# ORIGINAL SIN IN THE THEOLOGY OF ST IRENAEUS AND ST AUGUSTINE IN THE CONTEXT OF GENOMIC SCIENCES: TOWARDS AN EXISTENTIAL-ONTOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

BY

WILKINSON MUTAHI THUKU

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Master of Theology Degree (MTh) from St Paul's University

September 2016

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**Supervisor**: REV DR JOHN KIBOI

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## DECLARATION

*This dissertation is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration. It has not been previously presented to any other institution. I agree that this dissertation may be available for reference and photocopying, at the discretion of the University.*

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## ABSTRACT

The new science of genomics and the biotechnologies that spring from it pose increasingly greater challenges to the classical doctrines of creation, origin of the soul, the fall and original sin, than ever before. The biotechnological advances which include *in vitro* fertilization, stem cell research, and cloning, can cause a blurring of the distinction between human and non-human, and definitely strain discourse with theology. Furthermore, the findings of genetic science that humanity could not have arisen from an ordinary couple but from a large population of individuals, and that humankind and the great apes, share a common ancestry raise questions about the historicity of Adam and Eve. There is an urgent need to forge a dialogue between theology and Christian tradition on the one hand, and the new biomedical and genomic sciences on the other, in order to get a better grip on the existential anxieties of sin. The aim of the study was to explore how John Schneider and his conversation partners engage Christian tradition with evolutionary biology in their efforts to reformulate a theology of sin. Specifically, this study used the existential-ontological method of John Macquarrie to reappraise the theses of St Augustine and St Irenaeus and the genomic sciences in order to recover greater meaningfulness for the disposition to sinfulness that inheres in humankind. The study shows that sin is both personal and corporate, but also inherited from our animal past in the form of those self-centered proclivities that in the past enabled us as a species to compete successively for survival. It may also manifest as disorder in our existence generated by tensions arising from the irresistible pull of diverse polarities in our lives. This affirms its universal presence and sway in our lives. The study adopts John Macquarrie's immanentist model of a Being who is not only becoming in and with his creation, but one who enables his beings to choose the right path between dialectical opposites, thereby avoiding sin, whilst enabling the individual to participate in the creative process of ''letting-be''. Our model proposes God as an immanent being who directs evolution from within, giving humankind purpose, and a chance to achieve ultimate transcendence.


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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Background Information

The theory of evolution and origin of species through natural selection has enjoyed canonical status in the biological sciences as the only viable explanation of how ancestral hominids came into being. Despite the many gaps in our understanding, archeological findings coupled with the new advances in molecular biology and genomics, continue to provide almost incontrovertible evidence that humanity came into being through the process of evolution (Venema, 2010: 166). But whereas biological sciences provide a rational explanation about how pre-human hominids came into being, they are incapable of explaining what it means to be human rather than animal-rational creatures equipped with moral and spiritual awareness and capable of altruistic love and worship.

The theory of evolution is clearly at odds with the classical doctrine of creation. It appears to run counter with the doctrines of original sin and the fall (Duffy, 2005: 210; Schneider, 2010:196). Until quite recently, the church has taught that our biblical ancestors were a historical pair endowed with original righteousness and immortality, who through transgression introduced sin to their progeny and the consequent death (Murphy, 2006: 113; Brannan, 2011:163). All subsequent generations were born with a corrupted sin nature and inherited guilt. These views were primarily developed from St Augustine's teaching about man's pre-lapsarian righteousness and immortality which was later marred by sin (*City of God* (CG) 13.1; 13.3; 13.14).

The science of evolutionary biology on the other hand teaches that species arose through natural selection of the fittest, whose progeny survived to reproduce progressively more adjusted populations until they eventually attained present-day status (Domning, www.wastheocon.com accessed 24/2/2015, 11.36 am.; Darwin, 1968). The assumption is that death is very much part of the process of evolution, a fact attested by the numerous extinct fossils in geological strata. Moreover studies of sociobiology and primatology have shown that nearly all acts considered sinful in man are part of the normal complement of behavior among animals. If man came into being through evolution, then his sin nature is an integral part of the common genetic heritage from his animal past. Christian theology on the other hand teaches that sin made an historic appearance in man through an equally historic couple Adam and Eve (Collins, 2010:147-148).



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Christian scientists constantly face the paradox of the truth about hominid evolution as the means through which man arose, and the biblical teaching about creation of man, original sin and righteousness, and the existence of moral evil (Doran and McRoberts, 2012). This was a concern to Darwin himself both before and after the publication of his magnum opus, 'Origin of Species'. Darwin's ardent supporters Asa Gray, Fredrick Temple, and Charles Kingsley also debated these issues, as they defended him against accusations that his evolutionary theory was atheistic (Miles, www.asa3.org accessed 26/8/2016, 6.58 pm; Temple, www.anglicanhistory.org/ accessed 26/8/2016, 6.32 pm ). The dilemma engendered by these conflicting truth claims evokes considerable feelings of disquiet among scientifically minded theologians even today. The challenge is how to do the necessary balancing act between the two spheres of experience, neither of which can be denied.

There is now widespread acceptance among Catholics and Protestant Denominations that mankind arose from evolution or some version of it. The public acceptance of the evolutionary doctrine by Pope John Paul II in 1996 opened the way for other Christians. In February 2006, a majority of Protestant churches in the USA affirmed that Darwin`s theory of biological evolution is compatible with Christian faith (www.ekklesia.org, accessed 13/2/2016, 10.30 am; Borgeson, 2009). Even the Church of England published an official apology to Charles Darwin in 2008 for allegedly misunderstanding him and rejecting his theory (Brown, 2008 www.churchofengland.org accessed 24/2/2015, 3.15 pm).

The new sciences of molecular biology and genomics and the technologies that spring from them, pose even greater challenges to the church than ever before (Venema, 2010:166-178). They strongly suggest that the humankind originated from primate ancestors in numbers close to 10,000 interbreeding individuals, rather from a single couple (Harlow, 2010). All these pose serious challenges to the historicity of Adam and Eve and the Christian doctrines of Creation of Man and Original Sin.

There is an urgent need to forge a dialogue between theology and the Christian tradition on one hand, and the genomic and biomedical sciences, on the other, in order to gain a better grip on these existential issues. This work was intended to take a critical look at how George Murphy, John Schneider, Daryl Domning, and other conversation partners engage Christian tradition with

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evolutionary biology in their efforts to reformulate a theology of sin. My methodological approach will be the Existential - Ontological method of John Macquarrie (1966).

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Modern scientifically minded Christians may be facing a dilemma on questions of original sin when they know very well that humankind came about by means of evolution. This has come about from recent advances in the science of evolutionary biology and genomics which reveal the polygenic nature of his origins, and the near identity between the genetic structure of man and his hominid relatives. The absence of discontinuity between man and his hominid relatives, and the technological application of genomics to manipulate heredity for good or bad, confounds our understanding of sin and what it means to be humans bearing the image of God.

### 1.2 Aims of the study

The study is an inquiry into how George Murphy, John Schneider, Daryl Domning and other conversation partners engage Christian tradition with evolutionary biology in their efforts to reformulate a theology of sin.

### 1.3 Research Questions

How should Christians make sense of Genesis 1-3 in the light of genetic research's finding, that humanity cannot not have arisen from an ordinary couple (monogenism) but from a large population of interbreeding hominid ancestors (polygenism)? A theory of common ancestry between humans and the great apes is a real challenge to the historical understanding of Adam and Eve maintained by so much of the Christian tradition. Is there a way of reconciling the Darwinian hominid population with the character of the Augustinian Adam before the Fall? If the reading of this genomic science is reliable, how does it affect our biblical basis for faith? Specifically, what influence can genomic science have or not upon Christian orthodoxy which bases its existence on an historical Adam and Eve? How can theology appropriate the findings of the new science of genomics to explicate Augustine's implausible doctrines of inherited guilt, original sin, righteousness, and immortality? In an attempt to answer some of the questions posed above, the following objectives were formulated.

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## 1.4 Objectives

1. To critically evaluate Irenaeus' understanding of the sin nature of man
2. To critically evaluate Augustine's doctrine of original sin, inherited guilt and the Fall
3. To carry out a critical review of genomic and biomedical sciences as understood by Schneider and his conversation partners
4. An attempt to explicate the doctrine of sin by juxtaposition of Irenaean and Augustinian theodicies and their illumination using evolutionary genomics.

## 1.5 Hypothesis

If John Macquarrie's existential –ontological dialectic approach is used in the dialogue between the modern understanding of genomic sciences and the theological claims on the origin of humanity and the fall made by St Irenaeus and St Augustine, the veracity of these claims can be realized by holding them in tension, thereby enabling us to gain a more amplified insight into humanity's sin nature.

## 1.6 Justification

Schneider (2010:196) has argued that we need to reformulate Augustine's original sin theory because of changing existential contexts. Augustine formulated his theory in a bid to partly confront Manichean and Pelagian heresies that threatened to tear the church apart, as well as to gain control over his own concupiscence. He also needed a theory to conform the traditional teaching of a flat earth to current scientific understanding that the earth is a sphere. Like him, modern science forces us to face new facts that point to the evolutionary origins of man through eons of time rather than instantaneous generation through divine fiat, as understood from a literalist reading of Genesis 1-3.

There is a broad consensus on the origin of living organisms by biological evolution through natural selection. It is however prudent to proceed with caution, considering the triumphalist and even reductionist approach taken by some professed Christian scientists and atheists who are out to relativise the aberration of human sin.

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To attempt to shrink sin into a mere proclivity to sin is to forfeit the bad news that is necessary to herald the truly good-news gospel of our salvation. However, for Christianity to retain its intellectual credibility and remain culturally relevant, it is important that it rethink its formulation of the classical doctrines in fresh ways so that it can continue to speak meaningfully to the present. This is especially urgent now that the church is confronted with new interpretations of scripture, new understanding of the theological tradition, and with new insights from creation itself and the genomic sciences.

In view of the foregoing, it seems advisable to make a rapprochement between theology and science, erstwhile rivals to truth claims, to help us reformulate a better understanding of sin than that posited by the patristic fathers, whilst respecting the centrality of Christ and the image of God in Him.

**1.7 Significance of the Study**

It is a fact that sin is an existential reality. We all as humans share a common sinful condition however unpleasant this may appear to many people. The existence of evil and its defeat in the incarnation of Christ seems to be the whole purpose of creation. Its universality and debilitating effects on creation is without doubt the most enduring reality that the whole of biblical revelation has had to grapple with.

The reality of pain and suffering brought about by evil and sin are horrendous. Evil and suffering cast a dark shadow which does not appear to make much sense in a world that was made and pronounced very good by its Creator. Science while making no effort to discern the origin of sinful nature nevertheless asserts that there inheres in all life the disposition to a self-centredness variously called “egoistic selfishness”, “original selfishness” or “innate selfishness”, which leads to sinful acts (Harlow, 2010:180; Domning, www.washtheocon.org). It is this selfishness that ensures reproductive success and survival to present-day existence. Science shows that when species, populations, or individuals within these populations lose their competitive edge (selfish drive), they are doomed to death and possible extinction. Augustine’s doctrines of original immortality, original sin and inherited guilt cannot adequately explain away the pain, suffering and death as the punishment resulting from God’s retributive justice. Nor can science relegate the attitudes, choices and actions of man to blind concatenations of spinning atoms. Neither can



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peering at the genetic map explain human oppression, greed and violence towards fellow human beings.

The question that must be asked is what potential effect genomics and biotechnological advances could have on our intrinsic God-given moral and spiritual capacities that enable us to reflect God's image in the relationships that He has ordained. A dialogue between the Christian tradition and modern biological science is urgently needed. Such a conversation is to be especially desired between theologically minded scientists and scientifically minded theologians. The potential benefits of such an engagement and dialogue in our present technological world could be enormous.

### 1.8 Scope of the Study

The theses of the origin of sin by St Irenaeus and St Augustine will be presented as concisely as possible and compared and contrasted with the understanding of modern genomic sciences. Attempts will be made to highlight the strengths of each in their effort to explicate the sin nature of humankind. The possible convergences of the three stated positions will be sought, as will be the points of departure of each. The ultimate aim of this endeavor is to explore areas of synergy and complementarity in their response to the problem of human sin.

### 1.9 Research Methods

The existential-ontological approach of John Macquarrie will be used (Macquarie, 1966). He recommends a phenomenological approach in describing the situation at hand. In his approach, Macquarie begins with the existential situation-the feelings, questions and problems that people experience –which he takes as the source of doing theology. The problem is subjected to the tradition of teaching of the faith community, in the process of which the existential situation is illuminated by ontological reality. The illumination allows God to disclose himself in the existential moment.

A brief expose of the modern genomic sciences will be given as part of the existential issues engendering disquiet on Christian scientists and theologians alike, who constantly grapple with new facts about the innate selfishness of man, and the close kinship revealed between him and animals. An excursus of St Irenaeus on sin and the *Imago Dei* will then be presented. Next an



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in-depth analysis of St Augustine's thesis on original sin and inherited guilt will be presented and critically evaluated against the theodicic goals that motivated it.

Data will be gathered from studies of library collections in form of books and research journals in hard copy as well as through online publications.

**1.10 Chapter Outlines**

Chapter I - introduction

This chapter deals with background Issues leading to the study including the aim, problem statement, and research questions. It also states the objectives, justification, significance and scope of the study, as well as, the methodology used in the study.

Chapter II- Creation and Human Evolution

The chapter outlines the various theories of the origin of the universe. Next it gives a brief explanation of Darwinian evolutionary theory and theistic evolution. Next it discusses evidence for the evolutionary origins of humanity and related hominid groups. It also highlights the disturbing trends stimulated by the biotechnological revolution brought about by the genomic sciences, an offshoot of evolutionary biology.

Chapter III-Original Sin in the Theology of St Irenaeus and St Augustine

Section one of this chapter deals with the origin of sin in the theology of St Irenaeus. It discuses Irenaean conceptions of the creation of Adam and Eve, the notion of *imago Dei,* the progressive likeness of God, and the recapitulation of Adam by Christ.

The second section deals with original sin and inherited guilt in the theology of St Augustine. It includes a synopsis of Augustine's teaching on transmission of sin and inherited guilt. It looks at the doctrine of sin after the enlightenment before highlighting contemporary reactions to Augustine's doctrine.

Chapter IV –Towards an Existential-Ontological Synthesis

A description of the John Macquarrie's existential-ontological method is given. The use of the method to interrogate the various positions advanced for the origin and nature of sin is presented.



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The other issues addressed include an examination of the relation between the image of God and original sin and innate selfishness. The influence of heretical doctrines on St Augustine's doctrinal formulation is also explored. Finally an attempt to use Macquarrie's approach to explicate the nature of sin is presented.

Chapter V- Conclusions

Discussion of the major and minor premises of the thesis, pastoral implications, the achievements and challenges encountered in the course of the work and the recommendation for the future.

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## CHAPTER TWO : CREATION AND HUMAN EVOLUTION

### Introduction

There is now considerable evidence from paleontology, genetics and anthropology to make the case for human evolution a compelling one. But there are still innumerable controversies about when, where, or how humanity came into being.

This chapter presents a synopsis of evidence from paleontology and the genomic sciences suggesting a common origin for man and his primate relatives from a hominid ancestor millions of years ago. The second part outlines some of the biotechnological advances that have arisen from this revolutionary knowledge and the attendant misgivings it is generating among Christians and theologically minded scientists.

### 2.1 Origin of the Universe

There is at present almost incontrovertible evidence from geological, archeological, and astronomical studies, radiocarbon dating and genetic molecular clocks studies that the earth and entire universe are very old. Many theories have been advanced for the origin of the universe including the Steady State Theory, the Continuous Creation Theory and the Big Bang Theory (www.big-bang-theory.com accessed 9/5/2016, 5.02 pm). But by far the most popular and plausible is the Big Bang Theory, which holds that the universe arose approximately 13.8 billion years ago, while our earth has been in existence for roughly 4 billion years.

The theory states that the universe sprang into existence as a "singularity" around 13.8 billion years ago (www.big-bang-theory.com; Howell, www.space.com accessed 9/5/2016, 5.09 pm). A singularity is a zone which defies rational explanation. It is hypothesized to be located at the core of "black holes" which are areas of extremely high gravitational pressure. The finite matter in the singularity is compressed by the infinite gravitational pressure into infinite density. Singularities are infinitely small, dense and hot. Our universe is thought to have begun as an infinitesimally small, infinitely hot, infinitely dense, singularity that inflated and expanded in an instantaneous moment. After the initial expansion, the universe cooled sufficiently to allow for the formation of subatomic particles, and later simple atoms. Giant clouds of these primordial elements later coalesced through gravity to form stars and galaxies in all directions (www.big-bang-



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theory.com). The major figures in the development of this theory are scientists Edwin Hubble and Georges Lemaitre who carried their observations in the late 1920s. Current evidence suggests that the universe continues to expand and the galaxies to move away from each other at tremendous speed. Direct evidence in support of the big bang theory rather than the steady state theory was found when astronomers discovered the Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation in 1965 (Howell, www.space.com; www.big-bang-theory.com). What is worth noting is that the universe had a beginning in time, and that the earth has been evolving for the last 4 billion years.

### 2.1.1 Darwinian Evolutionary Theory

The theory of evolution was developed by Charles Darwin and first published in 1859 in a thesis entitled "The origin of species" (Hunter, 2001). Darwinian evolutionary theory holds that species of living organisms arise and develop through natural selection of small inherited variations (Darwin, 1968:101-113). Such a selection increases the capacity of individuals to compete, survive and replicate their own kind. Darwinian evolution is founded upon three major pillars: the primacy of natural selection as the creative agent of evolutionary change; gradualism, meaning the accumulation of small genetic changes over long periods of time; and extrapolation of micro-evolutionary processes to explain macro-evolutionary trends. It works on random variation to privilege those individual best suited to survive, to ultimately enjoy reproductive success. Such individuals are thus selected to pass on their genes to the next generation. Provided the selection pressure is maintained, the frequency of such fitness genes will continue to accumulate in successive generations leading to noticeable changes at population level (Darwin, 1968:169-172).

As unlikely as it sounds, Darwin's main concern in formulating the theory was the problem of natural evil: evolution was Darwin's solution to the age-old problem of evil (Hunter, 2001:8-18). In one of his letters to Gray, Darwin expressed how difficult it was for him to resolve the contradiction evoked by the presence of natural evil with the picture of a loving and benevolent God. He sarcastically remarked that "I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent & omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae [parasitic wasp] with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice." (Miles, www.asa3.org/) The scientific revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth

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centuries was continually revealing the carnage and prodigality of the biological world and nature at its capricious worst, which the poet Tennyson in 1850 mournfully labeled "Nature, red in tooth and claw" (Bush, 1951:182). In crafting this theory, Darwin, like other Christian scientists, philosophers and theologians of his time, sought to distance God from the evils of creation.

With the publication of Darwin's book, The Descent of Man in 1871, the theory of evolution by natural selection seemed to directly attack the dignity of human beings (Brannan, 2011:194). Many saw the Book as claiming that humanity had no grand purpose: that they were just like other animals that arose as a result of randomness, chance, and blind indifference. A major opposition to the doctrine appeared to centre on how random the process of natural selection appeared and that new organisms arose by chance, thus ruling out design or divine purpose in Nature. The general purposelessness of the times was highlighted by what science revealed of the cosmos, as again captured by Tennyson's hopeless cry, that:

> A web is woven across the sky;
> From out waste places comes a cry,
> The stars" she whispers, "blindly run;
> And murmurs from the dying sun; (Bush, 1951:149)

The Christian community reacted to Darwinism and to more recent developments in evolutionary genomics in diverse ways. Four major approaches are discernable (Ostling, 2011:22-27): 1) young earth creationists (YECs); 2) old earth creationists (OECs); 3) intelligent design school (ID); and 4) theistic evolution (TE).

1) Young Earth Creationists- according to Schneider (www.community.berea.edu accessed 16/6/2015, 12.13 pm), YECs adopt a literalistic approach to the Genesis account. They believe that the bible is infallible and inerrant in all areas of knowledge. Consequently, the creation stories in Genesis 1-3 present scientific and historical truths about origins including human origins; The earth was created fully functioning in six 24 hour -days approximately 6,000 years ago; and that Adam was literary the first human being created directly by God (Ostling, 2011:23). By so doing they leave no room for any evolutionary process which would have required a longer evolutionary period to complete. They hold that statements about scripture must be superior to any conclusions of science. They utterly reject evolution, claiming that

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arguments for it are speculative and based upon only a small number of uncertain remains. They also absolutely reject any evolutionary interpretation of empirical data that contradicts their literalistic interpretation of the bible (Schneider, www.community.berea.edu).

2) Old Earth Creationists accept geological evidence for a very old earth and for hominid precursors to *Homo sapiens* (Schneider, www.community.berea.edu). However, they remain unconvinced about a common ancestry of humanity with other animals, but on the contrary assert that man is a *de novo* creation, as literally depicted in the Genesis 1-2 narrative, which they consider historical. They recognize the Adamite family as cultivators of domesticated plants, herders of animals, metal workers with utensils and musical instruments. OECs believe that the biblical record does not go further back than 10,000 years ago. Like the YECs, OECs are concordists who hold that any scientific 'truth' that does not conform to the scriptures must be rejected as untenable.

3) Intelligent Design school attempts reconciliation with science but repudiates Darwinian natural selection, while positing a divine designer as the primal force behind the ordered structure of nature (Ostling, 2011:23). But they stop short of defining this as the Judeo-Christian God. It arose to counterbalance the metaphysical assertions of avowed atheists such as Richard Dawkins, but also as a fundamentalist reaction to decry the decline of traditional Christian values in the 1960s and the growing secularism in society, which they blamed on the teaching of evolution in schools in the USA (Brannan, 2011:195). Their ideas were packaged as "creation science" or "scientific creationism" and much in vogue in the 1960s and 1970s. Their attempts to introduce their teaching into the public school curricula became the subject of court cases in the 1980s, were eventually declared unconstitutional in 2005 (Brannan, 2011:195).

4) Ostling (2011: 24-25) notes a fourth option, theistic evolution, suggested by Francis Collins and his conversation partners, which subscribes to Darwinian evolution, whilst attributing the mechanism to the creative genius of God. This last group, while treating Genesis in a symbolic rather than literal sense, nevertheless continues to hold onto fundamental theological tenets: That God the creator is sovereign over nature; that human beings uniquely bear the image of God, and that human sin is a universal moral issue.

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### 2.1.2 Theistic Evolution

Most theistic evolutionists claim that God created the world from its inception so that all the universe and life would evolve independently without further divine interventions. Theistic evolution generally posits a God who is disjoint from the material world, a God who relies on secondary causes- the results of his divine laws of nature (Hunter, 2001:165). There is, however, a huge variety of shades of opinion on theistic evolution with just about every imaginable mix between the two domains of theism and evolution (Hunter, 2010:166-167). At one end of the spectrum 'evolution is nearly orthodox while the theism is diluted' while at the other extreme, 'theism is orthodox' and 'evolution is diluted'. The famous figures that stand at opposing ends of the two camps are Theodosius Dobzhansky and B.B. Warfield, respectively. Dobzhansky held that evolution is unguided and that there are no final causes. Moreover, it is purposeless, with the only goal being to preserve life itself, nor does it happen according to any predetermined plan. His god appeared abstract and impersonal and exerted no influence upon his evolutionary ideas (Hunter, 2001:167).

Like Dobzhansky, Van Till considers that God endows creation with the ability to self organize through natural laws. He holds that biological evolution is consistent with the doctrine of creation and that there is an allowance for creation to organize and transform itself from elementary matter to complex life forms (Brannan, 2011: 196). While agreeing with Van Till, Collins holds that no supernatural interference occurred once life began, including development of humans from a common ancestor with apes. Warfield, on the other hand, rooted for a theistically directed evolutionary process: one in which God exercised continuous oversight with occasional interferences to initiate new beginnings by actual output of His creative force (Hunter, 2001:168). These views were shared by Robert Russell (Brannan, 2011:197). In the middle of these rival camps are the centrists who attempt to maintain and reconcile the orthodox views of both theism and evolution.

## 2.2 Human Evolution and Creation

A huge body of evidence from paleontology, genetics and anthropology make the case for human evolution a compelling one. But there are still innumerable controversies about when, where, or how humanity came into being. From the genomics and fossil evidence gathered so far,



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it seems that hominids, to which our species *Homo sapiens* and other primates belong, separated from a common ancestor 10-8 million of years ago (Schneider, www.community.berea.edu).

The order primates to which humans belong, includes old world monkeys, chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans, gibbons and new world monkeys. Humans share with monkeys a host of traits suggesting that they share a common ancestry (Domning & Wimmer, www.washtheocon.org; Schneider, www.community.berea.edu). Available evidence suggests that the last common ancestors of humans and chimpanzees diverged between 8 and 5 million years ago (Tobias, 1995: 155). This marked the emergence of the family Hominidae to whom humans belong. From the fossil and genomic evidence gathered so far, modern hominids separated from pre-human hominid genera *Ardipithecus* and *Australopithecus* approximately 5.8 to 4 million years ago. One of the famous fossil finds among these pre-humans was a female called Lucy, otherwise named, *Australopithecus afarensis* (Leakey and Walker, 2003:15).

Early human Hominids belonging to the genus *Homo* include *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus* who lived between 3.5million to 100,000 years ago (Tattersall, 2003 (b): 42-43). Other hominids that appear to have coexisted with *Homo sapiens* are *Homo neaderthalensis* and *Homo heidelbergensis* (Tattersall, 2003 (a): 26). The transition from pre-human hominids to human hominids involved substantial anatomical changes most notably, development of a larger braincase and a more complexly organized brain.

Genetic evidence seems to indicate that humans are most closely related to the chimpanzees and less so to gorillas and other primates. The chimpanzee genome (total genetic heredity encoded in the DNA), which was fully mapped by 2005, displays almost complete identity with the human genome, to a high degree of 95-99 percent match, depending on which parameters are used to assess this.

The similarity and common ancestry of humans and living primates is established by three lines of evidence from comparative genomics: gene sequence similarity, or synteny, and pseudogenes (Venema, 2010:166-171). Gene sequencing (the sequence of nucleotides that make up genes) shows that the human genome matches that of the chimpanzee to a 95 % identity. Notwithstanding slight differences arising from speciation, the similarity in spatial organization of genes (synteny) is outstanding, confirming predictions that would be expected if evolutionary

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theory holds true. Pseudogenes (non-functional gene sequences) common to both humans and gorillas were also present in chimpanzees. Mutations common to humans and orangutans also occur in chimpanzees.

Venema adds that the resemblance is also supported by similarities in the structure of some common proteins such as haemoglobins, cytochromes, and a host of serum albumins. Analyses of a majority of these proteins reveal that chimpanzee proteins and human proteins share a 99% similarity.

Another line of evidence has been provided by population genomics. Recent studies have strongly suggested that the ancestors of modern *Homo sapiens* can be traced to a population of 10,000 interbreeding individuals and not to a single pair as Genesis 1-3 suggests (Venema, 2010:173). These individuals were members of a larger population living in Africa approximately 150,000 years ago. There has however been considerable confusion over the early human female called 'mitochondrial Eve' (Tobias, 1995:160-163). This matrilineal carrier of the ancestral mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) molecule is thought to have given rise to all the mtDNA in women today. The mitochondrial genome is only passed down through females (Venema, 2010: 175-176). Christians have taken this announcement as support for the claim, that the biblical couple, Adam and Eve, is the sole progenitor of the human race. This interpretation could be problematic as 'mitochondrial Eve' represents one of the thousands of women who lived alongside her in that early society (Cann, 1987:37). This position also seems to be bolstered by the discovery of a 'Y-chromosomal Adam', the patrilineal common ancestor for all Y-chromosomes in men living today (Venema, 2010:176). This patrilineal ancestor is thought to have lived around 60,000 years ago, 100,000 years after mitochondrial Eve.

Venema (2010:175) concludes that "the hypothesis that humans are genetically derived from a single ancestral pair in the recent past has no support from a genomics perspective, and, indeed, is counter to a large body of evidence".

These three lines of genetic research give credence to the conclusion of evolutionary biology that man is not an independent *de novo* creation but one that shares a common ancestry with other life forms.

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Despite the many aforementioned similarities between genomes of hominids and their primate relatives, there are huge phenotypic differences that set the former apart. But the most fundamental change of all is that humans have developed the ability of language, the capacity to make abstract and symbolic thought, culture and technology, the ability to think about the past and plan for the future; the capacity to love and worship.

**2.3 Biotechnological Advances**

A not unrelated offshoot of these genetic advances has been runaway technology which has brought with it mixed blessings. Recent advances in reproductive health- cytology, stem cell research, *in vitro* fertilization, and cloning technologies continue to strain discourse with theology. In the case of *in vitro* fertilization, questions arise about what the implications are of having three parents (semen donor father, ovum donor mum, and the surrogate mother) on our understanding of the original sin doctrine or the origin of the soul? While the benefits of ability to predict illnesses before symptoms appear are laudable, there are dangers if this screening is carried out on the fertilized egg before implantation into surrogate mothers. No less frightening is the ability to edit genes with molecular scissors (Regalado, www.technologyreview.com/ Accessed 3/4/2016, 3.13 pm). All these advances amount to an ability to manipulate and choose your future. The potential for abuse of stem cell research, cloning technology and xeno-transplantations (transplantations across different species) is enormous.

It is now possible to clone entire animals and this was demonstrated by the debut of "Dolly the Sheep" in 1997 (Alexander, 2015, **www.jubilee-centre.org** accessed 17/2/2015, 12.26 pm). Many other different animals have since been cloned including cows, pigs, and dogs (Cyranoski, 2014:469). The frightening possibility of cloning humans has been heightened since the mapping of the human genome in 2002 (Collins *et al.*, 2003). Many suggestions have been advanced to support human cloning, ranging from valid medical reasons, to the whimsical and bizarre: as a way of overcoming infertility due to absent or dysfunctional gametes; as a source of compatible transplantation tissue; to replace a child who has been lost through disease or accident; duplication of individuals with particular talents or abilities; to enable homosexual partners to have children by using one of the partner's tissues; enhancement of certain bodily attributes for whatever reason, and the like (Alexander, 2015).

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These biotechnological marvels can cause a blurring of the distinction between human and non-human. Cloning would cause a disjunction between procreation and loving sexual union. It would also interfere with relations between siblings and parents and ultimately disrupt family and social structures. This may ultimately call for a redefinition of what it means to be a human being created in the 'image of God'.

Our knowledge of genomics is still very crude and hazy. It is worth noting that an individual is much more than the sum of their genes. This is especially important with regard to the medical application of genomics (Alexander, 2015). The individual's environment can modify the expression of the genetic message to the body. In deed many health factors are not genetic at all. The discovery of variation in a particular gene can rarely predict the severity of a healthy condition, nor the age at which symptoms will make their first appearance. Consequently discovery of a faulty gene or chromosomal abnormality for a child may not provide all the information about the potential or quality of life for the child or a severity of a particular condition (Noble, 2015:7-11). There are disturbing trends towards genetic determinism where dualist language such as 'genes and physiology' vs. 'us and our mind', are being flaunted by the popular press. Extremely simplistic claims based upon controversial studies are being made: an example is that genes can influence attitudes to issues such as abortion, immigration or the death penalty (Buchen, 2012: 466-468). The catch phrase frequently bandied is that 'it is in his/her DNA' (Alexander, 2011, www.Biologos.org. accessed 11/2/2016, 1.36pm). Some relevant questions to ask from all these are: how does our understanding of the role of DNA relate to the *Imago Dei* and our destiny as human beings? Are human beings the prisoners of their genetics?

**Conclusions**

The sciences of evolutionary biology, genomics, paleontology, and anthropology show that Adam and Eve were not literal or historical persons, as portrayed in Genesis 2-3. These sciences also show that modern humans share a common ancestor with other hominids and that they represent the climax of millennia of evolution. Another salient point is that humanity did not arise from a single pair of ancestors but from a population of at least 10,000 interbreeding individuals.

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The science of evolution and genomics may help us to understand how humanity may have evolved together with related hominid groups, but what distinguishes humans from other animal groups cannot be so easily explained.

The knowledge that genes control many heritable features and can be put to some medical application, is no excuse for facile optimism.

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## CHAPTER THREE: ORIGINAL SIN IN THE THEOLOGY OF ST. IRENAEUS AND ST. AUGUSTINE

### Introduction

The Christian attempt to solve the theological problem of evil falls into three main responses: the traditional Christian response formulated by St Augustine which is based upon the concept of the fall of man from an original state of righteousness; the Irenaean response of a progressive development of man towards a perfected humanity through life in an imperfect world; and the response of process theology that posits an impotent God unable to prevent the emergence or existence of evil, either in man, or in the processes of nature (Hicks, 2010:40).

Irenaeus teaching on original sin was mainly provoked by contemporary Gnosticism as taught by Valentinus and Basilides (Bk I of *Adversus Haereses* (AH)) which claimed that human beings comprised of a divine spark trapped in material body. This soul or mind (*nous* or *logos*) has to be released to return to the spiritual realm from which it was lost (Weinandy, 2001:16; Farrow, 1995: 335-336). Salvation from entrapment in the material world requires special knowledge to enable the self to find its way back to its spiritual abode.

Augustine's labours, on the other hand, were devoted to the refutation of Manchaean and Pelagian teachings.

The first part of this chapter traces the development of the thesis of *Imago Dei* and sin by St Irenaeus. The second portion deals with the original sin doctrine of St Augustine.

### 3.1 Original Sin in the Theology of St Irenaeus

A look at the early church fathers does not reveal any very definite statements on the origin of sin. There are however suggestions in Irenaeus that the idea of sin may have arisen in the voluntary transgression and fall of Adam in Eden. His view became adopted by much of the church and was used mostly in opposition to the heretical teachings of the Gnostics. Irenaeus asserts that Adam fell because of inherent limitations within his makeup. He maintains that Adam was created in an undeveloped and childlike state which God intended to bring to maturity in the course of his earthly life, and was therefore unable to overcome deception by the devil. He

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comments that the deception opened his eyes, in effect quickening his soul into becoming a moral being (AH 4.38.7). Irenaeus also held that at creation man was endowed with both the 'image' and 'likeness of God'. In his understanding, the image of God carries with it rationality and freedom of will, which allows us to participate in the divine, while the likeness of God represents the operation of the spirit that allows us to realize that potential (Brannan, 2011:144). As a result of his disobedience, man lost his mortality, and though he retained his image, his ability to attain the likeness of God was severely damaged. Irenaeus finds that man fell because of limitations imposed upon him by his creaturely finitude, by an epistemic gap between him and his Maker, and through deception by the Devil (Bray, www.biblicalstudies.org. accessed 12/01/2015, 2.36 pm).

Irenaeus presents man as functionally trichotomic in composition with a spirit, a soul, and a body (AH 5.6.1). Quite a number of texts seem to indicate that the fall of Adam was a necessary experience that gave man the knowledge of good and evil, after which he was subjected to choice. Only then could he enjoy the benefits of salvation- the chance to achieve the likeness of God (AH 4.37.4; 4.39.1-2; 4.37.7).

### 3.1.1 Irenaean Concept of the Creation Adam and Eve

Irenaeus had a totally divergent opinion to the Gnostic notion of creation of the material world. Whereas they saw the formation of the cosmos as the work of some inferior and misguided power, Irenaeus asserted that the work of creation was the province of the Supreme and infinitely Good God. At the outset he presents the foundational basis by stating that the supreme all powerful Creator made everything out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) *(*AH 2.1.1). He upbraided the Gnostics for their insistence that creation was contrary to His will and that it was executed by some inferior and disloyal deity or angels. He was quite emphatic in this, stating that "it was not angels, … who made us" for they did not have "the power to make an image of God"; God did not need assistance for he had with him always his two hands, "the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, He made all things" (AH 4.20.1). He felt that the Gnostic teaching would portray the disobedient deity as more powerful than the Supreme God (AH 2.2.1-5). On the contrary Irenaeus conceived God as the Supreme Creator who is perfectly good and that all he created was perfectly good.



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Irenaeus did not denigrate flesh or matter as evil like the Gnostics did. Weinandy (2003:18) notes that Irenaeus, on the contrary, appeared to glorify and "delight in the materiality of the material, the physicality of the physical, and the bodiliness of the bodily" as he declares that God formed man from "the dust and the slime of the earth" (AH 1.9.3; 3.21.10).

According to Irenaeus humankind was the culmination of God the Father's good creation. It is here that the divine personhood –the Father, and through His two hands, the Son and the Holy Spirit- collaborated in imprinting God's image and likeness upon Adam and Eve, after fashioning them from the dust of the earth (AH 5.6.1).

### 3.1.2 Imago Dei

As stated in AH 5.6.1 Irenaeus is very clear in his understanding of what it means to be created in the image of God. And this is that mankind was created to conform to image of His Son and not just any deity or being. The son himself is the perfect image and likeness of God. For man therefore to be created in the image of God means the Father creating us using as a template, the archetype of Himself, in His Eternal Son. Moreover this creative act is to be accomplished by the father through his two hands, the Eternal 'Word and Wisdom' or the 'Son and Spirit' (AH 4.20.1; 4.20.4; 5.6.1).

Creation of man in the image and likeness of God is therefore a tripartite undertaking involving all three persons of the trinity. For Irenaeus, being in the image of God is more than merely possessing reason and free will. There are strong suggestions in his writings (AH 5.16.2) that the whole of man in his physicality, the entire bodily formation, carries the image of God.

Irenaeus appeared to celebrate the body, asserting that it is only within our bodies, that is, through our bodily words and actions that we participate in righteous deeds. He concluded that since the father created man a bodily being modeled after his son, the whole man must be the icon of the son (AH 5.6.1; 5.16.2). It is therefore in modeling our life to the whole life of Christ from birth, through death, resurrection and exaltation that we manifest the true pattern and nature of man as God the father originally intended. These views which are foundational to Irenaeus doctrine of recapitulation are intimated in many sections of *Adversus Haereses* including AH 5.6.2; 3.16.6; 2.22.4.

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Irenaeus conceived the image of God as being the residual capacity for rationality and exercise of free will that Adam retained after his fall. While the image of God was damaged but not completely destroyed, what was lost of man's original nature, and which required regeneration and restoration, was the likeness of God. He states that man will "be justly condemned because having been created a rational being, he lost the true rationality, and living irrationally, opposed the righteousness of God, giving himself over to every earthly spirit, and serving all lusts" (AH 4.4.3).

It is clear from the foregoing that this distinctive attribute of rationality and free will is the one that most ably reflects the divine image. But in fallen man this residual faculty of rationality is in opposition to the full realization of the likeness of God. Having lost the 'true rationality', man lived irrationally opposed to the righteous God, 'giving himself over to every earthly spirit, and serving all lusts'. Irenaeus observes these lusts or passions to be those works of flesh enumerated in Galatians 5:19 (AH 5.11.1).

Purves (1996: 106) notes that Irenaeus compared the potential with which Adam was formed with the prototype of what he was intended to become, manifest in, and through Christ. Adam did not acquire this inheritance because 'the projected growth', 'from childhood through to maturity', was never completely attained. Secondly, he affirms that the couple was originally created in perfection, meaning that they had a potential to grow and develop into the full image and likeness of God in a dynamic process of man's growth, that was only fulfilled, completed and sustained in and through the humanity of Jesus Christ and the agency of the Spirit (AH 5.9.2,3).

Irenaeus reiterates that the process of transformation and restoration into the image and likeness of God is the mutual work of both the Son and the Spirit, the two hands of God. He affirms that the true image of God in man is only found in Christ, who thus acts as the template for man's transformation to full humanity. In this process the Spirit acts as the agent of growth and transformation.

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### 3.1.3 Irenaean Adamite Infantile State

Irenaeus declares in Book IV of *Adversus Haereses* that Adam and Eve were created in God's image and likeness and that they were intended to share in his eternity and imperishability. But he also qualified this by insisting that they must grow into the image and mature into the likeness of God. Continuing his argument, Irenaeus held that to be created in the image and likeness of God enables man to enjoy God's eternal and incorruptible nature. There is a qualification, however, in that what is created is not eternal, and cannot be 'uncreated' or eternal like God, who alone is truly perfect. Irenaeus argues that Adam and Eve could only manifest their 'likeness to God' in an infantile and childlike manner. They needed to mature through discipline and faithfulness to God in order to attain the state of God's perfection and nature. Adam and Eve, and conceivably, humanity at large, could only acquire the incorruptible likeness of God through a protracted period of growth and development. Thus through grace could "they receive growth and (after) a long period of existence, do reflect the glory of the uncreated One" (AH 4.38.3). He however emphasizes that only by remaining in subjection to God could they remain in "continuance in immortality, and immortality is the glory of the uncreated One" and be "rendered after the image and likeness of the uncreated God" (AH 4.38.3).

What Irenaeus labours to say here is that created beings achieve growth and maturity to the likeness of God by grace such that they reflect his glory. Though they may not achieve true perfection, they might if they remain in subjection to God and through a long course of time receive a faculty of the "uncreated", evidenced by a measure of immortality and perfection "approximating to the uncreated One". In this way, man a created being, manifests the image and likeness of the uncreated God.

### 3.1.4 Irenaean Progressive *Imago Dei* and Likeness.

Likeness of God in man is a process of transformation that develops through time rather than an event that took place in a historical time. Though the potential for progression into the perfect image of God was present in man, such a capacity was not realized because man was 'infantile', 'unaccustomed to' and 'unexercised' in discipline (AH 4.38.1). Again the perfect image of God had yet to be manifested through the incarnation of the Son as the Word made flesh, and so man easily lost the similitude (AH 5.16.2). Perfection to the image and likeness of God is equally a



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movement towards God that enables man to advance and grow into full communion with God. It means to undo the damage of the first Adam and to grow into the image of Christ, who alone manifests as the true image of God.

The true and perfect image and likeness of God the Father is revealed in the whole life of Christ, from birth, life, death resurrection, and exaltation. It is by embracing the whole life of Christ, that the true pattern and nature of man as envisaged by God, is realized (AH 3.16.6).

Repeatedly, Irenaeus asserts that Adam strayed from the path originally set for his perfection because of 'ignorance' of the immanent presence of the Word. The failure to 'understand' was because he was, as 'yet an infant' incapable of assimilating solid food (AH 3.16.6; 4.4.3; 4.38.1). According to Irenaeus, human beings had the potential to grow into the likeness of God but Adam stumbled and forfeited this capacity. The reason for this was the epistemic distance caused by his immaturity, which made him block the Spirit's counsel, without which his growth was stunted (AH 3.8.2).

Irenaeus maintained that the realization of this exalted status must be through gradual progression. First there was his animal nature which was mortal, then through a gradual process of growth, attainment of maturity, immortality, and ultimate glorification in Christ. Irenaeus observes that perfection into the image and likeness of God is contingent upon gratefulness to God, faith towards Him and submission to His will i.e. through obedience to His Word, man "shalt receive His handwork and shall be a perfect work of God" (AH 4.39.2).

The choice was to either reject God and lose 'His workmanship and life', or by subjection to Him, gain perfection. Man at creation had been endowed with the basic attributes, such as free will, rationality and a body, for growing into the image and likeness of God.

That Adam and Eve and indeed their whole progeny tarnished their Godly image and derailed their progress towards divine similitude is reiterated over and over again (AH 3.18.1; 5.2.1; 5.21.3). Due to his disobedience, man failed to obtain the similitude of God intended for him at his creation, and instead death ensued, for as Irenaeus states: "on as many as, according to their own choice, depart from God, He inflicts that separation from Himself", and "separation from

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God is death" (AH 5.27.2). The 'power of death' overcame Adam and Eve "because they did eat in disobedience; and disobedience to God entails death" (AH 5.23.1).

According to Irenaeus, man can resume the path to his perfection in the image and likeness of God. This perfect similitude could however only be manifested in the process of life, as we by informed choice, willingly acted through our bodies (AH 5.23.1). We can once again ascend "towards the perfect" or "approximating to the uncreated One" (AH 4.38.3) in a progressive or stepwise pattern, through beholding the incarnate Word, Christ.

### 3.1.5 Irenaean Recapitulation of Adam by Christ

The major concern for Irenaeus was completion and perfection of the *Imago Dei*. A critical issue in his theology is that the soteriological outcome is inextricably linked to his understanding of man as being in the image and the likeness of God. Like a mantra he reiterates the theme of restoration and or perfection of humanity to the intended ideal- the image and likeness of God which humanity was originally bequeathed with (AH 4.38.1, 2).

He notes that the Son of God, or the Word of God, as the full image of God had not yet assumed physical presence, meaning that they had no visible template to imitate (AH 5.16.2). But by the incarnation, Christ became "Himself what was His image; and He re-established the similitude after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word" (AH 5.16.2). The passage clearly explains how man lost the similitude. But it also explains how the same was re-established. By visible presence of the Son, Adam and Eve's descendants were able to grasp what it means to be in the full image and likeness of God.

It also appears from AH 5.16.2 that Irenaeus understood the incarnation as more than merely a response to sin. He seems to intimate that the incarnation was a necessary, indispensible component, for the spiritual growth and perfection of Adam and Eve, and ultimately, the entire humanity. He further states clearly that, "it was necessary that what might be saved should also be called into existence, in order that the Being (the Son) who saves should not exist in vain" (AH 3.22.3). Despite this 'presumed inevitability' of the incarnation and their vulnerability to sin, Irenaeus does not exonerate the original couple from their sinful disobedience; for the reason

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that their being in the image of God meant that they possessed free will, and the power to either obey or not to obey God's will (AH 4.37.4).

Irenaeus adds that the progress towards restoration and perfection of the *Imago Dei* can be resumed by reducing the epistemic gap through revelation of the Master himself, that is, by seeing the teacher, hearing his voice through our ears, and by practical application of his words, and thereby regain with him and through him, communion with the perfect One, the Father. He avers that "in no other way could we have learned the things of God, unless our Master, existing as the Word, had become man" (AH 5.1.1). Moreover "no other being had the power of revealing to us the things of the Father, except His own proper Word" (AH 5.1.1).

Irenaeus held to the thought that although humans are created in the image and likeness of God, they could only truly become icons of the Son if He became one with them (AH 3.18.7). Irenaeus affirms the same role when he asks, "[H]ow can they [human beings] be saved unless it was God who wrought their salvation upon the earth? Or how shall man pass into God, unless God has [first] passed into man?" (AH 4. 33. 4). He points out that it was the same hand of God who first created man in his own image and likeness that now reorients man upon the path of growth to perfection into the similitude of God (AH 5.16.1).

The term recapitulation is a key concept in Irenaeus theology. He uses it to illustrate the notion that in becoming a man, the Son of God summed up and united in Himself all that it means to be human. Irenaeus stresses that Christ recapitulated into himself "His own handiwork; and on this account does he confess himself the son of man" (AH 3.22.1-3). For Irenaeus the taking up of our humanity by the Son of God, was the minimum requirement for our being remade into the image and likeness. But he had also to recapitulate or retrace the whole life of man's sinful history. The aim of this was to transform and negate the life and history of the disobedience of Adam and his descendants by His own obedience. In this process, Jesus assumes the role of the new Adam for the rebirth of a new humanity. To achieve this work of recapitulation, "He summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who had at the beginning led us away captives in Adam, and trampled upon his head". He did it by becoming man, so that, "as our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one" (AH 5.21.1).

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### 3.2 Original Sin in the Theology of St Augustine

#### 3.2.1 The Nature of Evil and Sin

From the philosophical standpoint, Augustine forwards the concept of evil as privation or absence of good (*privatio boni*). This arises from the premise of the Jewish Christian understanding that the universe is good, because it arises as the creation of a good God and for a good purpose. He asserted that God created the world *ex nihilo*, the evidence being that had it not been so, there would be nothing at all apart from God, not even preexistent eternal matter. Augustine added that God has absolute control over all aspects of his creation, and nothing can limit Him in any way. As he put it: "Since God is Supreme Being, that is, since He supremely is and, therefore, immutable, it follows that He gave 'being' to all that He created out of nothing" (CG, 12.2). Upon creation the universe displayed perfect harmony and in this way experienced the intention of its maker. All of God's creation including the sun, moon, stars, angels, and human beings, birds, fish, trees, light, and darkness is good. This also includes all realities like fire, cold, wild beasts: if we use them wisely, in their proper place, even poison is good (CG, 11.22).

Creation therefore is subject to change because creatures were made not out of Him but out of nothing. It is also capable of being corrupted because it lacks the infinite immutability of its creator (CG, 12. 1). Among rational creatures there was a hierarchy created wills, higher and lower forms, each of which is good. As he states, he gave to some "more of being and to others less' and in this way arranged an order of natures in a hierarchy of being" (CG, 12.2). These rational beings included angels and men.

Each rational creature has its own measure of being, its own beauty and poise, and best fulfils its purpose by occupying the niche allotted to it by virtue of its own nature. Augustine held that there is no level of being that is evil, but only a lesser good. Among angels, blessings flow from union with the Absolute Being through their appropriating more of 'being' from Him. By contrast the bad angels abandoned the absolute and turned instead to themselves, in consequence preferring what was less in the order of being (CG, 12. 6). Augustine holds that evil is the corruption of a mutable good, not merely lack of goodness, but the loss of good or absence of good in that which is inherently good. It is not a substance but consists in opposition to good, the



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malfunctioning or defect of something that is a good creation. He continues that sin arises as a wound in created natures which were otherwise good. Evil or sin as *privatio boni* results from lack of goodness that arises from defection of a creature from the purpose ordained by God.

Evil therefore is not a positive quality of creation since all created nature is good. As he clearly states, " absolutely no natural reality is evil and the only meaning of the word 'evil' is privation of good" (CG, 11. 22). What we call evil is thus a privation of some feature that creatures should possess in fullness.

### 3.2.2 Origin of Evil

Augustine considers that moral evil can only be introduced into creation by will, in those creatures endowed with free will. Nevertheless free will is unquestionably a good bestowed as a power to certain of God's creatures which includes angels and humans. At first he deals with the first instance of willing evil in angels. It is Augustine's thesis that free creatures made out nothing inevitably fall, firstly because unlike God they are mutable, and secondly because they are created out of nothing.

Augustine distinguished between good and bad angels on the basis of their contrary dispositions towards God. He avers that both had the same nature and origin but differed in their free will or 'choices and desires' (CG, 12. 1). The good angels remained faithful to God thus enjoying His eternity, truth, and love. By contrast, the bad angels of their own volition defected from the Supreme Good (*summum bonum*) and chose their own way: "Preferring the pomp of pride to this sublimity of eternity, the craftiness of vanity to the certainty of truth, and the turmoil of dissention to the union of love, they became proud, deceitful, and envious" (CG, 12. 6). Augustine here (CG, 12. 6) and elsewhere (CG, 11. 33) clearly equates sin in angels to pride. This pride in the bad angels is seen in their desire for elevation as well as in their love for deception and envy. Adherence to God confers beatitude, while absence and failure to cling to the creator damaged their nature much like a disease, and that this eventually led to disaster and misery (CG, 12. 6).

After attributing the cause of a bad will to pride, Augustine yet contends that there is no efficient cause for an evil will (CG, 12. 6). An evil will, he states, is in itself, the efficient cause of a bad



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action or wrongdoing. He continuously argues that we need not seek for an efficient cause of an evil will. He finds that the effect of a bad will is a 'deficiency' and roots for the term 'deficient' to describe the cause (CG, 12. 9). Augustine clearly emphasizes that though a good will of the good angels does not have an efficient cause, neither does it make them uncreated, nor immutable, nor coeternal or at the same level with God. The bad angels freely chose to defect from the Supreme Good.

Augustine goes through the same arguments when he discusses original sin in Adam. Though he notes that Adam was deceived by Satan in the form of the serpent, he does not totally exonerate him as a vulnerable victim of a mightier power. As he states, "God the author of all natures but not of their defects, created man good; (but he became) corrupt by choice" (CG, 13. 14). Augustine points out that the original couple had already fallen even before they committed the actual sin, long before they were beguiled by the Devil. A bad will had already grown in them, the sin of pride. He states pointedly that "Our first parents fell into open disobedience because already they were secretly corrupted; for the evil act had never been done had not an evil will preceded it" (CG, 14. 13). He further explains that "The wicked deed, then,—that is to say, the transgression of eating the forbidden fruit, - was committed by persons who were already wicked" (CG, 14. 13) . While not completely exonerating the Devil, Augustine puts the blame squarely on man's hubris.

He adds that the promise of Adam's elevation to godhood in the above quote would have come to fruition only if Adam remained in fellowship with, and obedience, to his creator and true source of his being, rather than arrogantly imagining himself to be the author of his own existence.

Augustine emphasized that evil has no ontological basis. He argues that "If evil were a substance, it should either be absolutely incorruptible, hence good to some extent, for unless it were good it could not be corrupted" (*The Confessions* (CF) 7. 12). He continued that evil is neither in God nor in any of his creatures. It is not a being but the privation of being, brought about by the defection of man. Ultimately, it means a turning away from the infinite Immutable Good to the world of changeable and finite goods.

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### 3.2.3 Transmission of Sin and Inherited Guilt

Augustine held that all the progeny produced by Adam after the fall was not only corrupt but also 'justly condemned' like their first parent. He argued that we all existed in the first man even before he fell into sin "through the woman who was made out of him before sin existed": that the form we were later to take "was already present in the seed" out of which we would sprout (CG 13 14). This idea of the mystical union of Adam with all his future descendants was adduced to earlier in the statement in CG 13.3 that "the whole human race, which was to become Adams posterity through the first woman, was present in the first man". This justifies the shared fate of all Adams progeny with him. Augustine adds that inevitably, all descendants of this rebellious pair are thus corrupted by sin and deservingly damned to death. Augustine concludes that "from a bad use of free choice, a sequence of misfortunes conducts the whole human race, excepting those redeemed by the grace of God, from the original canker in its root to the destruction of a second and endless death" (CG 13.14).

As to how this sin is transmitted to succeeding progeny, Augustine states that it is through generation (CF, I 7.12). He catalogues the spectrum of wicked actions that spring from this first original error. He affirms that "These are indeed the crimes of wicked men, yet they spring from that root of error and misplaced love which is born with every son of Adam" (CG 22. 22). He claimed that "what the first man became by perversion and penalty that his descendants are by birth- natures subject to sin and death" (CG, 13. 3).

The notion of transmission of original sin by natural generation is expressly taught in his numerous polemics against Pelagius where he argues that sin is propagated to all men by natural descent and not through imitation [ *Forgiveness of sins and baptism* (FSB) 1. 9(IX),10,11(X))]. In the statement that, "whilst by the generation of the flesh only that sin is contracted which is original; yet by the regeneration of the Spirit there is effected the remission not of original sin only, but also of the sins of man's own voluntary and actual commission" (FSB I. 20), he makes a clear distinction between the original sin contracted by carnal generation through the birth process and additional sins acquired through man's willful commission. At the same time, Augustine rejects Pelagian ideas of transmission of sin through imitation.

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Augustine considers original sin as an infection that transmits itself to children from their fathers through the act of procreation. Not only is the infant corrupted by the stain of original sin, but the act of generation, is itself, a sin because it is preceded and sustained by the stimulus of shameful lust. It is because of this propagation that even infants who have not yet developed a rational will and have thus not yet committed any personal sins are culpable, and therefore require, and are given the sacrament of baptism. Thus while they have not as yet committed any willful sin, they require to be absolved of original sin. As he states, "inasmuch as they do not commit any sin in the tender age of infancy by their actual transgression, original sin only is left" (FSB 1. 39 (XXVI)).

Additionally Augustine contends that ultimately, each offspring acquires the infection of sin from his parents through the shameful lust brought about by the insubordination of body organs during sexual intercourse, and in consequence emerges contaminated. Original sin is thus presented as both an act-the first act of disobedience of partaking the forbidden fruit, and the resulting condition of the act –the fatal wound inflicted on humanity or concupiscence [*Marriage and concupiscence* (MC) 57 307].

Augustine reiterates the evil consequences of sexual intercourse, which he considers the fruit of man's depraved desires in section CG 13.3. He emphasizes that we share in Adam's guilt by our solidarity with him through the mystical union. This corruption or canker, no individual born of woman through natural means can escape. The supposition was that all infants were born in Adam, and therefore all of humanity is present when he eats of the fruit. For Augustine, Adam and his descendants are all 'one man'. The sin of Adam is the sin of his descendants. Consequently all are guilty of Adam's sin. It is this that condemns even unborn children, since they too were already present in the loins of Adam. A major argument that Augustine used was the fact that the church baptized infants, like it did adults for the forgiveness of sins. He contended that this could not make sense if infants were not sinners. Ultimately, Augustine considered infant baptism a necessary ritual for the remission of sin and the inherited guilt associated with it (CG 13. 3).

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### 3.2.4 Original State of Humankind

Augustine states that before the fall man lived in a veritable paradise graced with constant communion with God and free from all want. There was no lack of food and drink and he was rejuvenated from the tree of life, and thus kept from seeming senescence, or aging (CG 14. 26). There was neither decay, nor physical pain or sickness. He lived in complete health and peace, without a fear in the world. Likewise there were no sorrows but on the contrary, perpetual joy and love flowed from the abundance of God. His was an idyllic state of perfection, both moral and intellectual, besides enjoyment of immunity from suffering and death. Moreover 'there was an effortless observance of law of God' (CG 14. 26).

All of the foregoing bespeak of an original righteousness bestowed by grace upon the first couple. Augustine argues that, although they were not like the saints of heaven unable to sin (*non posse peccare*), they were nevertheless able to avoid sinning (*posse non peccare*), which is also a form of goodness though of lower rank than the saints. He continues that had the first man relied on the help of God when tempted by the devil, he could have overcome him. Instead he was overcome because he proudly relied on his own devices, rather than call on the wisdom of his maker and helper, God (CG 14. 27).

A major consequence of man's fall was that his nature became changed and weakened, imprisoned by its own lusts. The flesh began to rebel "against the spirit in which struggle we are born, deriving from the first transgression a seed of death, and bearing in our members, and in our vitiated nature, the contest or even victory of the flesh" (CG 13.13). These inordinate desires also signified the loss of control over the members of the sexual organs, and were inflicted as punishment by God for Adam's sin. The soul was no longer able to master the flesh, which now continued its relentless rebellion, unlike before when it was subject to God. Man was doomed to die with, and to pass to his descendants by birth, this rebellion of the flesh against the spirit termed, concupiscence (also CG 13. 3). In this way therefore man lost his original righteousness.

#### 3.2.4.1 Original Immortality and Inherited Guilt

Augustine draws a distinction between the first man and angels in that while God graced the angels with immortality irrespective of whether they sinned or not, man did not enjoy such a



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privilege. Nevertheless he notes that, if the first man did not sin by disobedience, he too would have enjoyed an immortality and everlasting happiness akin to that of angels, 'without interruption of death' (CG, 13. 1). In the event that he disobeyed, death would be instituted as a just penalty. For man therefore, immortality was conditional upon his appropriation of the grace freely offered.

The eventual consequences of this first sin were far reaching. All the offspring of the first parents were liable to the same sentence of death. Augustine goes so far as to assert that all of them were guilty of the same sin as their forebears, so that the punishment designed for them became that of their descendants too (CG, 13. 3).

Augustine argued that this was so because at the time that judgment was meted out on the original parents, the entire human race that would later form Adam's lineage 'was present in the first man' (CG, 13. 3). He continues that "what was born was not human nature as it was originally created but as it became after the first parents sin and punishment- as far, at least, as concerns the origin of sin and death" (CG, 13. 3).

Augustine states that death is the penalty of all those who come to birth on earth as descendants of the first man. However he clarifies that despite being a punishment of sin, death secures "for the soul (of saints) a grace that is a security against all punishment for sin" (CG, 13. 6).

### 3.5 The Doctrine of Original Sin after the Enlightenment Period

Matthew Ashley (http://cs.redeemer.ca/pascal/depo/Ashley.pdf; accessed 29/10/2015 5.56 pm) has noted that criticism against original sin reached a peak in the Enlightenment Period. European philosophers rejected the doctrine while others defended it citing historicity of the texts. A group of philosophers in the 19$^{th}$ c led by Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Schelling, and Kierkegaard reinterpreted and reformulated the doctrine, divorcing it from the literalism but at the cost of surrendering some of traditional components associated with it. These scholars put forward a doctrine of sin that upheld the claim that the human condition was cumbered by guilt, and damaged to such a state that it could only be restored by Christ alone. While doing so, they completely ignored the historical foundations propped up as grounds for justifying God in a universe where evil flourishes.

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Questions still remained about how to secure the universality of original sin without the historical device of an original couple. Kant repudiated the transmission of original guilt by biological propagation. Instead he introduced reason and motive as drivers of why people act in one way and not another. He posited categorical imperatives or maxims that should guide all human activity, appropriation of which should conform to moral law. He concluded that all humans have an innate predilection towards evil which is both subjective and unfathomable. As a reminder of our flawed or innate proclivity to evil, Kant thinks that the narrative of Genesis 2-3 necessary, though he rejects its historical accuracy and interpretation.

Schleiermacher (Ashley 16) considers the idea of innate sinfulness or inclination to sin attractive. However he opines that innate sinfulness requires tinder from outside to trigger it. Only after external stimulus like the brokenness of culture can this disposition to sin, lead to actual sin and consequent guilt. He denies the historicity of the fall or loss of an original righteousness that leaves Adam and Eve in a different and worse condition. Wyman (1994: 206) notes that for Schleiermacher, the root of sin is found in the inability to integrate one's consciousness of the Divine with the rest of one's conscious life, and not in the will or direction of one's love. This is a departure from the position held by Augustine, in which sin consists in a defection of the will from God, which results in a diversion of one's love of the eternal, to love of the temporal and mutable, and even love of the self.

Schleiermacher also makes sin a corporate enterprise with a complementary social component (Wyman, 1994:210-211). He notes that all human beings are influenced by previous generations as well as by their contemporaries, and that they in turn contribute their sinfulness to those around them and to later generations. Schleiermacher concludes that original sin is in a sense inherited, though one is nevertheless responsible for it, and that it is a universal 'corporate act' that bears a 'corporate guilt' of the human race (Wyman, 1994: 211).

Kierkegaard rejected the notion that the fall is both necessary and good, and that it is not amenable to rational explanation (Ashley, 17). He introduces anxiety – a state of alienation that accompanies thought and its power to distinguish self from the world, and good from bad. Kierkegaard brings the notion of anxiety into the reading of the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2-3. Secondly he does not insist on the literal truth of the doctrinal complex: there is no

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fall from an original perfection. Like our primeval parents, we each of us re-enact 'our own enigmatic leap from innocence to guilt'. We are coaxed into the leap but not forced into it by a pre-existing anxiety. Thirdly, anxiety does not occasion sin but only brings the person to the threshold, where the agent then takes the leap into sin. Kierkegaard also points to a major difference between the primeval pair and the successive progeny, in that each individual succumbs more easily to sin because of the cumulative effect of the race on the individual. Finally it may be noted that the concept of anxiety is not an adequate explanation for original sin. The notion of radical evil in Kant can neither explain original sin, nor is it explained by it.

The aforementioned philosophers set the stage for the reformulation of the doctrine of sin in the light of evolutionary science.

### 3.6 Contemporary Reactions to Augustine's Original Sin and Inherited Guilt Doctrines

Nineteenth century positions on the doctrine of original sin continue to inform reformulations constructed in the in the light of developments made in the science of genetics and evolution. Among the major figures that shaped this discourse are Teilhard de Chardin, Friedrich Tennant, John Haught, and Jerry Korsmeyer.

Teilhard's writings on evolution and original sin had a profound effect on Roman Catholic theologians in the later part of the 20$^{th}$ c and this warrants inclusion among contemporary figures. The major contribution of Teilhard was that he embedded original sin deep within the ontological and evolutionary structure of the created world. For Teilhard, original sin symbolizes the inevitable chance of evil which is now present everywhere in the universe, just as it has always been from its beginning.

By making original sin the chaos principle, *i.e*. the *entropy* that inheres in the universe, Teilhard guaranteed the universality of sin without the need of an originating couple and transmission by propagation (Ashley 20). He considered original sin "the essential reaction of the finite to the creative act" and "the reverse side of all creation". When considered in the context of the evolving creation and universe, sin is what thwarts and checks progress or the onward march towards the more, towards the Omega-Christ. It is that which obstructs the energy of evolution which fosters greater and closer union. Teilhard appropriated the scientific concept of *entropy*-



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the gradual decline of a more complex organized system to a simpler lower state of organization and energy- to explicate original sin. Evil is that which fragments, dissipates and breaks down man and his world. It is that which inhibits creation's advance towards Christ and obstructs his approaching kingdom. He added that sin is rarely an individual's exclusive affair, but that it is a contagious act transacted in a community.

He noted that it could not be fixed at any one point in the whole environment, but is rather embedded into the being of the whole world as an immanent principle (Halloran, 2012: 191). It could only have been always everywhere in the developing universe, from the earliest nebulae to be formed, to the most distant.

With Teilhard de Chardin, the notion of original sin is broadened to encompass the whole of creation, not just within the bounds of human freedom (Halloran, 2012: 192). All 'participated being' benefits from the 'unitive, organizing power of the cosmic Christ', who is immanent and at once more powerful that the 'centrifugal, dissociating impulses' working to disrupt the evolving universe. The Roman Catholic Magisterium through Pope Pius XII Encyclical of 1950 (Fisher, 2008: 7) insisted that monogenism must be upheld for all those appropriating evolution to expound on human sin. The church held that speculations about polygenism would clearly invalidate the basic tenets of the Church's teaching. Implicit in these ideas of polygenism were concerns about the origin of the soul. The Church affirmed that the soul was created directly by God and not generated by means of 'semen spirituale' from the parents. Teilhard answered that a historically localized Fall in a small corner of the universe would render the redemption of Christ an equally localized and insignificant event (Ashley 20).

The generalization of evil into a natural element of a 'creation-in-process', elevates evil to an ontological position. In essence, this makes God the author of evil and reduces creation to a Manichean dualism. In the final analysis, Teilhard solved the problem of how to guarantee the universality of sin without an original couple, and sin's transmission by propagation. But all of these came about at the cost of giving evil an ontological status.

John Haught follows Teilhard's approach but with important additions (Ashley 23-26). He appropriates philosophical traditions and biblical hermeneutics to downplay the significance of creation as a singular event, whilst emphasizing the redeeming acts of God. He sees humanity as



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born into a still unfinished, imperfect and evolving universe: in other words, humanity is the product of an evolutionary universe. Haught sees original sin as all the forces that inhibit our participation in God's megaproject. Haught tolerates Genesis 2 as a symbolic portrayal of creation, but dismisses Genesis 3 as an 'obsolete' and 'unbelievable' myth made irrelevant by evolutionary science. He suggests that we should not try to locate the Edenic paradise where men allegedly fell, in the mythical past, but rather place it in the open future towards which we journey.

Korsmeyer was similarly much inspired by Teilhard de Chardin. He argues for a process theology and philosophy against classical theism (Ashley 26). He rejects the whole of Genesis 1-11 as a myth. He considers man to be the product of fifteen billion years of evolution of matter and a universe, and of four billion years of the evolution of life on the planet. Ultimately, man is the product of a long life of the evolution of mammals, primates and hominids. He presents man as being at the pinnacle of an evolutionary process that has become conscious of itself.

Korsmeyer defines original sin as the characteristics of self-survival and self-interest inherited both culturally and biologically, and which results from a long period of God-directed evolution. Individuals born into this state are not sinners until they fail to respond to the call towards transcendence over basal instincts and social conditioning. An individual born into this state is therefore predisposed to sin or evil. Original sin thus translates as innate selfishness or self-interest. This concept finds ultimate expression in Domning's thesis of "original selfishness".

Korsmeyer appropriated the term 'fall upward' for the call of Christ to transcend behaviours by which human beings are conditioned for competition, the struggle for existence and the drive for self-perpetuation. The proclivities are enabled by genetic and cultural inheritances, whose influences are inimical to the kind of life to which Christ has called them.

Recent studies in sociobiology and advances in biological evolution and genomic sciences have broadened our understanding about *Homo sapiens* as the climax of primate and hominid evolution. The findings challenge the basic tenets of the doctrine of sin, particularly, the historicity of the original parents, monogenism, original righteousness, original immortality, inherited guilt and original sin.

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Aside from this group are contemporary biblical scholars, theologians, and Christian scientists who have used the new tools of historical, critical and literary criticism supported by anthropological and archeological findings, to carry out detailed exegesis of the Genesis texts and the Pauline writings (Harlow, 2010:179-195). They have crafted an entirely new hermeneutic that considers Adam and Eve as strictly literary figures in a divinely inspired myth designed to instill theological, but not historical truths about God, creation, and humanity. The scholars assert that the doctrine of the fall and original sin are nowhere taught in Genesis 2-3, but only in later Christian readings of it. Many of these ideas are to be found in the Apocrypha and in later Hellenistic and Christian literature.

Despite the foregoing, original sin, the Fall, inherited sinfulness, and sexuality, did not achieve great importance in Jewish tradition as it did in Christian belief. The exegetes argue that despite the importance of Adam and Eve in the Christian tradition, they are not central to biblical theology. This can be attested to by the fact that they barely receive mention outside Genesis 2-5 and several references in the epistles of Paul. They insist that Genesis does not teach that the first human beings were created immortal, nor that death entered the world only after, and as a consequence of sin. Neither does the narrative anywhere indicate that the couple was created in a state of spiritual maturity or moral perfection. The text does not depict that the transgression of the couple infected their offspring and all the subsequent seed of man. Aaron (2005:685), quoting Dennis Schulman (2003), notes that Midrashic literature abounds with references to Adam's sinning that brought about death into the world. These writings do not highlight sexuality as inherently sinful, and neither do they accept the Augustinian notion that the original sin and guilt could be transmitted to future generations.

Harlow (2010:189) concludes that rather than teach sin and death as the major themes of the Adamic myth, the concepts emphasized are knowledge and immortality. The lessons to be gleaned from this primeval myth are etiological and epistemological rather than punitive: the why of toil and work, pain at childbirth, the experience of autonomous wisdom, a consciousness of human mortality etc.

There are others who find fault with Augustine's misreading of Romans 5:12 (Harlow, 2010: 190; Phipps, 1980:126-127). Instead of reading that death spread to all *because (or in whom;*



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Greek *'eph' ho*) all sinned, Augustine used a Latin translation that implied sin entered the world *through* (Latin *sub quo*) Adam. This means that though Adam was the first sinner, the responsibility for human sin rests squarely on the human race as a whole, and on each individual human being.

Augustine's handling of origin sin has also been challenged on metaphysical grounds. Brown (1978:317) argues that rather than critics applauding Augustine for the three basic assertions that he made regarding the cause of the evil will that led to original sin, they should instead pin him down for his inconsistencies. The epistemic difference between their perceptions appears to have been predetermined, thus denying them free will. The 'inevitability of their fallenness' thus throws the responsibility for the fall squarely upon their 'Creator's shoulders' (Brown, 1978: 319-321).

Brown also rejects the second explanation Augustine gives, that the cause of the evil will that leads to the fall both for Satan and for Adam, is pride, arguing that pride is, by itself, the fall. He adds that since no explanation is given for the first instance of pride, we cannot but ascribe this to God's creative works, once again making the Creator responsible for sin (Brown, 1978:321-322). In a similar fashion, Brown dismisses the explanation that the first sin is incomprehensible to fallen creatures (Brown, 1978:322-324). After making these long and tenuous arguments, it is a pleasant surprise that Brown reluctantly concurs with Augustine that an evil will has no efficient cause at all.

**Conclusions**

From the foregoing discussion on attempts to explicate sin, two strands emerge, Irenaean theodicy marked by a gradual spiritual growth, and an Augustinian theodicy with its emphasis on man in an idyllic pre-fallen state of perfection, exaltation and original righteousness. For Irenaeus, humanity is at the beginning of a long process of growth and development that should culminate into the similitude of God. Humanity is considered as immature, like children, whose sin is benignly treated like a simple weakness rather than a damnable act. Evil and good are both present in this world, and are thought to help man in his moral development, and to ultimately bring him into perfection, as God intended.

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For Augustine on the other hand, Adams disobedience results in serious consequences for himself and for his progeny. His sin is inherited, both as imputed guilt, as well as a moral taint, both collectively termed original sin, and transferable to progeny through physical inheritance through concupiscence. The sin of Adam thus becomes the sin of the whole human race. Consequently, humanity is guilty 'as charged' and deserving of eternal death.

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## CHAPTER FOUR: TOWARDS AN EXISTENTIAL-ONTOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

Neither of the two main theological traditions outlined in the last Chapter has been able to adequately handle all issues related to the origin and existence of sin. And modern evolutionary science, despite its huge claims, also falls far short of the same. This chapter engages the three traditions in a trilogue. Firstly, a brief look at John Maquarrie's existential-ontological method will be presented. Next, a historical perspective to the evolution-creation debate will be given followed by a discussion of the relationship between original sin, innate selfishness, image of God and evolution among the various truth claims. Finally, an attempt will be made to synthesize the various positions using the existential-ontological approach of John Macquarrie.

### 4.1 John Macquarrie's Existential–Ontological Method

Macquarrie's theological method is deeply indebted to Martin Heidegger, the German existential philosopher. In his method which he calls existential-ontological method, Macquarrie appropriated the affinity he saw between the ideas of existentialism and those of Christian theology. He uses a dialectical approach which critics term 'dialectical theism' to formulate a novel understanding of God. This understanding of God seeks to balance the transcendence of God with the immanence of God. Macquarrie (1966: 110) rejects the exclusivity of Western theological concept of the transcendence by the understanding "that there 'is' no being apart from beings and that being 'is' present-and-manifest in every being". In this way he corrects the "the exaggerated transcendence of God" by balancing it with his immanence. This approach can probably best be labeled as a form of Panentheism- the belief that the Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part of it exists in him but, that this Being is more than, and is not exhausted by, the universe .

This method uses an existential approach to answer questions that arise from contemporary experience. It seeks to formulate Christian answers based upon Christian teachings from the past as it relates to the present community of faith. The operative term existential refers to existence or reality as it is experienced in the here-and-now. The method addresses feelings of humanity today that are generated by anxiety, alienation, powerlessness, fear, boredom, confusion, and approaching death (Mueller, 1984:22).

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Macquarrie (Mueller, 1984:23) begins by analyzing the dynamic existential situation using current sources of scientific knowledge available. In doing so he looks beyond change to what is enduring rather than the transient. The resultant content is put through the transmitted body of truth contained in the Christian tradition in order garner its ontological kernel. The ontological component in his method reveals what impels or drives the particular existence.

Macquarrie (1966:170) states clearly that his method is not limited to single experiences but seeks to embrace other experiences in a holistic manner. Additionally, he considers all theology to be symbolic theology. Thus, all "beings" express "Being" by their responsible participation in God's life.

Macquarrie next highlights the role of the community of faith and the teaching traditions handed down the ages to interpret the Existential-Ontological reality. He notes that historical interpretations can only be appropriated so far as is possible to illumine rather than conceal the phenomena or existential situation encountered (Macquarrie, 1966:31). This is also because the teachings were products of specific space, time, language and culture, and while they faithfully addressed the ontological reality of their existential situation, they might not exactly fit the modern existential realities.

Macquarrie's method opens the way between human experience and God's presence. He seeks a god who is immanent in the daily experience of each human being, one who is disclosed in the "existential moments of pain as well as joy, suffering as well as the triumphs, anxiety as well as security". Macquarrie's method helps to explicate experience without passing judgment upon the experient, even for those experiences that are negative, as well as, for those that are disquieting and bizarre (Macquarrie, 1966:33-34). He notes the "circular character" of the interpretation and application of theology where it manifests as "a reciprocal process", in which "each mode of expression throws light on the other and has light thrown on it by the other" (34). Macquarrie advises use of the existential-ontological method to illuminate the content expressed in the symbols of religious revelation.

In working out his method, Macquarrie begins with the existential situation: the feelings, questions and problems that people experience, become the source of doing theology. The problem is then subjected to the tradition of teaching of the faith community, and in the process,



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"the existential moment" is illuminated by "the ontological reality". This illumination allows God to disclose himself in the existential moment. As stated in the beginning, the answer proffered is not disjointed from repository of faith in the believing community, nor does it contradict it, but is interconnected to the rest of theology. The answers formulated by theology are further subjected to critical assessment and acceptance by the believing community. Macquarrie reiterates that "there can be no final theology" but that it is always renewing itself in the illumination of the existential moment (Macquarrie, 1966:17).

One of its advantages is that it brings theology down to secular world of experience, thus making it more relevant to humanity today. Theology therefore becomes a suitable dialogue partner in elucidating the predicaments facing humankind and at the same time offers a clearer, and better hermeneutic, for faith today. Macquarrie's method is both relevant and contemporary: a theology that unlocks God's word and uses contemporary ways of knowing, expressing and interpreting symbols.

Another major advantage is how masterfully he maintains a balance in the relationships he studies throughout his major work, *Principles of Christian Theology*. To mention but a few relationships, there is a balance of humanity and God, and between the believing community and secular world, which brings a sense of harmony to his work. This is most beautifully expressed when he treats of the polarities of human existence: possibility and facticity; rationality and irrationality; community and individuality; responsibility and impotence (Macquarrie, 1966:56-59). The beauty of this approach is that he is able to hold in tension and yet resolve divergences and convergences of thought, which together bring disclosures of the Holy. In the same vein he reveals the existential human predicament which he euphemistically calls a "disorder of human existence" (Macquarrie, 1966:59), and which he later addresses by the proper religious designation as sin (Macquarrie, 1966:62).

In the work presented here, the existential issues are the feelings of disquiet engendered by the knowledge revealed by the genomic sciences and the technological innovations that have arisen as a result. The ontological will be based on the doctrines of sin by both St. Irenaeus and St. Augustine, in which God as the power of "'letting-be'", is the very possibility of existence.

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### 4.2 Perspectives in Creation and Human Evolution

There has been broad consensus among theologians since the time of the scholastics, that the whole of creation is a kind of Book of Nature, complementary to the scriptural Book of God, both of which reveal the workings of a sovereign, loving, and providential Deity. The inevitable conclusion from the Book of Nature as revealed in data from fossil, radioactive dating studies, primatology, sociobiology and more recently comparative genomics, is that modern humans have evolved from earlier hominid groups. But this conclusion is at odds with biblical understanding that human beings are a separate creation mediated through a primordial couple, Adam and eve.

Supporters of the opposing truth claims represented by the two books have held to hard-line positions to the exclusion of all else. At one extreme are the young earth creationists and less stridently, the old earth creationists, who hold to the literal truth and inerrancy of scripture as the only explanation for the creation of universe, man, original sin and the fall. At the other end of the divide are the evolutionists who hold to naturalism as the only explanation for phenomena and origins. The two groups have been bitter rivals.

Theistic evolutionists or evolutionary creationists have provided a compromise position. This view of origins has a substantial following among conservative Christians trained in biological sciences. Denis Lamoureux (2003: 14-15), a leading proponent of this view, points to some outstanding parallels between human development in the womb and the evolution of the universe and life. He notes that the way God individually fashions each person is similar to the way he acts in creating every part of the universe collectively. Lamoureux (2003:15) notes that human development and evolution are purpose-driven natural processes predestined by God. The molecular precursor DNA in a fertilized human egg is fully equipped at conception with all the requisite information for development throughout the nine month pregnancy. In a similar way the plan and capacity for the evolution of the universe and life, even human life, was built into the 'fabric of the cosmos at its inception' and set to occur 'ten to fifteen billion years after the Big Bang'.

Lamoureux (2003:16) proposes that the relationship between science and Scripture is both mutually exclusive and complementary. He observes that evolutionary creationists accept God's



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revelation of Himself through nature and the Bible whilst respecting the limits and differences between the two domains. In evolutionary creationist's understanding, science shows how God made the universe, while Scripture reveals the 'ultimate meaning of creation'. In other words, God creates through the scientific method of discovery, while Scripture offers direction and purpose to creation. But when taken together, both revelations complement each other to furnish a comprehensive picture of origins.

A non-literalist reading of Genesis does not preclude a historical Adam (Miller, 2001 http://w.w.w.personal.ksu.edu/~kbmill accessed 18/6/2015, 12.15 pm). Neither does our physical and genetic continuity with the rest of creation exclude the couple. It is definitely problematic whether to treat genesis 2-4 as legend, myth, faith message or literal history (Schneider, 2010). Schneider (www.community.berea.edu) notes that the primordial couple need not have been the first humans; rather they were the first that God created to function as his representatives, or first to bear the image of God. Another group prefers a form of progressive creationism in which some species are viewed as new and distinct kinds of creation brought into existence by special *de novo* acts of God. This would occur through special creative periods separated by long durations of time.

### 4.3 The Image of God and Original Sin

Schneider (community.berea.edu) observes that historical tradition usually considers image of God to refer to divine gifts of love and compassion, intellectual and moral reasoning and imagination, creativity or free choice. In the early texts of Genesis, the concept, image of God, is associated with relationship and stewardship (Day, 1997). On a fundamental level, this means the relationship between man, woman and by extension the whole family and the rest of creation, as well as the relationship between humanity and God.

With regard to stewardship humans are to 'image God' by exercising dominion over the earth, and to love and care for the rest of creation. Man is required to partner with God in a covenant relationship- companionship with human family- to model a relationship with the cosmos in a way that mirrors the love and compassion of God. This divine image that was given at creation is disfigured through sin. The fractured image can be restored and repaired, or realized to its fullest

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potential through Christ. Christ incarnated in order to display to the fullness this image of God and thereby restore it to and for all humanity.

J. Collins (2010:155) agrees with Schneider, that the image of God as distinctly human is taught in Genesis. He also notes that there is no consensus among biblical scholars on just what this image of God means. The most common interpretation in the past was that the image of God implies *resemblance*: that human beings are like God in intellectual, moral, and aesthetic experience. A more recent view is that the image of God is *representative*, in that it speaks about the way humans are appointed to rule over creation on God's behalf. Collins also notes another view which he terms the *relational* view based on Genesis 1:27 that describes 'male and female' together or 'humans in community' as the ones that function as image bearers. He cautions against treating these three views as mutually exclusive. Taken together, the views suggest that human beings were made with some kind of *resemblance* to God, a feature that enables them to *represent* Him as benevolent rulers, and to find fulfillment in their *relationships* with each other and with God.

Collins (2010:156) holds that these views presuppose the image to have unique and distinctive capacities that would make the ruling and relationships possible. He adds that they reflect those that God displayed during creation and which include intelligence, language, moral and aesthetic judgment, and a bent for relationships governed by love and commitment. Moreover they are not just properties of the soul but capacities displayed by the corporate body and soul of man.

Sibley Towner (2005: 343) gives a persuasive argument as to what the image of God means. Firstly, he reiterates Irenaeus' position, that the fullness of the image of God can only be realized in the person of Jesus Christ. He adds that the image consists in spiritual endowments such as memory, self-awareness rationality, intelligence, spirituality and even an immortal soul. Likewise, this image is evidently shown in our ability to make moral choices on the supposition of our possessing free will and knowledge of good and evil. The image of God is also displayed in the base human emotions such as love, qualities that are not shared with animals. Another unique quality in which the image may be expressed is the ability of transcendence, from which emerge beauty and appreciation of beauty.

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Another quality in which the image of God is displayed is in humanity's mediatorial role as vice-regent of God's creation. Image also bespeaks a relational view where humans are seen as God's counterpart in an 'I' 'thou' relationship. Finally, Towner concurs with Collins that image intimates the division of humankind into male and female, a juxtaposition of man and woman which hints at existence in community, mutuality and confrontation.

It is clear that Collins, Schneider, and other conversation partners are echoing the Christian orthodox position on the image of God bestowed upon man at creation. The fundamental basis of this position is 'that humans are qualitatively unique from other animals and that the *imago Dei* is found in the very characteristics that make humans distinct from other creatures'. The basis for this unique position is in our dual nature. Humans enjoy a kinship with the rest of creation and with the creator. In the understanding of the Genesis narrative, the origin of our physical natures is not different from that of other creatures in the sense that we are made of the same stuff, the dust of the earth, and are therefore inseparably linked to the rest of life on earth. This notion is clearly compatible with the idea of evolution and is upheld by evolutionary creationists. But humankind has also been chosen out of the world to be the image bearer of God and delegated authority to exercise dominion and stewardship over the rest of creation.

As to how and when the image of God was imparted to humanity, some theologians are of the view that God selected a particular individual, in this case Adam and Eve into whom God imparted a spiritually conscious soul (Miller, 2001). Here the *imago Dei* is seen as a new kind of consciousness that God brought upon an already existing population. Another view is that God revealed himself to Adam thereby "bringing Adam into personal fellowship in a state of moral innocence". Miller continues that God worked through evolution to bring humans to the point where they had acquired the mental and emotional wherewithal to have "conscious fellowship with Him", at which He "revealed Himself and established a covenant relationship". Miller claims support of his thesis from the close relationship God had with selected biblical figures such as Noah, Abram, Joseph, Moses and Jesus, upon whom he focused the salvation plan of His people.

There is a wealth of literature that vehemently denies the uniqueness or undiminished singularity of the human species among animals (Moritz, 2011: 313-314). These critics claim that the



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demarcation between humans and non-human primates is fuzzy at most. Even for other animals, species intergrade into each other imperceptibly without any real gaps between them. According to this school, dubbed neo- Darwinist, one population cluster imperceptibly grades into the other, much as the shades in the natural spectrum of colors blend seamlessly into one another.

Neo-Darwinists claim that because of "the slow and gradual character of such evolutionary continuity" it is difficult to "draw a sharp dividing line of discontinuity between humans and non-human animals" (Moritz, 2011: 315). After repudiating the singularity and uniqueness of humanity, neo-Darwinist proponents go so far as to suggest extension of the *imago Dei* to other hominids and even non-human animals. These views make rubbish of any claims of superiority or stewardship of humanity over creation as understood from the Genesis 1-3 narrative. Any consideration of animals as image-bearers is a serious rejection of biblical exegesis and marks a dramatic break with historical Christian teaching, that humans alone bear the image and likeness of God.

The suggestion that we extend the image to animals has huge implications for the doctrine of sin *vis-a-vis* the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. Firstly, this not only denies the historicity of Adam and Eve, but it also renders the couple theologically irrelevant to the teaching of sin and of humankind's proprietary role over creation. The traditional pair gets lost in the anonymity of nature, which now seems to run blindly without guide or purpose. Sin then becomes a bare-knuckle striving for self-perpetuation under the control of what Domning and his conversation partners call 'original selfishness'.

### 4.4 Original Sin, Innate Selfishness and *Imago Dei*

Domning (www.washtheocon.org, pg 18-19) argues that modern studies reveal that nearly all overt acts considered sinful in humans are part of the natural repertoire of behavior in other species. Referring specifically to chimpanzees, Domning notes that animals engage in activities that would, in humans, be considered utterly sinful and reprehensible. He explains that the similarity in these behaviour patterns is due the fact these species share a non-human common ancestor. As this selfish behavior confers survival advantage and reproductive success, it has consequently been reinforced by natural selection and extended to the entire animal kingdom.

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If selfishness with all its negative connotations is not only part of God's creative plan, but also a necessary part – indeed the driving force of the whole creative process - where then is sin to be located? Or to put it in another way, does the concept of original sin retain any theological significance anymore? In view of the significant conceptual tension between theological history and the findings of biblical exegesis on the one hand, and the scientific data substantiating evolutionary continuity, on the other, Moritz (2011:319) wonders whether the doctrine of the *imago Dei* has not been irretrievably lost ?

Biblical scholarship and Christian hermeneutical tradition point to the fact that humans occupy a unique position in created order. This privileged status and delegated proprietary role of humankind in relation to non-human creation is analogous to the status conferred upon kings in ancient near east over their subjects. The whole human species, as bearer of the image and likeness of God, is elected to a representative and intermediary role for transmission of God's power and blessings on earth. Moritz adds that a theologically sound understanding, one based on a correct exegesis of the Genesis 1-3 text, reveals the Hebrew idea of election of an individual or community, as exemplified in the case of Abraham, Noah, and Israel. By extrapolation, humans as *Homo sapiens* are sanctified, set apart or chosen in a specific historical context to perform God's purposes in the world. In a sense, Moritz (2011:329-330) continues, humankind is selected as a "tribe from among other animal tribes" to "embody God's purposes for the other animal tribes" and the entire creation. The uniqueness of the human species as image-bearers resides in the fact, that human beings alone have been "historically elected, called, and commissioned by God to be His royal representatives and priestly servants" to accomplish His will for the rest of creation.

How then are we to resolve the apparently divergent positions- man's evolutionary continuity with other animals and his theologically privileged one as bearer of *imago Dei*? Moritz (2011:320) advises that we need not jettison any of the contested views. He suggests that the two can be held in tension but within the context of divine election.

In this context, human beings represent the elected image of God, and are privileged to be a holy species, separated from their hominid relatives and charged with obedience to the commandments and stewardship over created order.



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### 4.5 Influence of Heretical Doctrines on Augustine's Doctrinal Formulation.

In his writings on original sin two major influences shaped Augustine's ideas and helped him to construct a coherent doctrine. These are Manichaeism and Pelagianism. Manichaeism a dualistic religion of the Gnostic type held that the human predicament is due to the presence of two principles in the universe, light and darkness. According to Manichaeans, the human condition is due to the mingling of the two elements, light and darkness, corresponding to the spiritual and the material. Salvation consists in coming to know one's true self. It literally means releasing the soul from its entrapment in the material body to return to its origins in the realm of light (Eddy, 2009:319-320).

Augustine joined the Manichaeans at the age of 19 years and became an ardent follower for nine years (CF 3.4.7; 3.6.11), and this sojourn must have influenced his worldview and affected his theological development, particularly his repugnance to sexual lust or concupiscence, and transmission of sin through generation (Van Oort, 2009:129; Eddy, 2009:316-346).

Pelagius agreed with Augustine that God had made us free and that the source of evil is in the will, but argued that human beings had the ability to overcome sin on their own. Pelagius denied the presence of original sin, or the existence of corruption of human nature that forces us to sin, insisting that Adam merely set a bad example which has been widely followed. He denied that children could have any prior sin or guilt, until they decide, by their own volition, to sin (Duffy, 1988:601).

Another major influence on Augustine's doctrinal formulation was Neo-Platonism. Neo-Platonists held to one single Being of infinite beauty and goodness (*summum bonum*) who is the source of all things. Evil consisted in looking or turning away from the One Superior Source and gazing downwards to the inferior realms (Moore, www.iep.etm.edu accessed 14/12/2015, 11.15am). They also recognized that evil exists within the creation, not as a substance, but as a turning away from the goodness of the One to what has less being, which led them to conclude that sin is defection from God or deprivation of good (*privatio boni*).

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### 4.6 Towards an Existential-Ontological Doctrine of Original Sin

Theology and Christian tradition have provided two broad approaches to the problem of the origin of sin. One tradition, the Greek, or Eastern doctrine developed by St Irenaeus, holds that we all have propensities towards sin, which arises once we become morally aware, but that we are untainted by this sin at birth. Irenaeus formulated a theology of developmental or progressive salvation based on a good creation. The second tradition was the Latin or Western doctrine developed by St Augustine which posits that we have all inherited original sin from our primordial ancestors Adam and Eve, and that we are adjudged guilty until absolved by the grace of baptism. Augustine presents nature and grace as being discontinuous, and of redemption as an interventionist and immediate rather than a developmental undertaking. A third strand is evolutionary theodicy which leans towards process theodicy.

#### 4.6.1 Augustine's Interventionist Theodicy

Whether or not Augustine's thesis of original sin fulfills the purpose for which it was formulated- absolving God from the responsibility for human sin- is still subject to debate. The best answer that Augustine could give was that the cause of an evil will is incomprehensible.

No one can downplay the huge influence Augustine's doctrine of original sin has had on Christian theology since its formulation more that fifteen centuries ago. One cannot help but admire the lengthy and persistent engagement with scripture that is evident in all his writings, a rare attribute in contemporary critics endeavoring to reformulate his work. At the same time, a lot of questions still linger as to why he clung to certain positions even when more plausible explanations were available. The traditional understanding of sin from Augustine to the reformers is that the fall was an actual historical event. It is not clear why Augustine turned his back on the sinlessness of infants as proposed by many patristic fathers, but instead considered them, not only heirs of their parents sin, but to have been actually culpable of this same sin.

In the course of formulating his doctrine of original sin Augustine presented many premises that appeared widely speculative and had little scriptural support. The idyllic conditions he presents of Eden and the character of the first parents as perfect beings with robust wills, sounds implausible on the basis of Genesis 2 and 3. The greatest challenge to the doctrine of sin has

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come from, and remains, the evolutionary theory. The argument for original righteousness- the concept that man was created in a state of integrity and perfection in which he was without sin and persisted in the same condition- is a major sticking point that is difficult to reconcile with what is known of evolution. Another stumbling block is original immortality, the notion that, had Adam not sinned, he would have enjoyed immortality. The picture evolution shows is one in which creaturely death was common hundreds of millions of years before humanity and sin entered the scene. Death and natural selection are integral to the process of evolution.

What emerges from Augustine's thesis is that despite Adam living in a pristine paradise in perpetual fellowship with God and supplied with superabundant grace, he chose evil and freely defected from the love of God. Augustine does not explain the evil choice, and the attempts he makes falter on many grounds. However he does outline the consequences that arise from that disturbed equilibrium. While he gives a historical outline of sin, the attempt to explain its origin reveals ignorance as he readily admits to its incomprehensibility. It is impenetrable, or as he states it, like trying to stare into the darkness, in an effort to see darkness, or trying to hear the silence. Augustine relocated evil to its rightful status: as privation or corruption of being and goodness, rather than give it an ontological status, as the Manicheans had done.

Augustine's overemphasis on the evil of sexual lust disparages human nature, and with it, the goodness of the Creator. This has echoes of Manichean Gnosticism, from which clutches he lately escaped to Christianity. Some accuse him of an over-displaced sense of sin. To his credit Augustine focused humanity on this complex concept of radical evil, or sin of origin, that inheres to man in an innate, but nevertheless, paradoxically blameworthy, disposition to evil.

Although not explicitly stated, Augustine introduced a dialectical notion in his thesis on original sin. He showed that sin, whatever its cause, is something that Adam found already lurking in the garden in the form of the serpent. And yet this "already-thereness" of sin (Ricoeur, 1985:636-640) does not absolve Adam from the responsibility for the act of sin. Clearly, the inevitability of sin is herein paired with the grace of free will. In his exposition on human existence, Macquarie talks about the tensions that exist between facticity and possibility. The human being has been graced with freedom and responsibility. He or she is placed in an existence which is neither complete, nor perfect, where there are many alternative ways of being and of achieving self-

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realization. But human beings as "beings in the world" find their freedom constrained by their facticity or situatedness. A human is born into a specific race, as a black man, or a white man, a Dalit or a Vaisya, a rich man or a poor man, a man or a woman. No one chooses these situations, neither the heredity, nor the environment, neither our history nor our social standing. We are born with certain social prejudices that provide the lenses through which we view the world. A child born in a society where bribery and all manner of corruption is the norm will find it difficult not to conform. One born white and Boer in apartheid South Africa would have found it difficult not to succumb to the poisonous temptation to be snobbish, discriminatory or cruel towards the inferior races. Those born in a culture of immorality and decadence will naturally imbibe these sinful habits into their psyche. Like the serpent in Eden, sin is already lurking in the shadows at our birthday, waiting to lure us. I talk here not merely of blind Pelagian imitation, nor of deliberate socialization, but of subliminal influences from our milieu that insidiously percolate into our psyche.

If we divest the original couple of their historicity but retain them as a type representative for early man, as evidence from other sources has shown, then original sin can be taken as that sin of the world, the sin at our origin, that bedevils society to which we are ineluctably immersed.

What distinguishes humans from the other creatures in the world is our rationality. This feature of our existence is the imprint of the image of God stamped upon man at creation. It gives humanity the ability to judge, understand, interpret, and discriminate. It is this attribute which Daryl Domning and his ilk disparage by claiming it for animals too. Just like free will is limited by factical issues at every instance, rationality is diametrically opposed by the converse tendency towards irrationality.

Philosophers before Sigmund Freud's time had considered humans as essentially rational animals, not only aware of themselves but thoughtful of everything they do. But Freud uncovered a dark undertow of irrationality deep within our minds that often breaks out in excessive selfishness, hatred, rage, murder, rapine and other beastly acts. I can only relate this as the transmitted sin and its consequent vitiation or concupiscence, which Augustine appended to fallen man. Freud calls this the *id* or pleasure principle that is incompletely policed by the *ego*, or

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reality principle. For complete personality development and transcendence over this lower nature, the *superego* or moral principle, partly dependent on the conscience, takes over.

Macquarrie also mentions the polarity between the individual and the community as another level through which to consider human existence. The community with its complex interrelationships affects and shapes individual thought and worldview. But this does not absolve the individual from responsibility, for he or she does have a measure of "privacy or autonomy". Schleiermacher has argued that humanity's sinfulness must be understood not just at an individual level but on a corporate or collective level. In the same way Augustine talked of humanity as a "mass of sin" (*massa peccati).*

Another dialectical pair of concepts used by existentialists is the tension that plagues human existence and which is expressed by the terms, *responsibility* and *impotence.* Disclosure may break in through the rational mind revealing what has to be done, and calling for decision. The *superego* may manifest as conscience which raises the awareness and self-understanding. This discloses to an individual how well he or she has advanced in bringing the individual to actualization of his or her own potential. The responsibility and the imperative to act in a certain way in order to achieve authentic existence may be limited by a weak will, hence the impotence. This impotence, as has been intimated before, is informed by the factors of facticity, irrationality and individuality. In between the two poles, the finitude of our present existence and the need for transcendence creates huge tensions, which generate an existential imbalance that translates as anxiety. Anxiety or angst and the need to make choices among the countless possibilities promote the temptation to sin, or is the precondition for sin.

### 4.6.2 Irenaeus Progressive Theodicy

Irenaeus presents man as a two stage creation process in which man is initially created good but not perfect. The second stage of humanity's creation involves his growth into the similitude of God following the pattern set by the incarnate Son of God, Christ. Necessarily therefore, the initial creation resulted in the formation of an infantile and morally immature creature, unexercised in discipline, and incapable of making moral choices. This according to Irenaeus made Adam succumb so easily to the wiles of the devil. Irenaeus almost glosses over the sin of Adam and Eve, treating it like a minor misconduct. In several places in his treatise, He treats this



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misstep as a necessary educative exercise to train man's moral fibre. He implies that after this first trial in which humanity not unexpectedly stumbles, humans would be able to distinguish good from bad, and thereafter resume the path towards growth to God's likeness, but from an informed point of view. It is almost as if God, like a watchful parent, allows the child in Adam to touch the sinful flame, the better to learn from the stab of pain to keep off from the dangerous activity of carousing with the devil. Irenaeus did not concern himself with humanity's original state as did Augustine did in his debate with Pelagius in the fifth century. To the contrary Irenaeus refused to speculate on the origin of evil (AH, 2.28.7; 5.20.2) and neither did he consider evil to be transmitted from father to son. Rather he held that we are each our own Adam or Eve, when we succumb to the temptation to sin. His focus was more forward-looking, one which emphasized on the unrealized and frustrated potential which Jesus Christ revealed in his incarnation. This potential could only be accomplished in us through baring our lives to the Holy Spirit.

**b) Irenaeus and theistic evolution**

The realignment of humanity towards the purposed path of their perfection means rebirth in Christ by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. The final goal of perfection of the image of God in man is a protracted process. Proponents of theistic evolution have enlisted the gradualist process of Irenaeus to support their theory of the evolution of mankind and of their sin nature. The claim of evolutionary creationists is that humans came into existence through their success in competition for food, securing reproductive opportunities, escape from predators, and other survival skills. Because of its enormous importance to survival, the capacity for self-centredness would have a heavy heritable component. Such self-serving behaviours that confer survival and reproductive success have been labeled 'original selfishness' and are thought to be analogous to original sin in humans. However to equate sin with original selfishness is overly simplistic. And to say that there is a genetic component to original sin does not imply that there is a gene for sin or as the popular press would have us believe, that our attitudes and opinions are in our DNA. The drive towards self-centredness must have been modulated by the environment, culture, and altruism.

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Modern genomics have provided incontrovertible proof for the co-evolution of humanity and close hominid relatives from a common ancestor. Evidences from many studies show that there is nothing unique in humanity that is not also found in animals. The human genome shows a close match to that of chimpanzees and shares a near total identity of the common proteins and pseudogenes.

However, despite the spirited claims by biologists and behavioural scientists of continuity between humanity and other animals, and particularly the closely related hominid groups, there exist huge gaps between them. Humankind is closest to them in terms of negative animal passions, such as his irrationality, bestiality, and selfishness. But as Macquarrie argues, only man among the animals is truly existent in the sense that he is self-aware. This unique feature makes him vastly different from even the closest relatives. It is a rare attribute of the image of God in man, which allows humanity to reason and make value judgments, and bestows the capacity for retrospection and future planning. This alone gives him the capacity for transcendence, the ability to seek and relate to God. In thus relating to God, humanity alone among the animals has developed moral awareness and a sense of sin.

### 4.6.3 Process and Evolution

Macquarrie's vision of a dipolar God, sneeringly dubbed "dialectical theism" by his critics, best explains evolution of man into the image and similitude of God. Evolution works by selecting and fixing random variations and mutations that confer fitness into the gene pool. It is thus a random, non-teleological process, whose only goal is biological survival. But with an immanent Being, literally existing within his beings, One who is not bound by His creatures but is yet part of them, existence acquires a newer meaning. This later being is the transcendent Being. Being does not imply the notion of a static God but "always includes becoming" as "the dynamic act of "letting-be"" (Macquarrie, 1966: 103, 110). Macquarrie explains this loaded expression as an invitation for beings to enter into the mystery of Being, to be enabled, empowered, and be brought into being, and to participate in the "letting-be" or creative activity of God. Macquarrie's Immanent Being is one who is always becoming with and in His beings, and yet He remains transcendent. By obedience and subjection to the Expressive Being, the incarnate Son of God, humans too can achieve the perfect image and similitude of God.



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It is my contention that Macquarrie's Being-in-the-world, the Immanent God, would chaperon evolution, giving it direction and purpose. He was there in the very beginning, as the Spirit hovering over the waters, bringing form to the void and illuminating the inchoate darkness by His "letting-be", forever changing with His beings, and yet immutable. He is there as the Son of the transcendent God, the Expressive Being, who "is not only the agent in creation" but who also enters creation, expressing more adequately the immanence of God in the creation (Macquarrie, 1966: 203). He is also the Son of immanent God so intimately involved with His creation that creature and creation become one in the incarnation. I can picture Him acting at crossroads, nexus points where equal probabilities exist for events to go either way, operating to nudge events towards quantum leaps, so necessary for macrocosmic and macro-evolutionary changes. Such a quantum leap must have occurred between the hominids and their primate relatives, the old world monkeys. A similar leap must have occurred 4 to 5.8 million years ago to separate pre-human hominids from the early human hominids. The latest quantum jump must have occurred about 200,000 years ago, heralding the arrival of *Homo sapiens,* the sentient man. It is most likely at this time, evolutionary-speaking, that the image of God could have been imprinted upon man. Perhaps the next quantum jump will occur at the rapture, when *Homo sapiens* metamorphoses into *Homo divinus*.

**Conclusions**

This chapter has engaged the three major traditions dealing with the existence of evil and the sin nature of man in a trilogue. There are many good things to say about each of them, but there are also weaknesses. Augustinian theodicy, while at times coloured by a Manichaean worldview, emphasizes the universality of sin in man, the grace of freewill, and the ambivalent nature of evil as both inevitably present, but not inescapable.

Irenaeus considers Adam as created perfect, but childlike, placed in a world of mingled good and bad, and with a potential to grow into the perfect image and likeness of God. The world is a training ground for man to hone his moral awareness and an opportunity for him to grow into the similitude of God. There is no mention of inherited sin or guilt and each human is his own Adam and Eve, with the freewill to choose to obediently follow the path modeled by Christ, to perfection in the image of God. The process is gradual and progressive.



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Theistic evolutionists picture a God who created the world but left it to run under natural laws and one who, by some variants, intervenes in creation to effect major changes. He is a god of the gaps who is either too impotent, or apathetic, and submerged under his creation. Theistic evolutionists claim Irenaeus as their patron saint to support their evolutionary agenda.

Using Macquarrie's approach, what we have proposed here is an immanent God, who throbs and wanes with his creation, sharing its groans and triumphs in an ever-becoming process, but one who yet remains transcendent and immutable, as the Ground of All Being. A God who "lets-be", and invites his beings in the "letting-be" process, so that existents can dynamically participate in creative activity and love.

In between nothing and being, is 'becoming', or the process of evolution. As a being becoming within His creation, He creates and determines the critical moments and gives the push necessary to birth new phenomena, whether they be new species, genera, nebula or planets.

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## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Major assumptions

Modern science armed with modern technologies has the capacity of investigating prehistoric dates or age of creatures with precise accuracy. For instance the age of animal fossils discovered recently have proved the fact that human hominids have been on this earth for millions of years. If this scientific evidence is validated, then the Creationist theory of Young Earth proponents, collapses, and the evolutionary theory Old Earth adherents, stands. Given that scientific truth claims are empirically verifiable and therefore true, we can infer that evolutionary theories regarding the origins of species on earth holds to a large extent some truths. Does this therefore render the Biblical creationist theory untenable? Possibly not. Biblical truth claims are all true based on the fact that biblical authors were concerned with different questions from the scientific concerns. Biblical writers were concerned with the WHY question whereas the scientific question is WHEN and HOW. For instance biblical authors made theological statements about why God created the universe. Answers for the theological why questions abound in the Bible. The Bible states that the creation cries that it was created and that it was created to worship God. Therefore, both biblical creationist theory and scientific evolutionary theories are valid. However, the two truth claims seem to stand in opposition to each other. An effort to resolve this contradiction has been attempted by Theistic evolutionary theories as we saw in our chapter two. In this theory, God is depicted as creating through a process and not instantaneously. This makes sense when held together with the Old Earth theory as opposed to the Young Earth assertions.

If we hold onto antiquity of the earth and process creation theory, the historicity of Adam and Eve and the creation claims in Genesis Chapter become problematic. But this difficulty is resolved on the exegetical basis of Old Testament biblical scholars' explanation of historicity of Adam and Eve. Genesis Chapter 4 tells us that after Cain had killed Abel, by then his only existing brother, God banished him from the rest of humanity. After this judgment, Cain pleaded for God's protection lest someone finding him might hurt or kill him. God provided protection by putting a sign on his forehead and made a covenant of protection with Cain. The question that arises from this text is: Who were these other people that Cain was referring to, considering that the only people remaining after the death of his only brother, Abel, were his own parents, Adam

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and Eve? The text goes on to state that Cain went away and married. The question is, whom did he marry? These internal exegetical problems of Genesis creation account have been explained by Biblical exegetes as mythological.

Therefore, if Genesis creation account is mythological, the credibility of inherited sin as advanced by St. Augustine becomes problematic. How can it be possible for a humanity that does not originate from the same stalk of Adam and Eve to inherit a defect? It is for this reason that this thesis has argued that all animals, on the basis of competition for survival, have developed self-serving tendencies that lead to theft and robbery of others kill, as some carnivores do, incest, rape, killing of competitors, killing of the young of a deposed dominant male by the incumbent males, and warfare, as in hostile takeovers of new territories. Whereas the same tendencies in ages past gave humans a competitive edge over rivals and enabled them to become the predominant species, as a sentient morally aware species today, they predispose humanity to sinful behavior.

Using Macquarrie's existential ontological method and bringing the three competing truth claims, Irenaean, Augustinian, and evolutionary theodicies, into trilogue, a number of issues emerge. That God created the universe through natural processes that are not fully explicable to science. That equally, God created man through the process of evolution by natural selection in which He exercised oversight. It is the suggestion of this thesis that God, as immanent being, not only guided the process as an integral part of it, but also as a transcendental partner. In this way, God not only imparts to evolution direction and purpose, He also remains the ultimate Creator.

Sin is a universal presence in our lives that is rooted in human origins. It is both personal and corporate, necessarily inherited from our animal past in the form of those passions that appear negative when viewed from a moral perspective, and which enabled us in the past to compete successively for survival. It may manifest as disorder in our existence generated by the tension arising from the irresistible pull of diverse polarities in our lives. The anxiety that is generated becomes a temptation to sin by warping our choices, thus preventing us from achieving authentic existence. In the psychological development of an individual human, it is the Freudian pleasure principle or *Id,* that would drug us back to our base reptilian instincts, and which can be equated to Augustinian concupiscence. Additionally, sin is the cultural environment into which we are

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plunged at birth, whose influence seeps into our unconscious predisposing *us to* act in certain patterns.

The immanent being within our existence discloses Himself to us as 'expressive being', by His Word, and as that voice in our ear, which urges us to choose the right path between dialectical opposites in order to achieve ultimate transcendence. When the right choices are taken, we participate with the immanent Being in the 'letting-be', enhancing our capacity for love and being loved, for self-giving and creativity.

### 5.2 Pastoral Implications

Genes are not all there is to govern human life contrary to reductionist claims generated by the new science of molecular biology and genomics, and the rogue offspring of scientific innovation, biotechnology. Human life is influenced by the environment, both within and outside our bodies, about whether and which genes are expressed, and when. Ecological and cultural factors have an immense effect on genetic expression. The kind of deterministic talk nowadays about genes controlling or influencing this or that behavior is extremely naïve and misleading. Humans are as much creatures of their biology as they are of the culture they have grown in.

### 5.3 Achievements and Challenges

The above formulation retains the strengths of the mainstream doctrines of the church but is broad enough to recognize their weaknesses. It admits to the universality of our sin nature, and its transmission to progeny in accord with Augustinian premises, but denies the claim to historical origin of sin and consequent death as punishment in a literal couple. The model has God as immanent being, directing evolution from within and giving it purpose, perhaps the ultimate deification of man.

This proposal does not however explain how humans achieve atonement from the tensions and sin that hold them down and which prevent their ascent and self-actualization.

### 5.4 Recommendation

There is need to develop a Christology from the sketchy rendition above to explain how man can be redeemed from this predicament of sin.



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