sociological, or psychological solidarity. When Paul writes that "all sinned," one cannot find a ground for that statement except in the personal core of freedom in each individual. Freedom, and only freedom, lies at the root of sin. Sin is the threat of universal meaninglessness, the dark misuse of our liberty, which is embraced and overcome by the victorious light of Christ.

Alfred Vanneste

The Dogma of Original Sin is the fruit of many years of research in which Vanneste studied the conciliar theology of original sin as well as the principal achievements of speculative theology.⁴⁹ Like Baumann, he tries to identify original sin with personal sin, but his focal concern does not coincide with Baumann's. Where the latter stressed the depth dimension of sin, seeing the universality of sin as a function of that depth, Vanneste makes central the fact of sin's universality. Fundamental here is the conviction that theology cannot speak meaningfully of

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 248.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 263.

⁴⁹ Alfred Vanneste, *The Dogma of Original Sin* (Brussels: Vander, 1975).

anyone but adults. Theology should always be concerned with the freedom and destiny of persons in the full sense, so that the doctrine of original sin must keep adults at center stage, a point which he feels has been frequently overlooked in other theological constructions.⁵⁰

The deepest intention of the Church's teaching on original sin, writes Vanneste, reflects the central concern of Augustine. Succinctly put, that intention is the insistence on the strict universality of personal sin.⁵¹ When a child (whom Vanneste calls a "virtual human") becomes a moral person, he or she will freely but inevitably sin in the first act of the will. Vanneste calls this a "law" which "dictates" such a development without abolishing the freedom of the act. The "law" at work here seems to be more a statistical statement of recurrent pattern than a compulsive force in a person's life, since Vanneste is insistent that sin issues from (misused) freedom. Theology must demythologize the concept of a child sinner, which has played such a crucial role in the received doctrine. "All adults are sinners, and all pre-adults are virtually sinners" is Vanneste's way of expressing the demythologized content of the second canon of Carthage.⁵²

Giving precedence to a metaphysical understanding of free will, Vanneste can write that, however hardened in sin a man may be, the self-directedness entailed in his *amor sui* is not his ultimate and deepest characteristic. Because the basic structure of human existence remains the same even in sin, the person is capable of loving God above all things, be it with great difficulty. This capability of loving God above all remains even after sin, because it is this capability which constitutes the religious essence of the human being.⁵³

The ground of the universality of sin is not found anywhere but in the will of the individual sinner, all of whose sin is contingent fact and free. While this seems to run counter to the idea that there is a dictating law at work in human history, in the final analysis Vanneste's remark about a law is meant to summarize the universal fact that all men sin and so need Jesus Christ as their savior. Vanneste admits that there is a paradox here, but it is at the heart of authentic Roman Catholic teaching: the paradox of the absolute universality and historical contingency of sin. That all men are born in original sin means that all are sinners from the first moment that they are men.⁵⁴

Vanneste devotes a short chapter to the problem of infant baptism. Faithful to his approach, he is not sure that theologians should treat baptized and unbaptized children as radically different cases, since neither class belongs to the adult world. He wants to apply the general theological principle to all children, namely, that no one is saved unless

⁵⁰ Ibid. 83-92.

⁵² Ibid. 85-86.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 83-84.

⁵¹ Ibid. 88.

⁵³ Ibid. 101-2.

he or she has co-operated freely with divine grace. He disagrees with those who say that God grants salvation to unbaptized children by virtue of a baptism of desire, or because of God's universal saving will, because these approaches suggest that anything is possible, and that spells the end of genuine theology. We have no absolute certainty regarding the destiny of children, because we do not know what the humanity of a child means for itself in relation to God. *Limbus puerorum* is a theological hypothesis which only makes sense in the outdated framework of the classical theology of original sin.⁵⁵

Karl Schmitz-Moormann

Schmitz-Moormann is the editor of the German translation of Teilhard de Chardin's *oeuvres*. In his *Die Erbsünde: Überholte Vorstellung-Bleibende Glaube*, he offers a very sympathetic outline of Teilhard's ideas on original sin, arranged chronologically, and then presents his own reflections on the doctrine.⁵⁶

Because Teilhard does not employ an established and accepted theological method, Schmitz-Moormann believes that his approach cannot be criticized adequately from the older perspectives. Because the methods flow out of differing world views—the static-essentialistic on the one hand, and the evolutionist on the other—the basic criterion for judging the adequacy of Teilhard's method will be whether Teilhard's approach makes the gospel appealing and challenging to inhabitants of the new thought world.⁵⁷

The basic concerns which motivate Teilhard and Schmitz-Moormann are the same as the basic interests of the tradition. In one form or another, original sin is a significant dimension of the Christian faith, (1) because of the need for a theodicy to show how evil is not due to the good Creator, (2) because of the Christian conviction concerning universal sinfulness, and (3) because of the doctrine of the universal need for redemption and the universality of Christ's redemption.

The classical version of original sin is poor theodicy, because it fails to show how God is not co-responsible for human sin, since in the classical, static view God could have created the first person simultaneously free and sinless. The notion of an initial calamity having of itself universal influence is, in the light of God's dominion in the world, anything but the absolving of God of all responsibility for evil. Only a point of view which regards evil as statistically necessary in an evolving universe can appreciate that God could not have created a world of development and

⁵⁵ Ibid. 161-65.

⁵⁶ Karl Schmitz-Moormann, *Die Erbsünde: Überholte Vorstellung-Bleibende Glaube* (Freiburg: Walter, 1969).

⁵⁷ Ibid. 169-79.

freedom without evil being a structural implication of that world. If every entity in the world is centered on itself to one degree or another, then there is a corresponding degree of "freedom" with regard to the environment and its future development. On every level, therefore, there is some degree of choice, culminating in personal and social freedom on the human level. In such a world, evil appears as the logically necessary price for a nondetermined, essentially free creation oriented to growing freedom. Trial and error are necessary to the evolutive process, and evil in the sense of error or failure is inevitable. Evil is the unavoidable by-product of freedom's development.⁵⁸ Because God can no more create a free and sinless universe than He can create a square circle, writes Schmitz-Moormann, it is necessary to posit the source of evil not in the Creator but in the possibilities open to freedom in every entity. Thus theodicy is better served by an evolutionary world view.

With regard to the second concern, Schmitz-Moormann considers the doctrine of the universal sinfulness of humanity grounded in the universal experience that, due to the great difficulty involved in achieving personal and social integration, such integration is culpably avoided or thwarted by everyone. Sin consists in centering on oneself to such a degree that one's own desire is determinative instead of our service to creation. The process of disintegration is sinful when it involves, and to the degree that it involves, the misuse of our freedom. We sin against the divine Love which is creatively drawing us to itself, and this resistance to unification is a wounding of the evolutive-historical process of creative union. Here sin is the very opposite of some juridical infringement of an external, immutable law.

The "law" of large numbers insures that freely but inevitably there is and always will be sin; one might say that it is organic to the evolutionary process at the same time that it is a wounding and thwarting of that process.⁵⁹

The universality of Christ's redemption—to take up the third principal concern—does not rest on either the factual universality of sin or in a universal sinful situation. Rather, Schmitz-Moormann takes the cross and resurrection of Christ to be more universal in import than the mere re-establishing of a right order lost by one man, the head of the human race. Christ's redemption affects the universe, not just the human race, and it affects the universe at a level deeper and wider than that of factual sin. For the deepest threat to evolution is death—death which is not the fruit of "Adam's" sin but is natural to creation as much as it is a threat to it. Christ's death and resurrection answers the question, does evolution have an issue? Is extinction the ultimate fruit of the human

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 189–99.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 199–215.

hunger for unconditional meaning? The paschal mystery tells us that all creatures have a definite, consummating goal, thanks to God's creative union in Christ with His developing world. Physical death of the universe through the victory of entropy, and spiritual death through the victory of sin, are both overcome in the identification of Omega with the world. The overcoming of death occurs through God's opening up a final, absolute future for all the world in the resurrection. In the event of salvation, men and women are not saved from the world, but the whole universe is promised a deliverance from entropy, spiritual and material.⁶⁰

It is apparent that Schmitz-Moormann does not feel bound to either the biblical or magisterial formulations of the doctrine of original sin. Rather, he sets out within an evolutionary framework to examine the roles sin and death play as necessary but secondary dimensions of a process whose outcome is guaranteed by the creative participation of God in Christ in this process. Prepersonal solidarity in sin is not the axis of his thinking; rather, the cosmic significance of death on all levels. Here he rejoins a principal concern of the Eastern Churches' theology of sin as much as he leaves behind not only the classical world view of both Latin and Eastern Church, but also the usual demands of Roman Catholic theological method.

Juan Luis Segundo

Juan Luis Segundo's approach to the doctrine of original sin is expressed most fully in the fifth volume, *Evolution and Guilt*, of his series *A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity*.⁶¹ Segundo reflects on the mystery of evil in structural terms, because he wants to locate moral evil in an evolving universe and discover whether the notion of sin finds an analogy in the reflection of scientists on the nature of matter. For Segundo, sin and redemption are not fixed, established poles between which each individual in history lives out his or her destiny; rather, they are matters of structure and solidarity first and foremost, so that "sin and evolution are components of one and the same single reality."⁶²

Theology can no longer afford to maintain an essentially immobilist conception of human freedom, a conception which prefers to view human beings as poised between grace and sin at every stage of history in basically the same moral situation, no matter what sociopolitical development has contributed at any point to the *humanum*. The philosophy and theology of freedom must increasingly heed the contributions of the physics, biology, sociology, and psychology of freedom, so that the notion

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 216-38.

⁶¹ Juan Luis Segundo, *Evolution and Guilt* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1974).

⁶² *Ibid.* 6.

of guilt will no longer be derived solely from a "religious sphere" while evolution and its imperatives belong only to the scientist. The primitive choice of an "Adam" can no longer serve as the basis of human solidarity in guilt and collective responsibility. Moral good and evil and the dialectic of redemption and sin cannot be exempted from the laws of evolution. Yet the difficulty of developing a correct synthesis of evolution and guilt is evidenced by the fact that a Teilhard de Chardin, who was no naive optimist, was not able to succeed in relating the law of large numbers and the mystery of iniquity in a way which lives up to the realism of Scripture regarding the profound dimensions of the human spiritual struggle, both collective and personal. If sin is not merely one of the infinite trials and errors, not merely inevitable and nontranscendent error in an ever-ascending movement, then how conceive guilt and evolution?

Segundo proceeds by looking for a negative structural principle in the realm of those sciences which think in structural terms. He finds it in the principle of the conservation of energy, or entropy. This principle suggests four things. First, evolution is effected by concentrating energy, drawing it away from one function and putting it into another. Second, all energy tends to convert into the simplest form of energy. Third, entropy is opposed to evolution, since the latter tends to ever more complex and potent concentrations of energy, thus running counter to the statistically greater tendency toward simpler syntheses of degraded energy. Fourth, every break-through rests on a basis of repetition of the simplest kind of energy, and it is effected by a minority which concentrates and liberates energies that are dormant in the lower levels of synthesis.⁶³

Something structural is going on. Material and psychic structures arise because the larger quantity of elements is always dominated by a tendency toward facile, enduring syntheses, while relatively smaller numbers form richer syntheses and are able to perdure if they manage to transform individual chance emergence into a more generalized state of affairs.

Segundo sees an analogy of continuity, as he calls it, between the evolution-entropy dialectic on the successive levels of material beings, and evolution and sin on the human level, accepting the classical understanding of concupiscence as the involuntary structural tendency to sin in every human being. For concupiscence involves (1) opposition to evolution of the truly human; (2) the difficulty of translating the center of human energy from the instinctive realm to the rational, personal level, from simple syntheses to more complex and richer syntheses; (3) a quantitative victory: the human person is redeemed

⁶³ *Ibid.* 22-24.

from sin by Christ, but not from concupiscence; (4) that the event that decided the victory of concupiscence (Adam's sin) was conceived as a *felix culpa*: the gift given the world by God's incarnation is qualitatively immensely superior to the initial guiltlessness, and the quantitatively victorious sin which followed the "fall." Sin and its consequences were utilized to achieve a better destiny for all people.⁶⁴

Sin, statistically speaking, is all the easy, premature personal syntheses that have taken place on the threshold of other, new, better, more complex syntheses that might have been and could have been and to which we were invited by the Spirit of God.

A major obstacle stands in the way of seeing the analogy between entropy and sin, namely, that the most decisive events, theologically speaking, in the history of humankind are not part or elements of evolution—Adam's sin and Christ's redemptive act. A depth and breadth of effect is attributed to these events which were out of proportion to the elements available for synthesis at the time. Even though the two languages are not the same, it is possible that the narrative about Adam is expressing, among other things, that man is the cause of his sinful situation, which is a structural one, and that the historical moment of Jesus' life and death is not the exclusive locus of his redemptive act, for Scripture also sees that redemption present at the beginning of time itself.

Redemption is the reality which allows us to understand the original sin which it has overcome. Our human history is the concrete history of a redeemed humanity in which only faith can enlighten us about an authentic sin situated at our common origins. Experience, on the other hand, shows the tendency to evil.

According to Paul, we are redeemed from the enslavement of sin (a state in which it is impossible not to sin), redeemed from a state in which the power of sin is totally dominant. Trent considered Rom 6:12, 14, 20 as referring to concupiscence. Segundo's hypotheses, like Weger's, is that without redemption original sin and concupiscence would be completely interfused and confounded.⁶⁵ Redemption makes a human being out of everyone who belongs biologically to the human race by procreation. Grace is negentropy on the human level.

Trent, based on its reading of Scripture, presents Christ's redemption as God's rectification of a plan in which man's sin figured only as a possibility. Three considerations rob this classical view of its force. First, Trent's idea, based on Paul, that the historical sin of Adam lies at the root of the universal propagation of sin, rests on our considering Genesis a historical writing in the modern sense. Neither sin nor redemption is datable. "No one can look to the Christian faith for

⁶⁴ Ibid. 25-27.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 79-80.

support for the claim that man's ability to overcome sin starts from the date of Jesus' death and resurrection. A juridical view of original sin suggests that all are condemned to a state of sin but an infinitesimal portion of humanity is offered grace. Vatican II maintains that our world is a redeemed world and it always was. We cannot run up against original sin in history."⁶⁶ Yet it is the truth about what our origins would have been if an opposite force, redemptive grace, had not been given to humankind.

The third theological difficulty now appears: it seems that the human race did not interrupt God's plan. Hebrews (2:11) and Colossians (1:15-17) tell us that the whole universe was made for Christ. Right from the start the entire universe was journeying toward Emmanuel, toward God with us, toward God identified with our history. The profundity, the originality, the visceral complexity of sin is involved here. Segundo does not use the notion of "sin of the world," because the doctrine of original sin, wrongly understood, can take the social heart out of the Christian faith. He feels that the doctrine, rightly understood, is the key to the understanding of how and why human beings share a common destiny, a destiny that is supernatural.

The Christian message enters into a process where progress results not from a new dosage of energy, but from the redistribution of the invariable energy that was there all along. Yet the universality of grace, of the "extraordinary," does not consist in its becoming a common, ordinary thing. It becomes universal insofar as it fulfils its extraordinary function, which is none the less essential for the evolution of humankind.⁶⁷

Segundo insists that analogy must be faithfully employed in order to bring together evolution and the theological notion of sin. A reductive conception ignores guilt, conflict, dialectics, and ultimately redemption as well. It unjustifiably transfers the certitude of the preceding circle (the prehuman) to the mystery of the following circle. Liberty is called to take over determinisms as the foundation for its freely-made decisions. The analogy that does exist resides in the fact that every rich synthesis, on every level, is difficult, improbable, and a seemingly fragile minority affair vis-à-vis less rich and more facile syntheses. Organic matter finds its support for its existence, continuity, and preservation in the majority quantum of inorganic matter and the minority quantum of thinking matter. The multitude of the facile is at the base of the possibility of the emergence of the richer and more difficult syntheses. And life is defended from its great numerical weakness by minorities that are smaller than it; the consistency of the universe seems to depend on the convergence of two dialectically opposed forces:

⁶⁶ Ibid. 82.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 93-96.

physical entropy and love and liberty. Love is indeterminacy on the physical-chemical level; and in the realm of the specifically human, entropy is sin, both structural and personal.

The redemptive force which brings about the chancy victory of love over entropy is the life of God more and more present in the universe until it becomes a human being like any other human being in history. This minority layer is the most potent force for transforming everything else.⁶⁸

Segundo has tried to understand the doctrine of original sin as the Christian view of our redeemed, yet still sinful world. Concretely, the world of human living is marked by two vectors, negative concupiscence and grace. Original sin, as classically understood, is the formulation of a history that is marked by only one vector, the vector of sin or gracelessness. Such a world has never existed and never will exist, thanks to the deed of God in Christ. Thus Segundo joins all those theologians who see a profound element in the doctrine of original sin: the solidarity that binds us together, and which makes divine liberation of us both possible and necessary. The negative involuntary that itself is not culpable, but powerful for all that, opens up a social as well as personal understanding of redemption. The very doctrine that has been used in the past to encourage people to be satisfied with the *status quo* of social and economic class now becomes an illuminating and encouraging message of liberation which is structural and individual. Christianized, "original sin" loses its classical status as a "reality in itself" to become a mainspring in the understanding of the slow and patient but ultimately triumphant infiltration of creative love in a world which hungers for it as it resists it.

Domiciano Fernandez

The Spanish Claretian Domiciano Fernandez has been writing in this area since 1961, and the fruit of his research found expression in a book published in 1973, *El pecado original, ¿mito o realidad?*⁶⁹ Fernandez concludes his analysis in agreement with many other theologians who contend that there was no economy of grace that was proper to a "paradise" at the dawn of human history, because all grace is grace in and through Jesus Christ. The mystery of freedom and the mystery of sin are inseparable in the concrete from the good news of redemption, and this is true of every moment of concrete human history. "Original sin" in the sense of a structural or situational Christlessness or gracelessness has never existed in the concrete, and Fernandez subscribes

⁶⁸ Ibid. 110.

⁶⁹ Domiciano Fernandez, *El pecado original, ¿mito o realidad?* (Valencia: Edicep, 1973).

heartily to Baumgartner's admission that the doctrine of original sin taken for itself is a theological abstraction.⁷⁰ The doctrine should be replaced by a study of sin in general and of the sin of the world, with its consequences, its influences, its universality, its punishment, and with a study of the solidarity of the human race in good and evil. This study would need to be carried out in the light of the redemption.⁷¹ What Baumgartner remarks at the end of his study becomes a central conviction in Fernandez.

The first sin of the human race was different in only one important way: through it, sin and death emerged in history. Otherwise the beginning of the history of sin is not special in the sense that it possessed a unique transcendence or unique scope of influence in history. Many later sins could have had much graver consequences and a much greater influence in humanity's history.

Because the notion of original sin is bound up with outmoded ideas about an initial state of original justice and a biologically based mediation of sin (implying the absence of an equally misconceived biologically based mediation of grace), it would be better, thinks Fernandez, to retire the expression "original sin," however venerable the term might be. The native condition of the human person in relation to God and other persons is from birth to moral awakening an involuntary condition which is inappropriately designated sin or guilt. If all intrinsic voluntariety is absent in original sin, as the Roman Catholic tradition maintains, then it is stretching analogy intolerably far to say that the prepersonal condition of human existence is truly sin. Personal sin and original sin do not differ by degree but in kind. Fernandez applauds the attempt of theologians to devise other names for the negative aspect of our native condition.⁷²

It is misleading to suggest that human beings are born deprived of supernatural grace (original justice or sanctifying grace) which they ought to have by virtue of birth. This conception renders birth as such a sacrament of grace which effectively naturalizes or reifies a profoundly personal reality, the free divine self-communication in love. Sacraments are interpersonal realities which incorporate and transform, but are not finally defined by, infrapersonal elements.

Because original sin is not and never has been an independent theological magnitude in the concrete world, it is wrong, maintains Fernandez, to attribute furtively an objective content to the concept. The notion of total prepersonal deprivation of divine life must never be accorded independent status by, for example, devoting a distinct treatise to it, *De peccato originali*. It must always be presented as an element of a study of grace and redemption, and then as an ultimate eschatological possi-

⁷⁰ Ibid. 170, 195.

⁷¹ Ibid. 194.

⁷² Ibid. 194-95.

bility for a human freedom which freely betrays itself into eternity. For the rest, sin in the concrete, sin as reality, involves us in discussion of personal sin, or the inclination to sin, or sin's consequences, or the incapacity of a person to live a life of gratuitous love with Christ's help, or the situation of sin, or the mere absence of sanctifying grace. In itself, original sin is a pure abstraction.

The crucial question is not what baptism takes away but what remains after baptism: the permanent difficulty we experience in trying to live out our lives as daughters and sons of God. This difficulty has its root in our being in a sinful world and affected by its egotism, its ambition, and its disordered desires and self-deception. We are profoundly affected by the sinful aspect of the world, and this is the concrete form which prepersonal solidarity with sin takes in a world that is objectively redeemed. Baptism means incorporation into the Church of Jesus Christ, but the nonbaptized are also affected in their depths by their vocation to become sons and daughters of God, a vocation that is at work in them thanks to Christ and the presence of his Church in the world. Each human being is born into an interpersonal situation of grace and sin, with some environments more conducive to the life of grace than others, but no environment devoid of either of these dimensions. Because of the real efficacy of Christ's redemption even prior to our free co-operation, sin never starts out as the victor in anyone's life. Only free and total co-operation into eternity with the sin of the world gives a sin the victory in some real (but still restricted) sense.

The universality of sin is a negative statement of the need of all adults for Christ's grace if they are to develop in union with God. It is not a primary, undervived truth, nor of arithmetical import. Augustine's effort to attribute real guilt to infants to explain the Church's practice of infant baptism *in remissionem peccatorum* was misguided. The plural form of the noun indicates to Fernandez that personal sin, impossible to infants, is intended by the phrase. Baptism effects something profound in a child, but it is not the beginning of the positive side of the child's salvation history. We do justice to the theological status of infants and adults when we give pride of place to the universal efficacy of Christ's redemption and attribute real but secondary and partial influence to others' sins in their lives.⁷³

Thus, in his own way, Fernandez joins ranks with those Roman Catholic theologians who view grace and sin on the prepersonal level as two unequally matched but real intrinsic dimensions of each person's life. Fernandez goes further than some, however, by concluding that original sin is a theological abstraction whose truth can only be recovered if it is brought out of isolation, so that the notion of original sin

⁷³ Ibid. 177-78, 196.

as classically understood is retired and the concrete reality of our prepersonal solidarity with sin is embraced by, and so relativized by, the yet more powerful solidarity with God wrought for us by Christ. One cannot recognize the classical doctrine here, but perhaps a discerning eye can find, beneath the conceptual discontinuity, a continuity of understanding which unites the tradition's world of discourse and that of contemporary theologians. Fernandez feels that faithful understanding of revelation may not only permit but even demand such a radical conceptual shift.

G. Vandervelde

In 1975 a significant critical study appeared with the title *Original Sin: Two Major Trends in Contemporary Roman Catholic Reinterpretation*.⁷⁴ The two trends examined are ones G. Vandervelde terms the situationist and the personalist. These two categories do not indicate contrasting philosophical positions, but rather designate the theological axes around which the respective positions develop. Vandervelde discussed Piet Schoonenberg, Karl Rahner, and Karl-Heinz Weger as situationists, while Alfred Vanneste and Urs Baumann represent the trend which identifies original and personal sin. The author has performed a fine service in reading sympathetically yet critically each of these theologians, exposing their methodologies, presuppositions, strengths, and weaknesses. Here I wish to restrict myself to considering his estimate of the strengths and weak points of the five theologians.

For all their differences of detail, Schoonenberg, Rahner, and Weger all make the notion of situation pivotal to their reinterpretation. By definition, situation is the involuntary context of human freedom, intrinsic to the total human person as an *Existential* but not identifiable with the free self-disposition of the person. These three theologians join the concept of situation with the post-Tridentine understanding of original sin as the privation of sanctifying grace, so that in their reinterpretation original sin is a situation formally consisting in a privation, viz., the privation of sanctifying grace.

For Schoonenberg, the connection between the biblical idea of solidarity in sin and the notion of the intrinsic situation of the individual person is mediated by the nonbiblical, indeed relatively recent, notion of original sin as the privation of sanctifying grace. In this process a positive and active concept of sinful solidarity which is traceable from the Old Testament through the New and up to Augustine is replaced by a privational and passive notion. The latter interpretation is able to make clear the nonvoluntary character of original sin which distin-

⁷⁴ G. Vandervelde, *Original Sin: Two Contemporary Roman Catholic Approaches* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1975).

guishes it from personal sin. But the privational concept labors under several major difficulties. First, clarity is obtained regarding the non-culpable character of original sin at the expense of the religious, existential meaning of the symbol. The Augustinian *aversio a Deo*, the prepersonal, radical unwillingness (and not just incapability) to open oneself to God, is lost from sight.⁷⁵ Secondly, for all their emphasis on the intrinsic nature of original sin, the situationists distinguish the religious core of the person (his active freedom) so sharply from the person's situation that the situation is totally extrinsic to the active freedom of the person, while internal to the total human being.⁷⁶ Here the analytical mind has dissected the human being into his radical dimensions, without allowing sufficient space for the fundamental unity of the person to come into focus. A third difficulty resides in the basically abstract character of "situation" in these thinkers.⁷⁷ Vandervelde contends that situation is so defined that historical concreteness and specificity seem to play no decisive role. This abstractness is theological as well, and provides the fourth problem for our critic. All three situationists affirm the universal presence of grace in human history, thanks to the Incarnation and the presence of the Church in the world. Nonetheless, their reflections on original sin often proceed as though the privation of sanctifying grace and the universal presence of that grace (through Christ's redemption) dwell side-by-side as two concurrent situations of human freedom.⁷⁸ In the last analysis, however, the principle of the universality of grace leads each of these writers to deabsolutize the need for sacramental baptism and to emphasize the preventative and confirmatory aspects of the sacramental mediation of sanctifying grace. In other words, the value of baptism is seen in its being the full incorporation into the Church, understood as the indefectible, infallible, and essentially holy situation of salvation, compared to all other situations, which are ambivalent and ultimately vulnerable to the power of sin in the world.⁷⁹ Once the theologian sees each person's prepersonal situation as constituted by a "being-redeemed-by-Christ" and a "being-deprived of grace," it becomes increasingly difficult to give pride of place to baptism understood as the transference of someone from a totally graceless situation to a graced situation. Vandervelde can conclude that in the situationist

⁷⁵ Ibid. 313-14. Vandervelde points out that, while Rahner is convinced that the reality of sin as sin is revealed in the light of God's *forgiving grace* (*Theological Investigations* 11 [New York: Seabury, 1974] 249, 259-60), he nonetheless derives the (analogous) sin character of original sin from the relation of a person to God's *divinizing* and *sanctifying* grace, which is absent where it should be present. This is methodologically problematic for Vandervelde, but Rahner does not seem to make anything of the methodological inconsistency.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 318-22.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 320-21.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 315-16.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 254-56.

perspective the reinterpretation of original sin finds its basis in the axiom that the sacramental, institutional Church is the only *perfect* manifestation and medium of supernatural grace and is necessary for *full* participation in the salvation process in the world. In short, an ecclesiological principle is the basis for the hamartiological principle, but in a form in which, compared with traditional teaching, the necessity of sacramental baptism has been significantly relativized.

When Vandervelde turns his attention to Vanneste and Baumann he hopes that their efforts at reinterpretation may provide a better access to the mystery of iniquity. He is disappointed. The Dutch critic scores Vanneste for adopting a suprahistorical standpoint in order to make the axial assertion that all people *de facto* sin when they arrive at the level of moral consciousness. Such a standpoint, Vandervelde contends, is methodologically impossible. Nevertheless, Vanneste's approach to original sin stands or falls with just such a standpoint, since for him original sin is neither more nor less than the affirmation of the universal sinfulness of all humankind, which stands in need of the redeeming power of Jesus Christ. Vanneste wants to maintain the freedom of each individual, yet he must prescind from freedom to predict with assurance that each individual will sin in the first moral choice. In this respect he comes close to the situationists (whose view he otherwise rejects), because they too prescind from freedom by making situation the axis of their theology. Vandervelde questions the religious significance of Vanneste's position. How can the Christian translate into a confession of guilt this summary statement of Vanneste: "That all men are born in original sin means that all are sinners from the first moment that they are men because it happens to be an historical fact that all men sin"? The depth dimension of sin seems to be completely lacking in Vanneste's treatment, and a kind of fatalism seems inevitable.⁸⁰

Baumann, on the other hand, tries to find in the radicality of personal sin the authentic meaning of the doctrine of original sin. The problem with his position, writes Vandervelde, is that the only basis for sin lies in the individual free decision. This entails that sin, no matter how radically one conceives it, is not as radical as the individual freedom which underlies it. Human responsibility embraces it and grounds it: enslavement is radically and *exclusively* self-enslavement. His existentialist perspective posits the voluntary at a deeper level than the involuntary in the individual, and does this (unlike the tradition) in an undialectical manner, so that the individual's sin seems to be a fall from a private state of integrity into guilt. Baumann does not admit such a thing, however, because he asserts that Scripture affirms sin as a *Faktum*, already-there-all-along, whose beginning is inaccessible. Van-

⁸⁰ Ibid. 285.

dervelde points out that at that moment "*fact congeals to yield fate.*"⁸¹ By intensifying the awareness of the character of sin as (misused) freedom, Baumann's affirmation of the sheer facticity of sin seems contradictory to his central intention; for it introduces a quasi fatalism into a hypothesis which wants above all to eliminate from the doctrine of sin all forms of biological, sociological, or theological fatalism.

At the end of his critique of these two major trends, Vandervelde asks whether they could not perhaps be synthesized, drawing the best from the situationist and personalist hypotheses. His answer is a firm no. By choosing opposite foci as the center of reinterpretation ("situation" — "active freedom"), they part ways so significantly that they preclude the possibility of a synthesis, even though they have a common philosophical framework (which is personalist-existentialist).

REFLECTIONS

Vandervelde's critique of the two major trends in the Roman Catholic reinterpretation of original sin is a telling one, and it must be taken seriously. By way of conclusion, I would like briefly to follow several leads he and others offer to indicate some basic values, or points of reference, that the doctrine of original sin must hold in tension if it is to be a religiously significant doctrine in the lives of Christians. Sometimes the systematic theologian's thirst for clarity and precision of concept involves him in an analysis of the *mysterium iniquitatis* which, while leading to clear and distinct ideas, makes it difficult to appreciate the doctrine as the expression of a profound dimension of the Church's confession: "Lord, have mercy, for we have sinned against you."

First, the doctrine of original sin is the shadow side of the universal need of humankind for Jesus Christ as Savior and Liberator. This crucial point is solidly established in contemporary theology, even if all the consequences of this locating of the doctrine have not yet been developed. The language of the doctrine in the minds of many ordinary Roman Catholics is a "total" kind of language. When a baby is born into the world, the first moral impact of that humanly wonderful event seems to be a negative one: sin gets to the baby before Christ's love does. This "before," as they picture it, is all the more tragic because it is conceived as a chronological "before." The efforts of Rahner and others to demythologize this "before" and "after" are the logical consequence of the centrality contemporary theology gives to the effective universal salvific will of God present in *all* human history through Christ and the Church. Original sin says something profound and true about human history, insofar as it can be thought of *sine Christo*. The good news of the superabundance of grace is that the world is not *sine Christo*, except

⁸¹ Ibid. 325.

where the human heart closes itself to the Lord, and even this closure, this condition of *sine Christo*, is never total this side of death. Structurally, thanks to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, all of history is *in Christo* and *ad Christum*. Grace and sin are not equal valences engaged in a struggle whose outcome is fundamentally still undecided. How often Catholic parents view their child religiously as one on whom the power of sin has from the start left its tragic mark without their seemingly having done anything to bring it about or to impede it, while salvation from Christ is contingent upon a subsequent, contingent event—baptism. The good news of Christ, however, is that “original sin” is, apart from our own total betrayal of our vocation, a partial and not a total truth. The partial truth-character of the doctrine, due to its Christological containment, does not, however, take away from its depth dimension. This needs to be explained.

If the deeper situation each person is born into is not the sins of others but the effective offer of salvation to all through Christ, still the doctrine of original sin is saying something profound about the religious direction of a person’s life apart from Christ, as well as the difficulty of living a graced life in Christ.

The privational interpretation of original sin is not adequate to uncover the depth dimension of sin, no matter how widespread this understanding of original sin is among Catholic theologians. Here I would like to appeal to two students of the Christian theology of sin, one a Catholic theologian, the other a Protestant philosopher who is at home in theology as well. Their convergent reflections are not original, but they can remind us of an element of the long tradition of original sin which we tend to forget.

Piet Smulders, in his book on the theology of Teilhard de Chardin, devotes a section to what he calls a dynamic conception of original sin.⁸² He writes:

In the heart of man lies a kind of will not to love God; anterior to every personal choice, it encompasses and fetters that choice. Created and destined to love, man always aspires, at least unconsciously, to love as the final flowering and ultimate fulfillment of his being; but he has set up a deep-cutting egotism in the innermost chamber of himself. He suffers from a “curvitas,” a deviation that turns back upon finite goods and chiefly upon himself. . . . In this way, original sin might perhaps be described as a deep-seated bias within the very existence of each person, a bias stemming from the very fact that the individual has been born into the human family. . . .⁸³

⁸² Piet Smulders, *The Design of Teilhard de Chardin: An Essay in Theological Reflection* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1967) 167–78.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 176–77. By using the phrase “he has set up,” Smulders obscures the fact that he is speaking here of a prepersonal bias which exists anterior to personal acts (*ibid.* 177).

This Augustinian viewpoint, which sees in original sin more than a merely passive condition and a mere incapability, leads to a paradox, namely, the affirmation of a prepersonal active unwillingness to allow oneself to be saved or to grow in the likeness of Christ. "Prepersonal unwillingness," an involuntary *aversio a Deo*, an involuntary connivance with the sins of others (Flick-Alszeghy), a prevoluntary rejection (*Ablehnung*) of God's love (Weger), a "certain inclination to evil prior to choice" (Baumgartner)—these are not, to be sure, clear and distinct ideas. If pushed too far they become contradictions, or one element turns into its opposite and the tension dissolves. But the revelation of the power of sin which God offers faith seems to involve just such a tensive notion; for only such a notion goes deeper than the bifurcation of the individual into person and structure, active freedom and passive situation. It seems to me that the liberation wrought by Christ reaches the unitary root of those dual dimensions.⁸⁴ The confession of our sin, with the profound hymn of praise implied therein, involves our bringing ourselves before the Lord as a people who would be totally subject to the power of sin and death if it were not for Christ's work in our lives. And we bring before him as well the deep connivance with sin which reaches beyond reflex moral consciousness and personal choice, and which, because it is not a self-chosen condition, is not in any sense personal guilt but, revealing itself in our personal sinning, profoundly calls for Christ's liberating ("remitting") action. The deeper the Christian's confession of sin, the more he brings the very radix of himself before the Lord as what he *is* as sinner and what he *might be* (and would be) were it not for Jesus Christ. Since the radix of my being is a freedom which is threatened even within itself by an unfreedom, I deliver myself to the power of Christ, who *liberates* what must be liberated and *pardons* what needs to be pardoned. In this religious-existential sense, original sin is not an abstraction. What might have been is mediated to me by my awareness of my personal sin and its dynamic tendency to totality if left to itself. The language of confession carries its own truth, but it is not the same rhetoric as the language of dogma. Theologically, the dogma of original sin is a rhetoric of totality which is simply untrue if it is left unrelated to Christology at each step of reflection. Weger's important point that personal sin is the full actualization and flowering of original sin makes sense if original sin is more than a *privatio gratiae*; personal sin is the actualization of an involuntary but real conspiracy with the sin of others which is ontologically but not chronologically anterior to my personal sinful choosing.

Paul Ricoeur confirms this interpretation of original sin when he tries to recapture from the analytical dissection of the doctrine the original

⁸⁴ Cf. Vandervelde, *Original Sin* 326-67.

power of the "myth" of sin.⁸⁵ For Ricoeur, the confession of sin on the part of the Israelites and later Christians involves three fundamental dimensions of sin: its realism, solidarity, and power.⁸⁶ The confession of sin expresses a realism: my awareness of my sin is not the measure of my sin; sin is my situation *before God*. The "before God" is the measure of my sin. Secondly, the experience of sinfulness is not the experience of an arithmetic of individual sins, whether in one person's life or in the community's life, but it is a transbiological and transhistorical solidarity. Thirdly, sin is not just a state or condition but a power to which one is bound or subject. The doctrinal concept of original sin Ricoeur calls a rationalized myth which, as such, does not have its own consistency as a concept; rather, it is an explication of the myth of Adam. The latter, in turn, is the explication by the community of the penitential experience of Israel. Each level (dogma-myth-penitential experience) is true, but its truth allows understanding only if, at the crucial juncture, we pass to the deeper level which grounds the truth of the dogma and myth. The essential function of the dogma is to protect a previous but obscure truth, namely, that sin is not a substance but will, that sin as original is quasi substance (the negative involuntary) at the heart of will.⁸⁷ Augustine wrestled with this often, against the Manicheans first and then against Pelagius, but clear conceptual representation of this truth is impossible. In the will itself there is a quasi substance; evil, as original, is a kind of involuntary at the core of the voluntary, which is due to the *historical* emergence of sin in the world. Conversion thus must take place on the level of the voluntary, but it must go deeper as well: the Redeemer must transform the involuntary at the heart of freedom, lest that involuntary become voluntary and culpable. If our chief concern is conceptual clarity, then we shall allow the voluntary and involuntary simply to stand outside one another (which is the problem with the situationists). But if our principal concern is faithfully to explicate the corporate and personal confession of guilt which is a permanent need for the Christian, then the doctrine of original sin expresses on the level of *ratio* the depth as well as the universality of our human condition. For we always discover ourselves as already having chosen sin, and having been able to do otherwise, and as captive of that sinning, where that sin is not just a product of my freedom but a mode of being of my freedom. The Christian prays for forgiveness and transformation not only of his deliberate sins but of that deeper complicity with sin which is both "his" and "not his." Responsible for personal sin, I must give response to, and take profound account of, that complicity in me which will not go away

⁸⁵ "Le 'péché originel', étude de signification," in *Le conflit des interprétations: Essais d'herméneutique* (Paris: Seuil, 1969) 265-82.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 278.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 281-82.

by deliberately opting for its removal. In the justified person this complicity with evil is not the fundamental orientation of the person's life; rather, radical co-operation and affinity with the life of God in Christ marks the *option fondamentale*. Yet prepersonal complicity with sin is present as a secondary, but in principle conquered, orientation of life which renders difficult the integration of various aspects of personal life into this fundamental orientation to God in Christ.

The painstaking efforts of Roman Catholic theologians to show how original sin is true but analogous guilt require that original sin be seen as both situational privation of grace and *aversio a Deo*. Original sin is not sin solely because it comes from sin and leads to sin (like concupiscence in Catholic theology), nor exclusively because it is the deprivation of God's sanctifying holiness prior to my choice. More than this, the sinner in confessing his guilt discovers a desire to be held captive which, if untouched by grace, would surely be effective, for it is at once a desire that effects powerlessness and the expression of powerlessness. At this level unwillingness and powerlessness are the two indispensable names for that in the human heart which, prior to our personal *prise de position*, needs "remittance," that is, liberation and conversion. I am sinner and therefore I sin; I sin and so am a sinner. The analogy at work in the theology of sin does not begin with a pure, existentialist notion of freedom framed on the basis of personal sin which is then denied of original sin. Rather, the religious experience of sin and its power, illuminated by the depth of influence of Christ's cross, leads to the recognition by reflective intelligence that there is an involuntary element that is both outside the heart of the person and within it as well. Original sin and personal sin do not stand opposed as simply the involuntary and the voluntary, however true that distinction is. The continuity between them is better expressed in the religious conviction that self-enslavement which is personal sin is grounded in both self (freedom) and a negative involuntary. This is the dark component of an ultimately hope-filled *analogia fidei*: the Lord saves us but not without us. The self is not sole origin of sin and does not possess leverage of a possible liberation. The negative involuntary is not sole source of sin, for this would render the *invitation* to conversion completely meaningless. And it is perhaps in the light of the invitation to conversion that the meaningfulness of the doctrine of original sin surfaces: conversion that must come as invitation, and invitation that brings with itself the power to convert.