The Sin in the Garden and the Sinfulness of the World

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I. The Sin in the Garden

(1) *Special difficulties and importance of Gen. 2–3*

The story of the garden poses many problems.

In the context of the whole Bible the individual sin of the first parents seems to be only marginal: it is rarely mentioned explicitly. Sir. 25:24, 2 Cor. 11:3 and 1 Tim. 2:14 speak of Eve's transgression; Wisd. 2:24 identifies the snake as the devil, the origin of death; but the sin in the garden has no place in the religious and liturgical life of the people of the O.T. and, if Rom. 5:12–19 make the role which Adam played at the beginning come out very sharply, it is only in order to emphasize the role which Christ played in our redemption. Paul simply takes for granted the data of Gen. 3 and adopts its presentation of the origin of mankind.[1]

The literary forms of the narration are obscure and complex. They do not correspond to any of Greco-Roman or modern literature and cannot be judged according to our classical categories. Their historicity as a whole can neither be denied nor affirmed without unduly applying to them the norms of a literary form under which they cannot be classified.[2]

Nevertheless this story is the basis of various tenets of Christian theology in general and of many Roman Catholic dogmas in particular: the theology of evil, the so-called preternatural gifts of the first parents, the guilt of original sin as transmitted to their descendants, the need for Christ's incarnation and redemptive death, the prerogative of the 'immaculate conception' and subsequently the 'assumption' of Mary, the objective atonement through the passion and resurrection of the God-man, the individual reconciliation of each Christian through baptism, the

[1] Cf. P. Grelot, 'Réflexions sur le problème du péché originel', *NRTh*, 1967/4 avril, pp. 337–375 et 1967/5, 449–484 (p. 339).

[2] Cf. the letter of J. M. Vosté, secretary of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, addressed to Card. Suhard, 16 Jan. 1948.

life of grace as a struggle against concupiscence, the final perseverance and salvation itself, all these are linked up with the 'fall' of Adam.

In the words of A. Hulsbosch, 'the Biblical account of the fall is a prophetic announcement about man and, as such, preserves for all times its value as revelation concerning the condition of man under God.' But with the progress of palaeontology one feels an urgent need to rethink and reformulate one's view on the origin of sin and to reinterpret the sacred text in order to understand its real message and not so much with the purpose of salvaging its 'historicity'. 'We cannot assign any historical worth in the ordinary sense of the word to the happenings in paradise. No historical facts are related there and we are not speaking about concrete persons.'[3]

Most of the difficulties raised by theologians against a scientific exegesis of these chapters have their origin in an inadequate conception of revelation and Biblical inspiration. The Bible is not a scientific textbook on cosmogony, biology, anthropology and what not. As Leo Baeck pointed out, 'to observe and explore the world is the task of science; to judge it and determine our attitude towards it is the task of religion.'[4] St. Augustine had already remarked, 'In the Gospel, one does not read that the Lord said, "I am sending you the Holy Spirit to teach you about the course of the sun and the moon." He wanted to make Christians, not scientists!'[5]

The Bible is not a textbook of systematic theology, but the religious literature of a nation. In literature, there are figures of speech and genres of expression. When someone says that it is raining 'cats and dogs', one should not ask whether these dogs are Alsatians or bull-terriers. Similarly, there are many questions concerning the garden which are utterly naïve: e.g. how often did man have to eat of the fruit of the tree of life to become immortal? But there are also more serious questions which modern man would have liked to be answered by the Yahwist, 'Who is "ha-adam", the man? Is he historically the first man or a mythological progenitor? Is he the personification of mankind, representing each individual as well as a corporate personality?' But Gen. 2–3 did not tackle these problems. Only St. Paul evolved the typological aspect of the sin of the first man.

In short, one must read the text in the mentality in which it was written and, according to G. Von Rad, one must remember that non-Biblical ideas about the blessedness of man's original state have merged unnoticeably with Christian thought. These should be recognized as such. Consequently, the narrative raises more questions than it answers about 'original man' and 'original' sin. Conceptions about just these things have grown

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[3] A. Hulsbosch, *God's Creation* (Stagbook, 1965). p. 51.
[4] Leo Baeck, *The Essence of Judaism* (Schocken Book, 1948). p. 83.
[5] St. Augustine, *De Actis cum Felice Manichaeo*, I, 10 (PL 42 c. 525).

all too stable. The road of exegesis is as narrow as a razor's edge. One misses the road completely if one does not entrust oneself fully to the text itself.[6]

Before analysing the description of the fall, let us first examine the cosmogonies of West Asia with which the Yahwistic narration forms a close parallel. Although the ideas of a golden age, man's aspiration to immortality, some primeval catastrophy by which the initial ideal world was distorted are common traditions of many nations, yet the whole set-up, the structures and symbols used in Gen. 2–3 are typical of the fertile crescent: 'One feels that one is moving, in the Bible as well as outside it, in the same circle of symbols.'[7]

(2) *The myths of Mesopotamia*

The Enuma Elish, a ninth-century version of an ancient Sumerian epos of creation, shows great affinity with both the priestly hymn of creation and the paradise story: the seven tablets of clay do not exactly correspond to the seven days of creation, but the sixth tablet describes the fashioning of man and the seventh narrates the building of Marduk's heavenly sanctuary.

There are obvious differences and it has rightly been suggested that Israel's faith caused her to demythologize such cosmogonies and to do away with female deities and divine fertility so that her religious thinking gradually evolved towards an incipient concept of creation in the philosophical sense. Nevertheless, the Yahwist could borrow several themes and symbols from the mythologies of the neighbouring nations: a divinity fashioning the first man, the garden of the Lord, cosmic rivers, the tree of life, guardian Cherubs or lightning-like swords, a divinity improvising clothes for man, all these themes and modes of expression were more or less clichés at the disposal of the sacred authors. Let us examine a few of them more closely.

(*a*) 'Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being' (Gen. 2:7).

The theme is also found in Egypt: a relief in the temple of Luxor shows the creator-god, Chnum, at his potter's wheel, making human bodies out of clay. According to R. Labat, the sixth tablet of Enuma Elish explains the origin of evil. There had been a quarrel in the world of the gods. Both Apsu and Mummu had been killed. Through this serious guilt of the gods, death had come into existence. Kingu, the leader of the rebels, is then arrested and the assembly of the gods condemns him: his blood-vessels have to be severed and out of his blood the gods proceed to fashion man. Their guilt is thus drained from the divine world and passes on into the evil existence of mortal man.

[6] G. Von Rad, *Genesis* (O.T. Library, SCM, 1961), pp. 73 f.
[7] M. J. Lagrange, 'L'innocence et le péché', *RB*, 1897, 341–379 (p. 337).

Such would be the 'service' which mankind rendered to the gods. Evil is therefore connatural to man, but its origin comes from beyond, from the world of the gods.

The Yahwist changed the theme considerably: evil is introduced only after the creation of the man and attributed to man's own free decision.[8]

(*b*) The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East (Gen. 2:8).

The word 'paradise' is not used in the text. It connotes a compound in which trees or plants are grown. In Persian 'pairidaeza' means an enclosure, a property on the other side of the fence and could be expressed in Sanskrit as 'pardesha'.

'Eden' is a geographical term, etymologically connected with the Akkadian 'edinu' (a broad plain or steppe) and the Sumerian 'eden' (fertile soil). In Hebrew literature it was spontaneously associated with the homonymous but unrelated word for 'enjoyment'. This nuance of bliss is often present when the prophets use the term as a mythical illustration, e.g. Isa. 51:3, Joel 2:3 and Ezek. 28:13 and 31:9, etc. . . . In Gen. 2–3 the mythical element has almost disappeared.[9]

Speaking of two 'telltale loan words', one for 'flow' (Akk. edû and Sum. adéa) and the other 'eden', E. A. Speiser finds the latter especially significant. This word is rare in Akk. but exceedingly common in Sum. and thus certifies the ultimate source as very ancient indeed. The traditions involved must go back to the oldest cultural stratum of Mesopotamia.[10]

(*c*) 'The tree of life also in the middle of the garden' (Gen. 2:9).

The classic example of the plant of life is found in the Gilgamesh epos, with its main emphasis on man's quest for immortality. Inevitably the attempt ends in failure, with the exception of Utnapishtim, the local flood hero. This is not to set a precedent and, after the death of his friend Enkidu, Gilgamesh carries on roaming around fruitlessly. By the ale-wife he is told: 'When the gods created mankind, death for mankind they set aside, life in their own hands retaining.'

But Gilgamesh hears from Utnapishtim about a secret plant of life: 'Its thorns will prick thy hand just as does the rose. If thy hand obtain the plant, thou will attain life!' Gilgamesh finds the plant and even experiences some of its rejuvenating effect, but

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[8] R. Labat, *Le poème babylonien de la création* (Paris, 1935); cf. also W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960); and for this whole section: N. Lohfink, *Die Erzählung von Sündenfall* (Vortrag auf der katholischen Akademie in Bayern, München, 1964) published in his book, *Das Siegeslied am Schilfmeer* (Frankfurt A.M., 1966), pp. 81–101.

[9] G. Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 76.

[10] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (Anchor Bible, I, Doubleday, 1964), p. 19.

not the boon of immortality: on his way back, while bathing in a stream, he left the plant on the bank, a serpent snuffed the fragrance, came up from the water and carried it off.[11]

The loss of the plant comes here through the action of a serpent, but it is accidental or rather due to a fatalistic will of the gods. For the Yahwist, on the other hand, the access to the tree of life is denied to man as a punishment, after a voluntary transgression of God's command. The serpent is only a tempter and not a thief who stole the plant.

This theme and that of the fashioning of the first man show us not only the mythological background of the Yahwist and the technique of his demythologizing, but also the purpose and message of the narrative: evil in this world originated from man, who abused his free will and committed a sin.[12]

(3) *The use of sources and the unity of Gen. 2–3*

In his translation for the Anchor Bible, E. A. Speiser has stressed the fact that J derives much of its details from Mesopotamian sources. Comparing the opening sentences of J, P, and the Akkadian Enuma Elish, we find that in each clause a temporal clause leads up to a parenthetic description and is then resumed:

> At the time when God Yahweh made earth and heaven . . . (J)
> When God set about to create heaven and earth . . . (P)
> When on high, heaven had not been named, firm ground below had not been called by name . . . (*Creation Epic*, I, 1–2).

One particular passage of the Gilgamesh Epos deserves our attention. Such motives as sexual awareness, wisdom and a paradise-garden are familiar in various ancient texts. But it is noteworthy that all are found jointly in one single passage: Enkidu was effectively tempted by the courtesan and then repudiated by the world of nature, 'but now he had wisdom, broader understanding' (1.20). The temptress tells him, 'you are wise Enkidu, you are like a God!' (1.34). She then marks his new status by improvising some new clothes for him (II, 1.27).

It would be rash to dismiss such detailed correspondence as mere coincidence. Considering that the flood story has a no less striking similarity to the Bible, one must conclude, 'Such affinities lend added support to the assumption that in his treatment of primeval history J made use of traditions that had originated in Mesopotamia.'[13]

When we speak of sources, we do not refer to written documents, as if J had access to a copy of the Gilgamesh Epos, but to living traditions: 'A large number of heterogeneous ancient conceptions and themes had been circulating in Israel for centuries.

[11] *Gilgamesh Epos*, XI, pp. 287 f.; cf. *ANET*, p. 96.
[12] N. Lohfink, *Die Erzälung von Sündenfall*, p. 89.
[13] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, pp. 19 and 27.

Gradually and with difficulty the Yahwists gained control over these: they excluded some of them, transformed others and created still more. Finally our author came on the scene with his own synthetic and didactic genius and proceeded to select and combine together all that material into one compelling whole which is entirely subservient to his own, deeply religious convictions.'[14]

In other words, Israel had new ideas, but no other forms of expression than those common to the whole ancient Near East. We move in the same circle of symbols as in the myths of Mesopotamia; the mental process and psychological channels of observing human nature and nature outside of man, and of reconstructing primeval history, are similar. But the purpose and direction of the vision is given on the basis of a different religious belief. In Israel, the inspiration comes from the Yahwistic faith.

The unity of the narration has often been called into question on account of creation doublets: two trees occur in the same context, man is formed out of dust from the earth and condemned to return to dust AND to the earth, there is a double planting of the garden, a double condemnation (one to a nomadic life and one to the tilling of the soil), man is twice driven out of paradise and there is a double guard placed at the entrance (the Cherubs and the flaming sword).

We should remember that the Hebrew narrators were used to introduce their subject-matter first in general terms and then returned to it in greater detail. Thus Gen. 2:8 introduces the planting of a garden and the setting of man in it; then each point is taken up separately. There is no need of introducing two authors, two documents or even a later rewriting of the narration.

The problem of the description of the four rivers is somewhat more complicated. Gen. 2:10–14 seems to be a piece of ancient learning which the author inserts as a showpiece and then resumes his story in verse 15. Nevertheless it has a function in the structure of the narrative. According to G. Von Rad, we find in it what we missed in verse 8: a close connection between the earth and the garden on the one hand and the historical world of man on the other.[15]

The peculiar appellation 'Yahweh-Elohim' suggests that the text had an independent existence. It is used 20 times in these two chapters and only 23 times in the rest of the O.T. (of which 7 cases are doubtful and 13 are found in the Chronicles and Nehemiah). Why the name of Yahweh is not mentioned in the dialogue between Eve and the serpent is all too obvious.

As for the double punishment, J. Bergrich distinguishes two sources in Gen. 3:17–19: (i) 'Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you, and you shall eat the plants of the field . . . you are

[14] H. Renckens, *Israel's Concept of the Beginning* (Herder & Herder, 1964), p. 140.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 139 and G. Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 78.

dust and to dust you shall return' refers to the life of the steppe. (ii) 'In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken' refers to the life of the felah.

This is probable but, as G. Von Rad remarks, 'the fusion of the two passages . . . makes the curse of the clods and therewith the misery of agricultural life thematically predominant. Because of this union the passage has become more comprehensive: it speaks not only of the hardship but also of the wretchedness of human existence.'[16]

Finally, 'a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife' (Gen. 2:24) does not reflect the custom prevailing in Israel. After marriage, it is the wife and not the husband who breaks away from her family. This statement must have originated in a time of matriarchal culture.[17]

Conclusion: The irregularities, inconsistencies and other flaws in the story of the garden are not necessarily due to a literary combination of various pre-existing sources, but point out to a prolonged growth of various ancient traditions preceding their fixation into a literary unit. Moreover, the final redactor successfully gave to these chapters a definite literary and organic unity.

(4) *Some remarks about the most relevant passages*

> (The Lord God) 'breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being' (2:7).

The dichotomy is not between body and soul but between 'the man of dust' and the 'breath of life'. This life springs directly from the mouth of God as he bends over the man of dust. One may see in this description an undertone of melancholy, but there is certainly an anticipation of the state of the post-adamic man: when God withdraws his breath, man returns to dead corporeity.[18]

> 'the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' (2:9, 2:17, 3:3, 3:22).

One suspects at once that the duality of trees is the result of a combination of two traditions. Stylistically the Hebrew expression for 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' is awkward.[19] Yet it is around this second tree and around the knowledge of good and evil that the narrative evolves.

The tree of life, in 2:9 and 3:22, as well as the new name given to the woman, Eve (because she was the mother of all living), have an important but subordinate role in the narrative.

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[16] G. Von Rad, *Genesis*, pp. 91 f.
J. Bergrich, *die Paradieserzählung*, *ZAW*, 50, 1932, 93–116 (p. 102).
[17] G. Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 83.
[18] Cf. Ps. 104:29 and Job 34:14. G. Von Rad, *Genesis* p. 75.
[19] The substantial infinitive *hada'at* has rarely an object: the tree of the knowing good and evil.

In ancient West Asia, the tree of life was a symbol of 'a life of happiness'. Fountains of living water, life-giving herbs (beneficial to health or healing), and trees provided an obvious symbol for the figurative expression of something upon which our happiness depends. Thus Israel describes the king as the 'breath of our life' (Lam. 4:20) in the same way as the Assyrian prince refers to his own regime as a 'plant of life'. Ezekiel speaks also of trees planted along the water that flows out of the sanctuary, whose fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing (Ezek. 47:12); he could have called them 'trees of life'.

The expression 'knowing good and evil' is important for the understanding of the story of the garden.

According to E. A. Speiser, it means having the full possession of one's mental and physical power. In 2 Sam. 19:36 f., Barzilai has lost the ability to appreciate good and evil because at eighty he can no longer enjoy physical and aesthetic pleasure.[20]

For G. Von Rad, it means omniscience in the widest sense of the word, even sexual experience in so far as the verb to know never signifies purely intellectual perception but rather experience, acquaintance with something or somebody.[21]

J. De Fraine made a valuable contribution to the solution of this problem by understanding the phrase in two different ways:

(1) Experiencing successively good and then evil: after having had a good time, a life easy to bear, one starts questioning one's motives, trying to have it one's own way. Consequently the sense of evil arises, one kicks against the goad, life becomes unbearable.[22]

This would be the way in which God proposes it (2:17).

(2) Acquiring a comprehensive knowledge of everything, good, bad and everything else. In Jer. 42:6 it would mean experiencing what is physically useful or harmful. Num. 24:13 goes in the direction of a moral emancipation: to be able to decide oneself what is right or wrong and thus have power and autonomy in every field.

Basing himself on Amos 5:14 f. and Isa. 5:20 f. and 24*b*, P. Grelot shows that such moral discernment between what is good and evil can only be acquired under the guidance of divine Wisdom because it is God who defermines what is right and wrong.[23]

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[20] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, p. 26.

[21] G. Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 79 and also his *Old Testament Theology*—I (Oliver and Boyd, 1963), p. 155.

[22] J. De Fraine, Genesis, *Boeken van het Oud Testament* (J. Romen & Zonen, 1963), p. 47. Also 'Jeux de mots dans le récit de la chutte', Mélanges Robert, 1957, pp. 47–59.

[23] P. Grelot, 'Réflexions . . .', *NRTh*, 1967, p. 362.

This use of the tree of knowledge as a means of full emancipation is proposed by the serpent (Gen. 3:5).

'The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden to till it and guard it' (2:15).

Man, the Adam, is taken out of his natural surroundings, the adamah, and placed in the vicinity of the tree of life. After the fall he is sent back to the soil, his natural abode. Symbolically this means that man was mortal from the beginning. He could have changed this by eating of the fruit of the life-giving tree but he was expelled. The preternatural gift of immortality is nothing more than a lost opportunity.

'In the day that you shall eat of it; you shall die' (2:17).

Though the prohibition was far from oppressive, only one tree was singled out, yet it is a test of obedience and it places man before a free decision. The sanction attached to the moral transgression is expressed in juridical terms and means capital punishment. Though the passive formula, 'you shall be put to death', is more common, the active is also used, e.g. in Num. 17:28 and Lev. 8:35.

An excellent parallel to this prohibition is found in 1 Kgs. 2:27 in connection with Shimei, 'on the day you go forth and cross the brook Kidron, know for certain that you shall die!'

'and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman' (2:22).

The origin of this verse is most probably Sumerian. In that language TI can mean both rib and life. The pun was not possible in Hebrew, but the name Hewwah, life, was introduced in a later context, Gen. 3:20.

The fact that the woman was fashioned after the promulgation of the prohibition does not imply that the author did not consider women as possible subjects of a moral law!

As for the deep sleep, it is not anaesthetic but rather a kind of magic. Man is not permitted to watch God's miraculous activity while the creative action is in process.

'They were both naked and were not ashamed' (2:25).

The author uses on purpose 'arummim and not 'eyrummim as in verse 3:7. The former is homonymous with 'arum, used in the next sentence to express the cunning and insidiousness of the serpent.

The original nakedness illustrates a condition of mutual trust and esteem rather than the absence of disorderly sexual impulses. In the Bible, nakedness connotes the loss of social dignity and not primarily a danger of sexual stimulation. Clothing, like our official uniforms, expresses the wealth or the authority of the one who wears it.

After the fall of the first parents, their whole body is marked with a certain destitution. They can no longer have the same familiar dealings with God. They have lost 'face'.[24]

> 'the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature which the Lord had made' (3:1).

The Hebrews had a natural aversion for the snake and this was intensified by the fact that the serpent was adored as a divine sign of life, fertility and wisdom in the popular Canaanite religions. Some findings, as the terracotta snake of Bethshan and a bronze serpent at Geser, reveal the cult of a goddess whose symbol was the serpent.

The author seems to reject this serpent-myth and its pagan idolatry by the passing remark, 'creature which the Lord God had made'.

After the fall the description of the punishment is not without a certain irony: by listening to the snake, man, instead of obtaining the blessing of fertility, lost his chance of escaping death; and instead of gaining absolute autonomy and divine wisdom, came to know shame and guilt![25]

> 'Did God say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?' (3:1).

The Hebrew expression 'aph-ki' defies translation. According to Luther, it was used by the snake 'as if to turn up its nose and jeer and scoff at one'. E. A. Speiser considers it as synonymous to gam-ki (Ps. 23:4) and translates 'even though God told you . . .' The serpent is not asking a question but deliberately distorting a fact.[26]

'. . . not of any tree' is ambiguous and can mean either 'of none at all' or 'of not all without exception'. The woman falls for it and in her zeal she adds to the prohibition to eat: they are not even allowed to touch the tree of knowledge.

> 'When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband and he ate' (3:6).

This verse is a masterpiece of psychology. The man is silent and seems to approve. It begins to dawn on him that he would be better off as his own master than under the obedience

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[24] E. Haulotte, the article 'Clothing' in *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* edited by X. Léon-Dufour, Geoffrey Chapman, 1967, pp. 65–68. Also his book, *Symbolique du vêtement* (Aubier, 1966).

Cf. also A. M. Dubarle, 'Genesis and Original Sin', *Cross Current*, 1958, 345–362 (pp. 355–357).

[25] Cf. H. Renckens, *Israel's Concept* . . . , p. 280. For an explanation of the mythical symbolism of the serpent, cf. infra: Paul Ricoeur, *La symbolique du mal, le mythe 'adamique'*, pp. 239–243 (infra p. 23).

[26] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, p. 23.

of Elohim. The woman begins to shilly-shally, one can almost see the perspiration on her brow.

Far from being naïve, this scene without words has the theological depth of John's description of the triple concupiscence: of the flesh (good for food), of the eyes (delightful), and the pride of life (giving supreme knowledge) (1 John 2:16).

As for the snake, he no longer attracts our attention. He had only made a simple insinuation, given a stimulus to which a free reaction must follow. According to A. Läpple, 'it is correct to place the actual decision of the first man within, in his own conscience. It is there that the pros and cons are weighed; it is there that the actual decision against God is made. The eating of the forbidden fruit is only an external consequence of the inner rejection of God which has already been accomplished.' [27]

It is also remarkable that the Yahwist expresses no shock. 'The unthinkable and terrible is described as simply and unsensationally as possible, completely without the hubbub of the extraordinary or the dramatic break, so that it is reported from man's standpoint and almost self-evident, inwardly consistent.' [28]

> 'The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree' (3:12).

Man implicitly reproves God as the ultimate cause of what happened. Blaming the woman, he shows that the harmony of the 'two in one flesh' has been destroyed. 'The ultimate solidarity of sin, in which they are now united in God's sight, is not recognized by them: the man betrays the woman. The sin they committed together does not unite them before God, but isolates them.' [29]

The snake is not asked for an explanation because the attention is focused on man and his guilt. Only the impulse to temptation was transferred outside man but this marginal figure had not to be personified.

> 'upon your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat' (3:14).

The sinuous crawling, which makes the snake unclean to the Hebrews, is considered as a physical punishment. To eat 'dust' is to be humiliated, to eat 'humble pie', or perhaps to be reduced to the state of Rephaim, the phantoms of She'ol that feed on dust. In short, the serpent is linked up with death and defeat.

> 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel' (3:15).

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[27] A. Läpple, *The Problem of Genesis* (The Bible in the changing world—I, Mercier Press, 1967), pp. 81 f. Cf. also P. Grelot, 'Reflexions . . .', *NRTh*, 1967, pp. 339 and 358.
[28] G. Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 87.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

Literally the second half means 'it (they) shall strike at your head and you shall strike at its (their) heel'. 'It' refers to the seed of the woman and the verb SH-W-PH can mean attack or even lie in wait. The feminine, 'she will crush', combined with an alternative meaning for the verb, 'you shall lie in wait', occurs for the first time in the Sixto-Clementine edition of the Vulgate, 9 Nov. 1592!

Both E. A. Speiser and S. R. Driver are laconic in their comment: 'The passage does not justify eschatological connotations' and 'We must not read into the words more than they contain.'[30]

G. Von Rad rightly remarks that 'seed' may not be construed personally, but only quite generally with the meaning of posterity. It is a struggle of the species and as such there is no forseeable hope that a victory can be won.[31] Etiology is one of the Yahwist's specialities and he certainly has the natural aversion of man for the snake in mind. But Von Rad goes on, 'The exegesis of the early Church which found a Messianic prophecy here, a reference to a final victory of the woman's seed (proto-evangelium), does not agree with the sense of the passage.' Granted that there is no victory implied in the part of the body at which the blow is aimed: in one case the head, in the other the heel. Both can be fatal. Yet there is a hint at a hope of victory in the immediate context: in verse 14 the snake is associated with dust, death and defeat, while in verse 20 the woman is given a new name, Eve, i.e. Life.

Moreover, the eschatological interpretation is found in the N.T. itself. Rom. 16:20 states that the God of peace will soon crush Satan under the feet of the faithful and Revelation identifies the great Dragon, which is cast down, with 'that ancient serpent who is called the devil' (Rev. 12:9).

> 'I will greatly multiply your pain in child-bearing . . . your husband shall rule over you . . . cursed is the ground because of you . . . thorns and thistles it shall it bring forth to you' (3:16–18).

Neither man nor woman is cursed, but both are affected in their vital functions: the woman in her role as helpmate and as mother, the man in his work as bread-earner and in the field of his activity, the adamah.

The crawling of the snake, the pains of child-birth, the submission of woman to her husband, fatigue, the growth of thistles and physical death itself are all facts belonging to the experience of the author. But in his view, man's spiritual life is necessarily connected with his physical condition and his natural surroundings. Linked up with the innocence of the first man are his physical prerogatives and the integrity of the surroundings in which he

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[30] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, p. 24, where S. R. Driver is quoted.
[31] G. Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 90.

lived. All that hurts or is unpleasant has to be eliminated from the picture of paradise, before the fall.

If we surrender the historicity of paradise, we cannot maintain at the same time the physical integrity of man. On the other hand, if we accept the preternatural gifts we should admit that the snake was walking upright and speaking a human language. Nay, more, all the animals before the fall should have been free from fatigue, suffering, pangs of birth, sickness and death: though our consciousness is psychologically different from that of animals, the ultimate experience is analogous.[32] A. Hulsbosch concludes, 'None of the characteristics with which the first man and his wife are depicted are historically tenable. The manner in which the first man and his wife were created surely cannot pass as historical, and just as little can the prerogatives which go together with the paradisal state.'[33]

> 'At the east of the garden of Eden he placed the Cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life' (3:24).

The inaccessibility of the tree of life is here, for the first time, explicitly mentioned.

The fiery revolving sword may be a thunderbolt with two branches, the symbol of Adad. It was often placed on top of a stele to indicate the location of a city that had been utterly destroyed by the Assyrians. Here, it might be the lightning which bars the way to the sky and to the abode of the gods.

According to E. A. Speiser, the sword is a distinctive weapon of a god, as the dagger of Ashur or the toothed sword of Shamash. The conclusion of Enuma Elish I gives us an illustration: the rebel gods are said to make the fire subside and to humble the Power-weapon. The fire would seem to characterize the weapon, a metaphorical description of the bolt-like or glinting blade. The magic weapon was all that stood between the insurgent gods and their goal.[34]

(5) *Some conclusions about the historicity and the purpose of the narration*

The Bible does not teach palaeontology. It lies completely outside the domain of revelation to provide us with such information concerning the structure of the world before the fall as we would not otherwise have known.

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[32] P. Grelot, 'Reflexions . . .', *NRTh*, 1967, p. 344.

[33] A. Hulsbosch, *God's Creation*, p. 38.

Concerning sickness and fatigue, cf. A. Vanneste, *De theologie van de erfzonde* (Coll. Brug. & Gand., 1966), pp. 289–312: 'Original sin should not be used to explain the origin of suffering and death in the world. Biological suffering and death are "results" of sin in the same way as long life is the "result" of honouring one's parents, according to the decalogue.' (Summarized in *Theology Digest*, 15/3 autumn 1967, pp. 209–214).

[34] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, p. 25.

It is certainly out of question that the sacred author was drawing on human recollections of paradise, in some way handed down by the first generations of men.[35]

In Gen. 2–3, a constitutive element of the 'historical genre' is lacking: recourse to testimony. Instead, we have themes and symbols which belong to mythologies.[36]

Primeval 'history' has a great affinity with the Messianic and eschatological prophecies. The prophets displayed an amazing certitude regarding the future restoration and sublimation of the Davidic kingdom. While describing this vision in details, they used stereotyped and conventional symbols and similies, and projected into the future idealized situations of the present and the past: 'The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox' (Isa. 65:25); 'Instead of thorns shall come cypress, instead of brier shall come myrtle' (Isa. 55:13); 'there will grow all kinds of trees for food . . . they will bear fresh fruit every month . . . and their leaves will be for healing' (Ezek. 47:12).

Similarly, paradise never existed as a historical reality. Eden is but a description of the present world, as experienced by the author, from which he mentally removed all the unpleasant elements. After sifting out all that is evil and hurts us, what remained is something that should never have existed, because physical evil and suffering is a constitutive element of the material world.

As for the nature of original sin, it is proposed as an act of disobedience and was inspired by pride, *hubris*. Man stepped outside the state of dependence and refused submission. The guiding principle of his life is no longer obedience but his autonomous knowing and willing: he has ceased to understand himself as a creature. The disturbance which began in himself has also brought the earth under the dominion of misery and disharmony. But the ultimate reason for man's behaviour and the deeper explanation of this unfathomable relationship between man and the earth are not given.

The theory of the common sin of childhood, stealing fruit in the neighbour's garden, is inadequate even if we attribute to God a pedagogical intention in forbidding them to eat of the fruit of one tree.

Some of the arguments to prove that there is a certain sexual background in the narration have some value, but sex is definitely

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[35] One is astonished to read in a doctorate thesis, *Sin in the Old Testament* (Herder, 1963) by Stefan Porubcan: 'It should be clear . . . that the real literary genre of this writing is *memory of the past*, transmitted by tradition. Man fallen into sin and experiencing its consequences, *remembers* his own state and condition before the fall and compares one with the other' (p. 407).

[36] P. Grelot, 'Reflexions . . .', *NRTh*, 1967, p. 340.

not the main preoccupation of the author. Prof. J. Coppens has examined most of them, without always making them his own:[87]

(i) To *know* 'good and evil' refers to sex, but not exclusively.

(ii) The paradise fruit is an aphrodisiac, but not explicitly mentioned as such.

(iii) The sense of shame was experienced only after the fall. But nakedness is not only an occasion of sexual stimulation but also a symbol of destitution when some one has lost face.

(iv) It is only after the fall that the woman is called mother of the living, Eve. The connection between the sin and this new name has still to be established.

(v) The only commandment given before the fall is 'increase and multiply'. This belongs to the priestly tradition; here the transgression is against the prohibition to eat of the fruit of the tree.

(vi) The whole context deals with the problem of sex: sense of shame, pains of child-birth, the first impulse of concupiscence . . . It is true that the creation of the woman is depicted as an etiology of the sex urge, but man's relations to the soil, the desire for immortality and for knowledge are themes equally emphasized.

(vii) The punishment of the woman affects her sex life. For the author the role of the woman is to be a helpmate and a mother. Man's punishment regards his own function in life and not sex.

(viii) Archaeology has shown that the snake was closely associated with the goddess of fertility, as a symbol of the phallus. The goddess is often represented naked and with a snake around her neck or in her hand. But the serpent was also the symbol of magic and divine wisdom. The dialogue of Gen. 3:1–5 reflects much more the aspect of knowledge and autonomy.

(ix) 'I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord' (Gen. 4:1) seems to imply that previously Eve attempted to obtain pregnancy through the help of some god of fertility. Some Rabbinic exegetes even speak of Eve's adultery with the snake in order to put her sexual life under the protection of the Canaanite deity. In order to see in Gen. 2–3 a ritual defloration or the right of the first night one has to read too much into the text.

[87] J. Coppens, *la connaissance du bien et du mal et le péché du paradis* (Nauwelaerts, Louvain, 1948).

Nevertheless it is possible that the Yahwist (who hailed from Judeah) considered the fertility cult, practised under every green tree and on every hill-top, as the greatest evil of his time and selected it for his narration of original sin in order to stigmatize the practice.

Some attempts have been made to show that Ex. 32–34 is the Elohistic version of original sin. Yeroboam's idolatrous cult of the calf was selected and transposed back to the origin of the nation and of the covenant of Sinai. But the story of the golden calf is not an exact parallel to the fall of Adam, it had no lasting effect either on the relation between man and his god or between man and his surroundings.

Recently P. Grelot has stressed the psychological and social element in the story of the first couple. It is only in and through the relation of himself with his wife that man discovers his own personality. The concept of original sin should not be restricted within the framework of an abstract and purely individual action, but must be given an inter-personal dimension. Unlike Rom. 7 (which depicts an individual conscience), Gen. 3 brings a human couple upon the scene.[38]

Another interesting contribution is that of A. Alonso-Schökel and N. Lohfink. They postulate a covenant concept underlying the paradise story.[39] Although the structure of Gen. 2:3 does not explicitly manifest a covenant pattern, these chapters could not have been written without an accepted theology of covenantal relations between Yahweh and his people. Here are the main features of such theology:

(*a*) Yahweh found Israel in the desert, constituted her as a nation which he made his own.

(*b*) He brought Israel into a wonderful land, Canaan, overflowing with milk and honey, and made them dwell therein to till the soil.

(*c*) Yahweh gave them his commandments, the stipulation of a covenant between him and his people.

(*d*) If they observed these stipulations, they would prosper and live happily and undisturbed in that promised land.

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[38] P. Grelot, 'Reflexions . . .', *NRTh*, 1967, pp. 368 f. and 468.

[39] N. Lohfink, *Die Erzählung* . . . (Das Siegeslied), pp. 91 f.

L. Alonso-Schökel, 'Motivos sapienciales y de alianza en Gen. 2–3' *Biblica*, 43 (1962), pp. 295–316: p. 309 'Elección y traslado, cultivo y observancia, dones de Dios y mandato apodictico, abandonar y seguir, oir la voz y temer, interrogatorio y maldicón: todo esto son huellas que he dejado la alianza y el esquema narrativo de historia salutis.'

Jean Ricoeur has something similar in 'le mythe Adamique' (*La symbolique du mal, Finitude et culpabilité*, II, Aubier, 1960), p. 277: The primeval narration of the garden expresses in a nutshell all that the dramatic destiny of Israel has revealed concerning human existence. Adam and Eve are expelled from paradise in the same way as Israel is banned from Canaan.

(*e*) If not, Yahweh would bring upon them the curse of the covenant: he would affect them by plague, dislodge them with the help of their enemies, drive them into exile so that the whole nation would gradually be wiped out, i.e. die.

The whole Deuteronomistic history is but an illustration of this pact. The sins of the chosen nation are a breach of covenant. Every evil which befell them was the result of their falling away. Fidelity to the commandments meant peace and prosperity.

All these elements can be traced in the paradise story and give a clue to a new understanding of these chapters:

(*a*) God created man in the wilderness, outside paradise.
(*b*) He brought him into the wonderful garden to till the soil.
(*c*) He gave a commandment not to eat of the tree of knowledge.
(*d*) If man obeyed he was to live in the proximity of the tree of life.
(*e*) If not, he would be crippled in his own being, be expelled from paradise and finally die.

All these similarities cannot be due to mere coincidence but to a definite attempt to frame the narration into a covenantal pattern. The emphasis is undoubtedly laid on Adam's free transgression; the serpent-tempter and the garden are but prerequisites and the remains of mythological themes. But the sin of the first parents comes under the category of breach of the covenant and Gen. 2–3 could not have been written before the relations between God and his people and the concept of sin were considered as covenant and breach of covenant.

Behind the facade of archaic simplicity and without expressing any abstract speculation, the story of the garden is deep theology.

II. The Sin of the World

(1) *Sinfulness in the world*

Although the sin in the garden is not explicitly mentioned again in other texts of the O.T., except in the late books of Ben Sirach and of Wisdom, the sinfulness of the world and the 'sin of Israel' are often recurring themes.

Sin increased and evil action multiplied during primeval history: Cain murdered his brother, the sons of god fornicated with the daughters of man, the *hubris* of those who built the Tower of Babel is a collective transgression parallel to the eating of the fruit and followed by a parallel lasting punishment, i.e. the confusion of tongues.

The sins of Sodom and Gomorrah are proverbial and so are the rebellions of 'that stiff-necked people' in the desert.

For the prophets the typical sin is that of unbelief, the refusal to accept salvation when it is gratuitously offered by God. It is at the same time a breach of the covenant, because all are collectively responsible for abiding by its stipulation.

In fact, the attention is not so much focused on the individual transgression, but each sin is as it were a partial manifestation of the fundamental state of sinfulness, the irruption of a latent disease, a new impulse and further completion of the same malaise.

Isaiah exclaims, 'Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evil-doers, sons who deal corruptly' (Isa. 1:4). Hosea speaks of an 'adulterous spirit' which has taken possession of them, 'A spirit of harlotry has lead them astray and they have left their God to play the harlot' (Hos. 4:12). At times, the whole town is considered as one sinful person. Ezekiel rebukes them for 'the sin of Samaria' and 'the sin of Jerusalem'. Jerusalem is a murderous city, a 'town of blood' or a public woman.[40]

When St. Paul wanted to prove that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, he had no difficulty in finding a whole string of quotations from the Psalms and Isaiah (Rom. 3:9–23). But the idea of the sinfulness of the world is still more typical of John. His outcry, 'Behold the Lamb of God who removes the sinfulness of the word' (John 1:29) refers to sin taken in the collective sense, *tên Hamartian tou kosmou,* and not to individual sins.

(2) *Consciousness of this sinful state*

Several passages of Scripture express the consciousness of this sinful state. Man is aware of the fact that he is fundamentally linked up with the sinfulness of the world:

> 'Enter not into judgement with Thy servant, for no man living is righteous before Thee!' (Ps. 143:2). 'What is man that he can be clean! Or he that is born of a woman that he can be righteous?' (Job 15:14). 'I was brought forth in iniquity, in sin did my mother conceive me!' (Ps. 51:5).

This sinfulness 'from my mother's womb' has been interpreted in various ways:

> Due to her monthly course, or the even more profuse bleeding at child-birth, woman is ritually impure.[41]
>
> The womb is taken figuratively, as the town or the nation in which one is born. 'Are you not children of transgression,

[40] For this whole section cf. J. De Fraine, *Adam and the Family of Man* (Alba House, 1965); also several devotional articles in 'De Bode' especially the issue of June 1965.

[41] Lev. 15:19–33. This recurring ritual impurity is one of the reasons why women were not given official functions in the cult, although the major obstacle was the inferior status of women in the society of that time.

the offspring of deceit, you who burn with lust among the oaks, under every green tree?' (Isa. 57:5).

At times this sinful state is said to be so deep-rooted that it seems innate and incurable:

> 'The ungodly will be punished . . . their offspring are accursed . . . children of adulterers who will not come to maturity . . . for the end of an unrighteous generation is grievous' (Wisd. ch. 3).
>
> The only salvation must come from God, who annihilates this sinful state and re-creates a new disposition in man: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me!' (Ps. 51:10).

The consciousness of this collective guilt is also expressed in the various liturgical confessions, as for instance in Ezra 9:6 f. and Daniel 9:6. Christ himself not only spoke of an adulterous generation (Matt. 12:39 and 16:4) but also implied that their sins were not just a series of consecutive individual transgressions when he rebuked the scribes and Pharisees, 'Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell!' (Matt. 23:32 f.).

(3) *Solidarity in guilt and punishment*

Sin affects every member of the community, even when he does not directly co-operate in the sinful action. This is especially true when the transgression is that of a king, a priest or some one in authority:

David held a census and thus committed a sin of pride. Yahweh sent a plague and in one single day 70,000 people died.[42]

According to Lev. 4:3 'If an anointed priest sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer for the sin . . .'

In the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16) not only the three ringleaders but also their whole families and their belongings perished, not only the 250 men offering incense but as many as 14,700 people died by the plague.

Another dimension of this sinfulness is the solidarity between father and son: the Lord is a jealous God and visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him. The wrath of God even affects the beasts of the field and the trees that bear fruit.[43]

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[42] 2 Sam. 24. This is probably an aetiology of the choice of Araunah's threshing floor as site for the Solomonic temple.

[43] For the vertical dimension in solidarity, cf. Ex. 20:5 which also states that Yahweh's steadfast love lasts for a thousand generations of the pious.

For the repercussion of sin on the infra-human world, cf. the story of the flood in Gen. 6:6, 13, 17, the desolation on earth and the calamities in the sky in Isa. 13:9–11 and especially Jer. 7:20, 'My anger will be poured out upon this place, upon man and beast, upon the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; it will burn and not be quenched!'

During the past few decades the concept of corporate personality' has been studied more deeply, especially by J. De Fraine and H. Wheeler Robinson. The latter has spelled out the four main characteristics of this notion:

(*a*) A corporate personality has an extension going beyond the present moment both in the past and in the future.

(*b*) It is an eminently real concept and transcends the purely literary or ideal personification, making the group a real entity, entirely actualized in each of its members.

(*c*) The idea is extremely fluid: the human mind passes quickly back and forth, even unconsciously, from the individual to the collective and vice versa.

(*d*) The corporate idea persists even after the development of a new individualistic emphasis within it.[44]

One typical illustration of this fluidity is the description of the sin of our ancestor, Jacob-Israel: 'Your first father sinned, and your mediators transgressed against me. Therefore I profaned the princes of the sanctuary, I delivered Jacob to utter destruction and Israel to reviling' (Isa. 43:27 f.).

To put it briefly, the sin of the priest or the king affects the whole population; the guilt incurred by the ancestor passes on to all his descendants; the sinfulness of the world penetrates further in time and space and into the depth of every human heart.

(4) *The first Adam*

H. Renckens stated that the paradise story has 'the character at once of a prophetic exhortation and of the instruction given by a teacher of wisdom'.[45] It is certainly remarkable that Adam is never mentioned as the ancestor or as the first sinner in the pre-exilic literature. On the other hand, most of the themes and symbols of Gen. 2–3 are found in the exilic prophecies and the later Sapiential writings.

In the prophetic oracles written around the time of the exile, mention is made of a tree of life, the garden of Eden, Cherubim, a marvellous fertility, abundance of 'living' water, a state of restored harmony between man and beast, and animals among themselves.[46] But the most striking parallel of Adam's story is the description of the fall of the king of Tyre, although Ezek. 28:12–17 might be only the surviving torso of a more ancient masterpiece:

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[44] H. Wheeler-Robinson, 'The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality', *ZAW Bhft*, 66, 1936, pp. 49–61 and J. De Fraine, *Adam and the Family* . . . , pp. 20–21.

[45] H. Renckens, *Israel's Concept* . . . , p. 138.

[46] Cf.: the tree of life, Ezek. 47. Eden, Ezek. 28:13, 31:7, 36:35; Isa. 51:3; Joel 2:3. Cherubs, Isa. 6; Ezek. 1 and 9–10, etc. . . .

'You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty! (preternatural gifts). You were in Eden, the garden of God . . . On the day you were created, they (the precious stones) were prepared. With an anointed guardian Cherub I placed you. You were on the holy mountain of God . . . You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till iniquity was found in you. In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence (this fits the Phoenician context) and you sinned. So, I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God and the guardian Cherub drove you out . . . Your heart was proud because of your beauty, you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour. I cast you to the ground! (Back to the adamah!) . . .'

The literary affinity with Gen. 2–3 is most obvious. Yet, according to H. Renckens, it is not the prophets that were influenced by Genesis, but rather the Yahwistic narration that has to be regarded as the result of their preaching. There is no evidence that the prophets knew Gen. 2–3. They made use of similar literary material and yet never referred to what is central in the paradise story: Adam as the first man, Eve, the serpent, or the crucially significant tree of knowledge.[47]

In Ben Sirach and the Book of Wisdom, we have clear allusions to the transgression in the garden, but it is in the context of the origin of man's mortality, explaining how 'death entered the world'.[48] Even there Adam is not mentioned by name. Except for a passing remark in Ben Sirach 49:16, the first father is not considered as an individualized person in the O.T. literature. The 'fluidity' of a corporate personality is still found in the Book of Wisdom: 'Wisdom protected the first-formed father of the world when he alone had been created. She delivered him from his transgression and gave him strength to rule all things. But when an unrighteous man departed from her in his anger, he perished because in rage he slew his brother. When the earth was flooded because of *him*, wisdom again saved it' (Wisd. 10:1–4). The first man, Cain and all the sinners from before the flood are all just one 'adam'.

In his vision of the past, the Yahwist tried to give a concrete expression of the cause of the actual situation of sinfulness. The first man, the adam, is an eponym as well as a corporate personality and it is therefore difficult and perhaps pointless to separate the sin in the garden from the sinfulness of the world. Both are linked together as one topic of revelation.

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[47] H. Renckens, *Israel's Concept* . . . , pp. 150–154.

[48] In the same Book of Wisdom 14:12, 27, corruption of life also 'entered' through the making of idols, which are the beginning and cause and end of all evils.

(5) *Intertestamental literature*

In order to understand St. Paul's doctrine on the two Adam's it might be worth while first to quote a few passages from the Rabbinic writings that pertain to our problem.[49]

The Syrian Apocalypse of Baruch expresses clearly the effects of the first sin on Adam's posterity:

'O Adam, what have you done to your descendants? And what shall we say of Eve who listened to the serpent? For all this multitude is condemned to corruption and the number of those whom fire will devour is incalculable!' (48:42 f.).

'Whereas Adam was the first sinner and brought premature death upon all, his descendants have brought upon themselves future punishment or future glory' (54:15). The effect of Adam's sin seems to be only an early, premature, physical death. Only the personal actions of man determine his state in a future life.

The Fourth Book of Ezra considers the effect of the first sin as a seed of evil, which produces the works of death:

'Because of his evil heart, Adam fell into sin and guilt. The same thing takes place in all those born of him. Thus evil becomes more entrenched. The law was indeed in the hearts of the people, but *evil seed* was also present' (3:21).

'Ah! What have you done, Adam? When you sinned, your sin affected not only you, but us, your descendants. What is the use to have received the promise of eternity, if we have done the works of death' (7:118).

The affinity with the seventh chapter of Romans is striking: the double law is at work in the sons of Adam. Original sin is like a seed producing evil and spiritual death in us.

(6) *The two Adams, Romans 5*

Although St. Paul does mention individual retribution in several passages, e.g. 'Whatever a man sows he will also reap' (Gal. 6:7), he seems to have been greatly influenced by the Sapiential and Rabbinic views on corporate personality and collective solidarity.[50]

The individual and the group are identified. Adam is mankind and the human race is present or rather takes part in the acts of the first man. Even though they do not commit a personal

[49] Quoted by J. De Fraine in *Adam and the Family* . . . , pp. 146–148.

[50] In Rom. 2:6 and 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:5 and 11:15; Eph. 6:8 Paul speaks of the reward or punishment attached to personal actions, but it is not in a polemic way as the prophets who rejected solidarity in punishment in connection with the saying: 'the fathers have eaten sour grapes . . .' (Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2, etc.). Though perhaps not authentically Pauline, Heb. 7:9 reflects Paul's idea of corporate personality: 'Levi himself . . . paid tithes through Abraham; for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchisedek met him.'

sin, all the 'sons of Adam' are truly sinners. Conceived in one human will, the transgression of the garden changes the lot and the condition of all humans.

This outlook becomes very important when Paul puts our solidarity in Adam on the same level as our solidarity in Christ: 'As by a man came death, by a man also has come the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive' (1 Cor. 15:21 f.).

Let us examine more closely the classic passage of the two Adams in Rom. 5.[51] Unfortunately, Paul's thoughts are not as clear-cut here as in 1 Cor. His main purpose is to show that the gift of justification in Christ amply makes up for what we lost through Adam. Our union with Christ is by far more profitable than our solidarity with Adam was harmful.

> 'Therefore' (*Dia touto,* 5:12) might be more accurately rendered by 'on account of the fact that . . .', i.e. we can rejoice and trust and hope to be saved through Christ by the fact that our solidarity with Him is more helpful than that in Adam harmful.
>
> 'As sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned . . .'
>
> Paul does not finish the comparison which should have run as follows:
>
> 'so also justice came into the world through one man, and life through justice, and so life spread to all men because all men are being justified.'
>
> Was Paul himself not quite clear enough in his own mind? Instead of expressing himself immediately he first did a bit of reasoning and tried other formulations in verses 18–19.
>
> Or is the anacoluthon due to an objection which he puts to himself?, i.e.
>
> 'Sin is not counted when there is no law!' Death is the penalty for sin. But before the death penalty can come into force, the law must be promulgated. It was promulgated to Adam in connection with the eating of the fruit. It was also promulgated through Moses, e.g. Lev. 20:10, forbidding adultery under pain of death. But in between Adam and Moses, no such penalty was attached to any promulgated

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[51] St. Lyonnet has published several studies on the subject, e.g. 'Le péché originel et l'éxégèse de Rom. 5:12–14', *RSR,* xliv, 1956, pp. 63–84; also his article 'péché' in *Dictionnaire de la Bible,* Suppl. VII, 518–565.

Cf. also L. Ligier, Péché d'Adam et péché du monde, Vol. II, Chapts. iv–ix.

law. The death of all those who lived in that intermediary period seems abnormal.

'Even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam.'

Death reigned over those who perished in the flood, over the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorah. They had sinned. But such sins would not have been enough for a death penalty if they had not been linked up with the sin of Adam.

'Who was the type of the one to come': After this, Adam is no longer mentioned by name; he has become a 'type', the one through whom death, judgement and condemnation has come to all.

'By one man's disobedience many were made sinners' (5:19).

The future of the whole of mankind was linked up with this one man and his behaviour affected all. We are made sinners by a kind of passive guilt, by being born into the world, we are placed into a state of sinfulness.

St. Paul apparently never harmonized the various theologumena found in his various Epistles. It is therefore difficult to determine more clearly what he meant by death, judgement, condemnation, sinfulness or passive guilt.

In 1 Tim 2:14, where he denies all authority to women, he attributes the sin of the garden to Eve only: 'Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.'

From Rom. 2:14 ff., one might even deduce that Gentiles escape condemnation by their natural goodness, 'When Gentiles do by nature what the law requires . . . their conscience . . . excuse(s) them on that day when God judges the secrets of men.'

Was the solidarity in guilt and punishment existing between Adam and his descendants something more real than the one existing between Canaan, who did something to his father Noah, and his progeny, the homosexual Canaanites? We do not know whether Paul ever compared these two cases of corporate personalities.

One thing is fairly certain: Paul was never preoccupied with the problem of children who died without baptism. This question was raised by Tertullian against Cyprian and the theology of the transmission of original sin was elaborated by Augustine against the Pelagians: Through one man's fall human nature has become not only sinful, but the breeder of sinners so that even Christian parents, who are no longer infected by original sin, still pass it on to their children, because they beget them in concupiscence.

'Concupiscence renders the unbaptized infants guilty and leads them, as sons of wrath, to rejection, even if they die as children'![52]

(7) *The Johannine approach to the sinfulness of the world*

When he speaks of the origin of sin, John never mentions Adam but only that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world, he who has sinned from the beginning.

The sinners are called the 'children of the devil' and the influence of Satan is more than an impulse, a temptation to sin: it is a kind of possession by a spirit that falls upon us.[53]

'You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies' (John 8:44).

The only means of withdrawing from this influence is a spiritual rebirth: 'unless one is born anew . . . of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God' (John 3:3 and 5). Through belief in Christ, the Word, one receives power to become children of God, born not of blood but of God (John 1:13).

The Son of God has destroyed the works of Satan. The Lamb of God has taken away the sinfulness of the world and those who adhere to Him are free from sin: light and truth abide in them and they can no longer fall: 'He who commits sin is of the devil. For the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of Man appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God commits sin. For God's nature abides in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God' (1 John 3:8 f.).

For John, the dualism is not that of the first and the second Adam, but that of darkness and light, of lies and truth, of Satan and Christ. This dualism was there 'from the beginning'!

III. Recent Attempts at a New Formulation

The great probability of evolution urges us to reformulate our doctrine on original sin. The teaching authority of the Roman Church has been rather slow and reluctant to accept this probability:

In June 1909, the Biblical commission still considered the formation of Eve from the rib of Adam, the corporal integrity

[52] St. Augustine, *De Pecc-Mer. et Rem.* II, 4, 4 also II, 9, 11 and his *Concupiscentia* II, 34, 67: 'Through Adam's fall human nature has not only become sinful but the "breeder of sinners" because children are begot in concupiscence.'

[53] John does not seem to have inquired into the beginning of this dualism. It is there 'from the beginning'. Paul analyses a similar struggle within the individual between the carnal and the spirit, the 'law of my mind' and the 'law of sin' (Rom. 7:23 and the whole context).

and immortality of the first parents as fundamental to Catholic doctrine.

In August 1950, the encylical letter *Humani Generis* reaffirmed that Roman Catholics were not free to accept polygenism in the sense of more than one original couple, because it did not appear how such a view could be reconciled with the doctrine of original sin. For the author of the encyclical, 'original sin is the result of a sin committed in actual, historical fact by an individual man named Adam, and it is a quality native to all of us, only because it has been handed down by descent from him'![54]

One can sense the feelings of H. Renckens when he wrote: 'Catholic doctrine or not, the exegete has to carry on his investigation on the text of Genesis, with all the technical means of his science, in order to see how much he can get out of the text, i.e. how much the sacred author has expressed in it and what proofs the text can provide. Otherwise, one can as well abolish scientific exegesis altogether!'[55]

(1) *The views of Z. Alszeghy and M. Flick (Gregorianum, 1965–66)*

In a first article, 'A Personalistic View of Original Sin',[56] the authors admit that the common doctrine appears repugnant to our normal sensitiveness because it supposes a guilt prior to personal activity.

They consider man in the light of his own personal perfection: he develops gradually, by a free commitment to values and by a dialogue with other persons, especially with God.

This dialogue is based on love. But love of a person involves an unconditional acceptance of the one we love and of his uniqueness. It also requires a complete opening of the self to another's call.

Due to the fall, man has become incapable of such free commitment and unable to orientate himself to God. Thus the full development of the person is blocked because the dialogue with God is impossible. This disorder of the will is in opposition to man's constitutive structure and is as such truly sinful. It is not identical to mere concupiscence because the latter is only the total result of man's imperfectly conscious and incompletely dominated desires for material and spiritual values.

Moreover, God's invitation to dialogue is addressed to each individually but also to mankind corporately. Hence the

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[54] Cf. Neuner-Roos, *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, edited by K. Rahner (Mercier Press, 1966). (An Indian edition is being published by the Catholic Press, Ranchi.) Mercier edition, p. 126, f.n. 205b.

[55] H. Renckens, *Israels Concept . . .*, p. 190.

[56] Z. Alszeghy and M. Flick, *Il peccato originale in prospettiva personalistica* (Gregorianum, 46, 1965), 705–732. Summarized in *Theology Digest*, 'A Personalistic View of Original Sin', 15/3 autumn 1967, pp. 190–196.

inability to respond is a sin of nature, a formal evil by which unredeemed humanity is actually opposed to God.

Each individual shares in this sinfulness of the corporate person before his personal responsibility and freedom of decision come into play: each infant, by the fact of being born, manifests a 'world' closed to dialogue and in need of redemption.

Redemption comes through the word of God, who presents a new image of a loving and lovable Father. A dialogue situation is thus constituted in which there is a reciprocal growth of God's invitation and man's ability to respond.

In a second article, 'An Evolutionary View of Original sin',[57] the same authors consider the paradise story as a 'historical aetiology', i.e. an aetiology whose religious value demands the preservation of a nucleus of historical truth.

According to Rom. 5, the sin committed by one man had a very particular influence in producing the sad condition of man before redemption. But this does not exclude the aggravating co-operation of all other sins. Moreover, solidarity in the order of salvation does not necessarily imply a biological connection between the community and the individual head of the community. The Christians are not the biological descendants of Christ! From Rom. 5:12–21 one cannot conclude that all who are constituted sinners through Adam's fault are his offspring in the biological sense.

In God's plan both evolution and the raising of man to the life of grace were included. But this divinization surpasses the possibilities of the created order. It also implies man's free acceptance of it. Man would have been raised to a higher status: endowed from birth with divine grace, he would have come to a complete fulfilment of his personality and achieved a perfect mastery of the dynamism of nature. Suffering and death as they are now would have been unheard of.[58]

When this option was given him, man set himself in opposition to God's will and refused to co-operate with the divine plan of evolution. But Adam was a corporate person; the whole race was as it were incarnate in his individual self. Hence, by his own personal act, he determined the stand of the whole community before God. This situation is not a merely juridical imputation. Yet this connection is not necessarily a biological link. It is a solidarity that arises from a common divine vocation, as was that of Israel.

In the transmission of original sin, the generative act is not merely an occasion but a cause: it is through that act that one becomes a sharer in human nature and in man's condition. This

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[57] Z. Alszeghy and M. Flick, *Il peccato originale in prospettiva evoluzionistica* (Gregorianum, 47, 1966), 201–225. Summarized in *Theology Digest*, 'An Evolutionary View of Original Sin', 1/3 autumn 1967, pp. 197–202.

[58] See the remarks on Gen. 3:16–18 (infra p. 8) and footnote 33.

disorder is called sin in each individual in as far as it expresses man's opposition to God's will.

Evaluation

A personalistic approach is certainly appealing to modern man. The idea of commitment and dialogue are essential to a modern theology of sin. But at times one gets the impression that our authors make use of the word dialogue as a mere sugar-coating over the traditional doctrine: e.g. when they state that the sin of nature has been revealed 'in a dialogue situation' because Job happens to have an argument with his friends when he alludes to the impurity of all men (Job 14:4) or because the Psalmist happens to be addressing God in his prayer when he confesses that his mother conceived him in sin (Ps. 51:5). This is not very convincing!

The evolutionistic view is somewhat original: sin is conceived as a refusal to co-operate with God when the option of a higher stage of evolution is offered. But the framework is still a 'historical' aetiology. The authors try to reduce the traditional formulations to such terms that, while preserving the traditional tenets, they take account of the fact of evolution.[59]

(2) *Man's historical situation in a sinful world: Piet Schoonenberg* [60]

Scripture has emphasized human solidarity with regard to sin. But this solidarity does not come much to the fore in the traditional explanation of original sin. It is presented as a mysterious bond between each individual child and the first father of the race, while the sins of his own parents, and of his own environment, as well as the great sinful decisions of past generations are not taken into consideration. If original sin does not incorporate all that, modern man will be inclined to relegate it to the realm of mythologies.

Original sin must be envisaged in the line of the 'sin of the world', by which the world is closed to God so that we cannot even pray for the world (John 17:9).

The sin of a community, ultimately the sin of the world, is more than the sum total of individual sins unrelated to each other. On the other hand, what brings sin into a community is not the fact that the guilt of one man simply passes on to another; this would be against the principle of personal responsibility. Nor is it the sinful attitude that passes on. Nevertheless, the loneliness which one experiences when others keep aloof, the fact of having to face

[59] A. Hulsbosch, *God's Creation*, p. 28.

[60] Piet Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin* (Sheed and Ward Stagbook, 1965), especially the sections on 'Sin in the World' and 'Original Sin'.
Also 'Mysterium Iniquitatis' in *Word und Wahrheit*, 21 (1966), 577–591; summarized in *Theology Digest*, 15/3 autumn 1967, pp. 203–208.

those who have been harmed by one's sin, the damage inflicted upon bodily health, the psychological shock others had to undergo, the feeling of anxiety or of being unsheltered, all these may affect the people who are related to the sinner or entrusted to him. These are put into a new situation.

Under the label 'situation', we may group all these influences which pass on from one free person to another, respecting the latter's freedom and appealing to it. However, what is important for our study is not the situation itself, but the fact that a person is 'situated'. What the first personal action brings about is not the other's reaction, but the situation to which the other must react by means of a free decision.

The sin of the world, as well as the historical sinfulness of a certain family or cultural group (antisemitism, colonialism . . .), is a reality in man himself. In some, it is a sinful determination, an action or especially an attitude. In others, it consists in the fact of being situated by the sins of another group, of being affected in their own liberty. If we have to speak rightly of the sin of the world, we have to add this 'being situated' to the individual sins of the members of the community.

In dealing with the sin of the world, we often overlook the sins committed after Adam. We often forget what R. Guardini called 'the second fall': the rejection of Christ in so far as it constituted a peak in the history of previous sins and a centre in the whole history of sin. Unfortunately, the crucifixion looks more like the fulfilment of a condition for our salvation than the refusal of that salvation itself. 'Woe to you, hypocrites . . . Fill up then the measure of your fathers!' 'They cried out, away with him, we have no KING but Caesar!' (Matt. 23:32 and John 19:15).

The sinful situation can also be considered as an atrophy of moral life by which values and norms lose their meaning. It may even precede one's personal existence and then encompass it. The simplest example is that of a child born in a family living from theft or prostitution, in which the norms of honesty or chastity are not observed. It will be impossible for that child to realize these moral virtues. Since this impossibility is not due to its free will, it is not guilty of shortcomings in these fields. But it cannot do anything good in these lines either since in them it does not behave as a morally responsible person. This can be termed a partial death of the soul with which it has to start its human existence. Here too, in a way, 'sin engenders death'!

Confronting original sin with the sin of the world, could we then say that the former consists in the fact of being situated by the sin of the world? If so the voluntary character of this sin will have to be replaced by the fact that we have been so situated by the will of our ancestors. Moreover, since—from the existential point of view—nature or situation are never present in man without being in some way assumed into the process of self-development of the person, this 'being situated by original sin'

will always be accompanied by some faint foreshadowing of a personal decision, probably by personal sin.

One might therefore ask whether the extraordinary importance which the classic doctrine attributes to the chronologically first man is really justified; nay, whether we may speak of one first ancestor of the human race at all.

Concerning the preternatural gifts, the immortality before the fall can be reduced to the fact that biological death has been anthropologically modified: after the fall it involves a separation, a leaving the world which would not have been necessary in the state of original innocence.

According to Schoonenberg, procreation is only a condition for the transmission of original sin: the state of sinfulness is caused by the historical situation in which the parents live. In a similar way a child can be 'American by birth' though his parents have only recently acquired American citizenship.

Most of the new elements which our author proposes have been integrated by A. Hulsbosch. We shall evaluate them at the end of the next section.

(3) *Original sin within a dynamic presentation of evolution (A. Hulsbosch)* [61]

Modern man can no longer accept the traditional presentation of original sin within the static image of the world that we find in the Bible.

According to Genesis, God created (right at the beginning) man, plants and animals in exactly the same form as they are now. But our knowledge about the antiquity of man and his biological descent from prehuman forms of life urges us to discard this static presentation and its temporal and spacial limitations. The man whom God creates[62] is the man as he shall be at the end; those now alive in this world are in the process of being created, they have not yet reached the stature intended by God.

The so-called supernatural elevation of man is entirely gratuitous but so was our elevation to the status of a human person. Humanization of the pongids and 'divinization' of the human are two similar steps in the process of creation and both are gratuitous gifts of God, surpassing the possibilities of the lower stage.

According to the Bible, man no longer enjoys the happy condition of the beginning, his relation to his Maker is not what it should be and man is bowed under a certain deficiency which is moral as well as physical. In other words, man as creature is unfinished and at the same time he finds himself in a relation

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[61] A. Hulsbosch, *God's Creation* (Sheed and Ward Stagbook, 1965), especially chapts. 2–3: 'Evolution and Original Sin' and 'An Attempt at a New Formulation', pp. 15–57.

[62] In Hebrew the active participles '*bore*' and '*yozer*' denote a present continuous in the sense of 'the one who is creating', 'who is shaping' as well as 'Creator' and 'Maker', e.g. Isa. 43:1.

to God which requires a reconciliation. To explain the connection between these two facts we have recourse to a doctrine of original sin.

In the dynamic presentation, sin is revealed as the refusal of man to subject himself to God's creative will. When evolution reached the human stage, man had to co-operate freely. Being endowed with an ordination to fulfilment and a natural desire to see God, he had to take a personal decision to possess this creaturely perfection. But he refused to let God's creative will perfect itself in him. He serves the creature instead of the Creator and confines his longing for eternity within the endless circle of transient things.

Man is thus born in a state of privation, being bereft of what God intended to give to man, bereft of a communion with God which should have been present now in every man. In such situation, man is unable to direct himself to his original destination and to live according to the moral demands made upon him.

Because man wishes to stay back, and seeks his happiness on earth, refusing the ever-continuing creative action of God, what was at the start a mere 'not-yet-possessing' becomes now a sinful privation which is in conflict with God's will.

Is this situation due to the influence of a progenitor? Theologically speaking, it seems sufficient to believe that every man, by the fact that he belongs to the human race, carries in himself what we call original sin. The solidarity of man in sin depends on the way in which mankind forms a unity. Now, the common ordination to fulfilment in God is a much higher principle of unity than that constituted by a problematic common progenitor. The dignity of being the image of God is given to every man by his Creator and not by his ancestor: 'in the image of God he created him' (Gen. 1:27). This dignity, and the mutual communion of man resulting from this dignity, excel by far the unity derived from one biological ancestor.

Moreover, from a merely biological point of view, there is no difficulty in defending the unity of mankind while accepting polygenism. Although there is no proof for it on the basis of the evidence of fossils—we cannot draw the line between men and animals among the pongids of two hundred thousand B.C.—nevertheless, scientific observations about the origin of the species indicate that a given group does NOT develop from one pair of parents, but evolves as a whole in the new direction.

For a study of our solidarity in sin, the horizontal dimension is equally, if not more, important than the vertical lineage.

Communion with our fellow men takes place in society through bodily presence and in a material environment. The success of self-actualization does not depend exclusively on our relation with God but is also largely determined by the world in which we live and the persons whom we meet. A man born in a world of sinners already belongs, by birth, to a sinful race.

This sinfulness and privation of a perfection intended by God is extended to every child that is born. It cannot actualize his natural desire to see God without the gracious mediation of the Creator. This is for a great part due to the influence of the actual sinful world. The body is already a territory to be conquered by struggle. But when we add the negative influence of a sinful community, the conquest of the spirit is impossible. Unless God takes away the sin of the world and founds a community of salvation which renders personal fulfilment once more possible.

The horizontal dimension, the actual encounter with our fellow men, is much more constitutive of our personality than the common descent from the first man.

One might object that this evil influence is already remedied by the fact that a child is born from Christian parents. The author concedes that such a protective *milieu* prepares the child for his entrance into the Body of Christ, but it does not put that child right with God and can be compared to the actions of an adult catechumen, preliminary to baptism.

At the end of his study, A. Hulsbosch defines original sin as follows: it is 'the powerlessness of man—in his incompletedness as creature—to reach freedom and realize the desire to see God, in as far as this impotence arises from nature and is put into the context of a sinful world'.[63]

Evaluation

A. Hulsbosch himself entitled the chapter of his book 'an attempt at a new formulation' and did in fact formulate original sin in the context of evolution, within a dynamic image of creation, and in connection with the sin of the world. In doing so he considered man in his personal fulfilment and in his 'being situated'. Consequently the effect of original sin is felt much more horizontally (the mutual influence and impact of the members of a sinful world) than vertically (i.e. sin inherited by biological descent from common ancestors). In this way, we can consider his study as a synthesis of the best elements proposed by the authors whose works we summarized previously.

Nevertheless, it seems that not only the historicity of the paradise story has been abandoned, but even the historicity of the fall is reduced to a minimum: Chronologically, there has to be a first sinner, but he is not necessarily the progenitor of the human race. His influence is not to be emphasized and the rejection of Christ by his contemporaries—the second fall—is by far more central in the history of sin.

In the evolutionary perspective, modern theologians no longer focus their attention to the past and to Adam, but envisage man's eschatological fulfilment in the glorified Christ. Their doctrine is both anthropocentric and Christocentric.

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[63] A. Hulsbosch, *God's Creation*, pp. 55-56.

On the one hand, man's creative self-achievement in personal freedom before God is incomplete ; man is conscious of an imperfection which requires divine help, a 'supernatural' gift which is but the final phase of God's creative action.[64] On the other hand, man is conscious that this imperfection is not according to God's original plan. Christ's intervention is a redemption and a reconciliation.

It is this second aspect which both Schoonenberg and Hulsbosch fail to explain convincingly.

The doctrine of original sin may be centred around our need for Christ as redeemer. This universal need for reconciliation still presupposes a state of sinfulness actually existing before his coming.

P. Schoonenberg apparently holds that this need became universal only through the so-called second fall: 'Before baptism existed in the history of salvation . . . that universality of original sin must not be taken strictly . . . The sin through which Christ has been excluded from the world and from our existence on earth is the fact that makes the situation of original sin inescapable for all.'[65] And he explains, 'That rejection deprives our whole existence on earth of the life of grace so that everybody starts his own existence with the lack of it.'

In 'Mysterium Iniquitatis', he asks himself, 'whether the influence of all mankind as an educative community could not explain the universality of original sin'. More recently he admitted that sin is absolutely universal, before and after the death of Christ, because 'every sin is part of the existential situation of those who are born after it'.[65]

But even this universality by existential situation does not seem satisfactory.

A. Vanneste repeatedly and rightly stated that the basis of the theology of original sin consists in the fact that all salvation comes exclusively from Christ. This is true for Paul as well as for Augustine who refuted the optimistic naturalism of the Pelagians. There is no doubt either about the fact that the baptism of infants 'for the remission of sins' was a crucial problem in the development of the doctrine. But when he asserts that children are in a state of sin as long as they are unbaptized, i.e. 'they are not what they should be as long as they are not united with Christ', A. Vanneste only makes a statement and does not give an '*explanation* of original sin' different from 'the *conception*

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[64] It was only after I had practically finished this study that I received J. L. Connor's article, 'Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches', *Theological Studies*, 29/2 June 1968, pp. 215–240. The matter covered and the conclusions arrived at are very similar to mine.

[65] P. Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 190.

His article 'Mysterium Iniquitatis' already indicates the transition (cf. *Theology Digest*, 1967, p. 207) to the new position exposed in 'Some Remarks on the Present Discussion of Original Sin' in *Information Documentation on the Counciliar Church*, January 1967, especially page 14.

of those philosophers who view original sin as a mythical expression of man's general sinfulness'.[66]

The outcome of such one-sided orientation towards Christ is clear in the position of E. Gutwenger.[67] For him, to be in original sin is simply to be outside of Christ, prior to the possibility of free personal decision for or against Christ. Prior to the possibility of free choice, man is in a state of innate indifference. Though it obviously implies a lack or want, it is not a sinful condition, but positively willed by God, just as he wills man's decision for Christ, because this indifference is a necessary presupposition for such a decision!

E. Gutwenger made a comparison between the Pauline and the Classical theology; but his remarks are somewhat fallacious: e.g.

> For Paul, the fact that all must have sinned follows from the universality of redemption, whereas in the classic theology, the universality of redemption follows from the universality of sin.

This can be accepted as a logical deduction but not as an efficient causality. We come to *know* the universality of sin because we *know* that Christ died for all. But the *need* for universal redemption may have been *actual before* the expiatory death of the Saviour.

> The 'power of sin and death' in Paul are effective because all men actively sinned, whereas in the classical position their effectiveness is viewed from the perspective of hereditary transmision.

The power of sin has been *manifested* through personal transgressions, but these transgressions themselves are in a certain sense the result of a sinfulness that preceded their personal decisions!

Frankly speaking, have we, in order to give a Christocentric and anthropocentric doctrine, to explain 'original' sin without reference to the origin of humanity?

A. Hulsbosch admits that, when evolution reached the human stage, man refused to co-operate with the creative will of God. Is this refusal to be considered as a past historical event involving one or more members of the then contemporary human family, or as a personal decision taken by each individual when he has to choose for or against Christ? This seems to be the crucial question.

The answer cannot be found in St. Paul who simply accepted Gen. 2–3 in its literal meaning. 'In the typology of Adam-Christ

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[66] A. Vanneste, 'Toward a Theology of Original Sin', *Theology Digest*, 15/3 autumn 1967, pp. 212 f.

[67] E. Gutwenger, 'Die Erbsünde und das Konzil von Trient', *Z. Kath. Th.*, 89 (1967), pp. 437 f., summarized by J. L. Connor, *Theological Studies*, June 1968, pp. 238 f.

nothing really can be affirmed regarding the historical individuality of Adam. Paul neither wanted nor could make any historical affirmation about Adam and his posterity which goes beyond what is otherwise known.' [68]

Neither should we confuse the issue by laying too great stress on the concepts of corporate personality and collective guilt. This seems to be the case with H. Rondet: 'Adam is legion: he is humanity; he is man in so far as still a stranger to grace and calling for a Saviour, who will be at the same time the principle of unity.' The sin of Adam is 'an innumerable multitude of personal sins constituting a collective sin, the sin of the world'. 'Original sin in us is caused by actual sin, but as a collective sin, constituted by the sum total of the personal sins of men of all times'! [69]

P. Schoonenberg has contributed greatly to the concept of original sin as a 'being situated in a sinful world', but he seems to leave aside the problem of the 'historical origin' of that sinfulness.

P. Grelot may be more successful while searching along the line of depth-psychology. For him, as stated above,[70] it is not the individual first man who crossed the threshold of self-consciousness, but the first couple. Sexual bi-polarity is a constitutive element in human self-consciousness. Both man and woman contemplated the forbidden tree and when the awakening to self-consciouness occurred it was the woman who took the lead towards the first act of freedom: the attempt to be like God in the knowledge of good and evil. More recently he published a study on original sin and redemption in St. Paul (especially Rom. 7) in the light of Freud's research,[71] but much more work has still to be done.

It is not yet possible to make a synthesis of A. Hulsbosch's dynamic image of creative evolution, P. Schoonenberg's situation in a sinful world and the research of the depth-psychologists. A short exposition of two recent studies of original sin by specialists in psychology will form the concluding section of this survey of new approaches.

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[68] P. Lengfeld, *Adam und Christus* (Essen, 1965), pp. 115 f.
Cf. also H. Haag, *Biblische Schöpfungslehre und kirchliche Erbsündenlehre* (Stuttgart, 1966), p. 61: 'The liberal understanding of the account of the fall does not belong to the object of Pauline teaching any more than the literal understanding of the story of Jonah can be considered an object of Jesus' teaching.'

[69] H. Rondet, *le péché originel dans la tradition patristique et théologique* (Paris, 1967), pp. 316 and 321.

[70] P. Grelot, 'Réflexions . . .', *NRTh*, 1967, p. 472. Cf. *supra* p. 10 and f.n. 38.
J. L. Connor summarized his position, *Theological Studies*, June 1968, pp. 228 f.

[71] P. Grelot, 'Péché originel et rédemption dans l'épître aux Romans', *NRTh*, 90 (1968), pp. 337–362, 449–478 and 596–621.

(4) *Original sin and depth-psychology: P. Ricoeur and A. Vergote*

If Paul Ricoeur does not attach any historical value to Gen. 2–3, it is not because the narration has no importance, but because he fully recognizes the function of mythical symbolism. 'One should not say, it is ONLY a myth—meaning it is less than historical—but the story of the fall has the grandeur of a myth, i.e. is more meaningful than a true story!' [72]

Appealing to intellectual honesty, he warns those who request blind obedience in obscure matters: 'We shall never often enough repeat how much harm has been done to souls, during centuries of Christianity, by a literal interpretation of the story of Adam and by the later—especially Augustianian—speculation of original sin. In asking the faithful to profess the historical truth of this mythico-speculative piece of doctrine and to accept it as a self-evident explanation, theologians have unduly imposed a renunciation of one's intellect instead of guiding people to a higher understanding of the symbolic expression of their own, actual condition.' [73]

According to Ricoeur, the Adamic myth is the result of prophetic preaching. The indictments of the prophets, in their effective interpretation of salvation history, tended to exonerate God and to accuse men. The same dialectic of judgement and pardon has been projected by the sacred authors into the mythical representation of the beginning of man and the eschatological fulfilment of the world:

'The myth of the fall is the myth of evil occurring in a creation which is good and already completed. In thus dividing the beginning into an origin of goodness in creation and an origin of evil in human history, the author tries to satisfy a twofold confession of faith and of the spirit of repentance of Israel. On the one hand, God is absolutely perfect; on the other, man is radically evil.' [74]

The irruption of evil appears at first very sudden: 'By telescoping the origin of evil into one instant—through one man sin entered into the world—the narration strongly underscores the irrationality of this breach, this deviation, this jump which tradition has unequivocally called fall.' [75]

Beside this 'instantaneous' element of the fall, P. Ricoeur discovered another aspect, that of 'transition' to self-consciousness while man considered the option offered in temptation. 'The paradise myth represents at the same time a breaking off and a transition, an act and a motivation, a wrong choice and a temptation, an instant and a duration.' [76]

The element of seduction is depicted through the fruit, Eve and the snake.

[72–77] All refer to Paul Ricoeur, *Finitude et culpabilité*, II: *la symbolique du mal* (Aubier, 1960); chapter III: *Le Mythe Adamique*, respectively, pp. 222, 224, 228, 236 and 239–243 (regarding the serpent).

To eat a *forbidden fruit* is but a trifling offence and evidently chosen for its symbolic value. (A murder like that perpetrated by Cain would have an importance of its own).

Yet, how could any prohibition be possible at all, in a state of innocence? Can a 'life under prohibition', under a legislation which represses and therefore excites passions, be conceived in connection with a man who is not sinful?

The fruit has but a token value and represents prohibition as such. It is not this or that particular action that is forbidden, but a means to autonomy, which would make of man the author of the distinction between good and evil.

Supposing the 'freedom of the innocent', this limitation could never have been felt as a restriction or a prohibition. But actual man can no longer imagine how a limitation could appear as a guide-line which is not oppressive but constitutes a safeguard of liberty. We are no longer able to experience such 'creative limitation'! In the state of fallen freedom, each restriction, each act of authority is constraining and coercive. The fall is both the fall of man and the failure of the law: 'The very commandment, which promised life, proved to be death to me' (Rom. 7:10).

If we accept this concept of creative limitation, the question put by the snake suddenly casts another hue on the divine decree and makes it appear as a restriction. At such 'alienation' of the commandment itself, man experiences a certain dizziness. He no longer has a guide-line but is confronted by an obstacle, an unbearable prohibition. Creative limitation has become repressive hostility which can be challenged: 'Did God actually say . . . !?'

For the narrator, *the snake* does not seem to pose any problem: it is already there and it is already subtle!

In his historical experience of sin, man encounters evil as a factor that is already there. No one absolutely begins evil. If Adam is not chronologically the first man but an ideal prototype, he can represent both the experience of the 'beginning' of mankind and that of the people who come 'afterwards'.

Evil is part of the human set-up and of interpersonal encounter, just as language, tools and institutions. Evil is handed on . . . it is part of tradition and not only an event. But evil has a pre-existence even with regard to itself! Each one finds it and carries it further by beginning himself, on his turn. And so, in Eden, the serpent is already there and symbolizes the 'reverse-side' of absolute beginning.

The serpent 'beguiled' me! Temptation is seduction from the outside . . . it grows into an assent to the allurement which invades one's heart. Ultimately, to sin appears as 'yielding'.

The serpent is part of ourselves—self-seduction—which we project on the outside so that a quasi-external desire can disguise itself as an alibi for our free will. It represents that element of evil which cannot be reintegrated into one's own responsible free will.

If we follow till the end this process, which the dialogue of Eve and the snake symbolizes, we must admit that man is not absolutely evil, he became evil by seduction. He is not the 'evil one' but only 'wicked', beset with wickedness. He becomes evil by a kind of reaction (P. Ricoeur calls it 'contre-participation' or 'contre-imitation'), by consenting to a source of evil which the Biblical narrative naïvely depicts as the subtleness of an animal: to sin is to yield.

When the snake is called Satan, it does not become fully individualized. Satan is not some body. It is not a person . . . 'Otherwise one would have to intercede by God in his favour; and that does not make sense!' [77]

The snake, therefore, is not the symbol of a person. The 'Adamic' myth is the myth of *man* and the snake is not one of its central figures.

At the 1965 conference of Christian Philosophers (at Padua), A. Vergote discussed original sin in relation with the moral law. He gave a remarkable analysis of the origin of morality.[78]

Truly moral behaviour is both a beginning and a repetition of an absolute: it is history.

At first, what we call 'effective' good and evil are not radically distinguishable. 'Human will' could be considered as 'a nutshell of the history of human desires, which are being gradually modelled according to reason'.

At every stage, 'good' remains to be created since it does not yet exist. Good is always a relative concept and results from an evil which precedes it by only one step. In man, the becoming aware of what is right or wrong and the awakening of reason are one and the same process. Before ethical conscience is awake, there is but a mixture of right and wrong. When a prohibition is introduced, it dissolves this mixture: it manifests at once what is wrong by appealing to moral rectitude.

This appeal to what is right is coupled with the refusal of what is being qualified as wrong, i.e. an ethical attitude cannot come about except through the elimination of false attitudes which man had already taken.

A bad intention is not a choice of what is known as wrong but a consent to a pre-moral evil that is now manifested through a law. The law makes sin manifest. According to the extraordinary text of Rom. 7:7–13, this is even the essential function of the law.

The moral conscience also is essentially dialectic: a good conscience is always a bad conscience which has been overcome, or rather is in the process of being overcome.

In this connection A. Vergote points out that St. Augustine's self-accusations, contained in his 'Confessions', are not objective:

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[78] A. Vergote, La loi morale et le péché originel à la lumière de la psychoanalyse, in *Démythisation et Morale*, edited by E. Castelli (Aubier, Paris, 1965), pp. 188–213.

the concept of sin as a breach of 'convenantal trust' and a deadlock in the dialogue between God and man,

the Hebrew notion of collective guilt and especially that of corporate personality, according to which Adam might be an ideal prototype as well as an individual 'man',

the 'sin of the world' as an 'existential' of man, so that he is 'situated' in a sinful community from his very birth,

the dynamic, evolutionary process of creation, truncated as it were, by man's sinful refusal to co-operate with the divine plan,

the symbolic expression of a deep psychological insight into human moral behaviour, giving a very real value to genuine 'myths'.

At the same time, a more thorough knowledge of the literary genre of the narration, of its affinities with similar themes and traditions of the ancient 'Near East' as well as of its unique vision of faith, helps us to extract more clearly the real message of the Bible and sift out the genuine elements of its teaching on original sin:

There is evil and sin in the world; we are all in need of a salvation that comes exclusively from Christ.

Even while taking full account of the personal sins of each, we must accept a certain sinfulness which precedes the personal decision of the individual.

This 'sinfulness' affects us all as a body, collectively and in successive generations.

This corporate unity in sin can be compared to our unity based on the fact that we are all created in God's image and all called to become one in Christ.

However, there are many more questions which modern man would like to ask: Even if the 'horizontal influence' of sin is —from the pastoral point of view—more important than the 'vertical influence', how is it possible at all that 'sin' can be 'transferred' from one person to another, or 'inherited' from one generation to another?

Piet Schoonenberg has more or less answered the first part of the question by his 'sin as being situated'. As for the hereditary character, most theologians have now accepted that polygenism can be reconciled with the Christian doctrine. K. Rahner, though assuming that the 'sin' was committed by one single individual, wrote: 'Since this subjective guilt can in no case be passed on . . . the question can only be whether the personal guilt of one individual within the original group of human beings can be thought as blocking the grace-transmitting function which accompanied human descent from this group.' This must be possible because 'We know that we receive grace only through Christ

he judges previous actions by the standard of a more 'advanced' conscience.

Man always tries to pass judgements on facts, but good and evil are not strictly speaking facts, they are 'happenings', still in the process of becoming.

Keeping this analysis of the dialectic origin of moral evil in mind, one can realize that the great temptation which besets theologians of original sin is to explain evil from a historical point of view. They thus ignore both the power of the moment (*kairos*) and the depth of a necessary ethical becoming.

During the question period, the author got an occasion to explain his opinion on the story of the garden (*peccatum originans*) more directly:

The sin of Adam is not situated in some moment of the past that is beyond memory and happened once for all. It is a historical reality which comes in force each time man commits a sin.

There has been, undoubtedly, a first sin in the chronological sense, and that sin inaugurated the history of sin. But it had not the decisive importance of a unique event. It is only 'original' in as far as it was man's first religious attitude, which therefore started and gave direction to the whole history of man's relations with God.

From then on, the evil which man does is at the same time an evil which he somehow inherits from the whole history which preceded his action and which is now incarnated in him. Truly, there is a historical solidarity in sin.

The essential point in the theology of original sin is to show the deep reality which abides in us, which is not an innocent, a moral shortcoming: otherwise it would not be more serious than a physical defect, being quasi-natural or 'psychological'. On the contrary, original sin is an ever-present mixture of a conscious, intentional and also psychological shortcoming, an 'evil' the 'nature' of which is not fully lucid, but which is itself not fully 'natural' in man.

Neither P. Ricoeur nor A. Vergote intended to write a theology of original sin. But the theologians themselves have not yet fully integrated the data of depth theology into a Christocentric doctrine of the 'fall'. Nevertheless, it seems certain that mythical symbolism has a genuine contribution to make to the solution of our problem: it is perhaps more important than either a problematic 'historicity' of the story of the garden or a fully established harmony between the Bible and the data of palaeontology.

General Conclusion

The new approaches to the study of original sin have shown the shortcomings of the traditional explanation of the doctrine and brought out several aspects which were either ignored or not sufficiently taken into consideration:

as source and as the one who transmits . . . on the other hand such transmission had to exist from the origin of mankind.' [79]

A still more burning question is: How is it possible that moral evil could be introduced in God's own creation?

The only answer is that God created man endowed with a free will and that He could not but take this free will seriously. Ultimately, it seems improbable that evil will ever be explained rationally. The Serpent, as we saw, is but an alibi for our free responsibility. According to the Johannine approach, it is there from the beginning . . . 'a liar and the father of lies'. Even Paul, in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, explains evil actions in a rather dualistic way.

Neither is the Hindu doctrine of *karma* and reincarnation a more satisfactory explanation of evil and suffering: it does not explain why men, at the very first incarnation, behaved in different ways and thus differentiated their individual *karma,* for better or for worse!

According to mythical symbolism, man stands below the tree[80] in the middle of the garden and although there is no rational explanation for it, 'it is good for food, it is a delight to the eyes, and it is to be desired to make one wise'(?)!

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[79] K. Rahner, 'Evolution and Original Sin', *Concilium*, vol. 6/3, *The Church and the World*, June 1967, pp. 30–35.

[80] P. Grelot sees in the paradise tree 'the representation of the world as an object to be desired. Man wants to appropriate it for himself independently of God . . . Its fruit will be eaten in order to become an object that is enjoyed'. The same idea was expressed by Paul in a much more abstract form and under the formula: 'Thou shalt not covet!' (Rom. 7:7). Cf. 'Péché originel et Rédemption . . . ', *NRTh*, 90 (1968), p. 459, f.n. 100.

Editorial Note

Prof. Mathew P. John was elected Chairman of the Editorial Board and Editor of the *Journal* upon his return from England. Dr. John is Rector of the Theology Department of Serampore College. He has been associated with the *Indian Journal of Theology* for more than 15 years, almost from the time of its foundation, and has served on the Editorial Board in various capacities. He brings to the editorship a very considerable experience of Indian theology and of theological education in India. The retiring Editor, Dr. Thompson, is due to leave India shortly.