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978-0-521-02934-6 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 26 - Original Sin,
(1a2ae. 81-85)

T. C. O'Brien O.P.

Excerpt

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 1a2ae. 81, 1

Deinde considerandum est de causa peccati ex parte hominis. Cum autem homo sit causa peccati alteri homini exterius suggerendo, sicut et diabolus, habet quemdam specialem modum causandi peccatum in alterum per originem. Unde de peccato originali dicendum est.

Circa quod* tria consideranda occurrunt:

primo, de ejus traductione;
secundo, de ejus essentia;
tertio, de ejus subjecto.

*Piana: *Et circa hoc*, and concerning this

*There are three main parts of the *Summa*, namely the *Prima Pars* or first part (Vols. 1–15 of this series), the *Secunda Pars* or second part (Vols. 16–47), and the unfinished *Tertia Pars* (Vols. 48–60). The second part is further divided into the *Prima Secundae* or first section of the second part (Vols. 16–30) and the *Secunda Secundae* or second section of the second part (Vols. 31–47). For a plan of the whole see Vol. 1 of this series, and for the relation of Questions 81–3 to the rest of the *Prima Secundae*, see the introduction to the present volume.

^bThe devil as the cause of sin is considered in 1a2ae. 80. cf also 1a. 114.

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THE TRANSMISSION OF ORIGINAL SIN

The next topic for discussion is the cause of sin through human agency.^a While one person may be the cause of another's sinning by external enticement as the devil is,^b yet there is also a way of causing sin that is specially human, namely *by way of origin*.^c Accordingly let us treat of original sin.

Here three headings appear for investigation:

first, its transmission;

secondly, its essence;

thirdly, its subject.^d

^aThe expressions '*per originem*', '*originaliter*', '*ex origine*' and the like will be almost always translated 'by way of origin'. This is the key expression in the present questions; the uniformity in translation keeps the idea central. In the teaching of Catholic Faith 'by way of origin' means the rejection of the Pelagian interpretation of original sin, that it is by imitation of Adam's sin, together with the affirmation of a sin derived from Adam. cf Appendix 3. In theology the problem is to give an explanation of 'by way of origin'. St Thomas has his own explanation, developed especially in Question 81. cf Appendices 6 & 7.

^bThe three headings amount to asking *how it happens*, 81; *what it is*, 82; *where it is*, 83.

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Quaestio 81. de ejus traductione

Circa primum quaeruntur quinque:

1. utrum primum peccatum hominis derivetur per originem in posteros;
2. utrum omnia alia peccata primi parentis vel etiam aliorum parentum per originem in posteros deriventur;
3. utrum peccatum originale derivetur ad omnes qui ex Adam per viam seminis generantur;
4. utrum derivaretur ad illos qui miraculose ex aliqua parte humani corporis formarentur;
5. utrum si femina peccasset, viro non peccante, traduceretur originale peccatum.

articulus 1. utrum primum peccatum primi parentis traducatur per originem in posteros

AD PRIMUM sic proceditur:¹ 1. Videtur quod primum peccatum primi parentis non traducatur ad alios per originem. Dicitur enim *Ezech.*, *Filius non portabit iniquitatem patris.*² Portaret autem, si ab eo iniquitatem traheret. Ergo nullus trahit ab aliquo parentum per originem aliquod peccatum.

2. Præterea, accidens non traducitur per originem nisi traducto subiecto, eo quod accidens non transit de subiecto in subiectum. Sed anima rationalis, quæ est subiectum culpæ, non traducitur per originem, ut in primo ostensum est.³ Ergo neque aliqua culpa per originem traduci potest.

3. Præterea, omne illud quod traducitur per originem humanam

¹*II Sent.* 30, 1, 2; 31, 1, 1. *CG IV*, 50–2. *De malo IV*, 1. *In Rom.* 5, *lect.* 3. *Compend. Theol.* 196

²*Ezekiel* 18, 20

³*Ia.* 118, 2

^eThe development of these five points shows St Thomas first (art. 1) considering the proposition of Catholic Faith: the first sin of the first man passes to posterity by way of origin. He then by force of this explanation articulates its several points: only the *first sin* (art. 2); to *all posterity* (art. 3); *only* by way of *origin* (art. 4–5). One may see the five points also as reflecting a Master's development of a 'question' which followed the exposition of a Scriptural passage, the *sacra pagina*, by a Bachelor. And 81, 4 & 5 which deals with points arising from *Romans* 5, 12 are magisterial resolutions of a discussion among the masters of theology.

^fEnglish usage speaks of 'the sin of our first parents'. When there is no special need for retaining St Thomas's exactness when he speaks of 'the first parent', the ordinary plural 'parents' is used here.

^g*In Rom.* 5, 12, *lect.* 3, written 1272–3, after the *Prima Secundæ* (1269–70), St Thomas indicates a twofold theological problem about original sin: How can sin be transmitted through the origin of the flesh, since the soul, the subject of sin, is not so

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Question 81. original sin's transmission

Under this first heading there are five points of inquiry:^e

1. whether or not man's first sin passes by way of origin to posterity;
2. whether or not other sins of the first parents^f or even of later parents pass by way of origin to posterity;
3. whether or not original sin passes to all the seed of Adam;
4. whether or not it would pass to those who might be miraculously fashioned out of some part of a human body;
5. whether or not if the first woman alone, not the man, had sinned, an original sin would have been passed on.

article 1 .whether or not man's first sin passes by way of origin to posterity

THE FIRST POINT:¹ It seems that the first sin of the first parent is not passed on to others by way of origin.^a For it is written, *The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father.*² Yet this would be the case were iniquity contracted from the father. Therefore no one contracts any sin by way of origin from any ancestor.

2. Further, since no accident passes from subject to subject,^b no accident is passed on by way of origin unless its subject is passed on at the same time. Now the rational soul, the proper subject of fault, is not transmitted by way of origin, as was shown in the *Prima Pars*.³ For any fault, then, to be passed on by way of origin is impossible.

3. Further, semen causes whatever is transmitted by way of human

transmitted? How can a defect passed on by way of origin be sin, since sin is voluntary? The arguments 2, 3 & 4 here take up the first point; 1 & 5 the second. In his reply or exposition (the body of the article) St Thomas first gives the only possible source of knowing the existence of original sin, the teaching of Catholic Faith. cf Appendix 1 (7). He then considers the explanation of how it can be voluntary, and in replies 1 & 5 applies his explanation. In replies 2, 3 & 4 he is concerned with the other difficulty, how the precess of origin can be involved in the passage of sin.

^bBeing, that which exists, is a substance, the fundamental perduring subject. Accidents are the attributes or modifications which belong to the substance. A man exists; his colour, height, etc. are *accidents*. Accidents are said to exist only as the subject exists in a certain way by reason of them. Thus accidents only vary in subject when a subject itself is changed. cf 1a. 9, 2 ad 3. Also *In Meta.* vii, *lect.* 1; xii, *lect.* 1. *Quodl.* ix, 2, 2. *De ente et essentia* 7 *De unione Verbi Incarnati* 4. 1a. 45, 4; 90, 2. 3a. 17, 2.

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causatur ex semine. Sed semen non potest causare peccatum, eo quod caret rationali parte animæ quæ sola potest esse causa peccati. Ergo nullum peccatum potest trahi per originem.

4. Præterea, quod est perfectius in natura virtuosius est ad agendum. Sed caro perfecta non potest inficere animam sibi unitam; alioquin anima non posset emundari a culpa originali dum est carni unita. Ergo multo minus semen potest inficere animam.

5. Præterea, Philosophus dicit, quod *propter naturam turpes nullus increpat, sed eos qui propter desidiam et negligentiam*.⁴ Dicuntur autem *natura turpes* qui habent turpitudinem ex sua origine. Ergo nihil quod est per originem est increpabile, neque peccatum.

SED CONTRA est quod Apostolus dicit, *Per unum hominem peccatum in hunc mundum intravit*.⁵ Quod non potest intelligi per modum imitationis,* propter hoc quod dicitur *Sap., Invidia diaboli mors intravit in orbem terrarum*.⁶ Restat ergo quod per originem a primo homine peccatum in mundum intravit.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod secundum fidem catholicam est tenendum quod primum peccatum primi hominis originaliter transit in posteros. Propter quod etiam pueri mox nati deferuntur ad baptismum, tanquam ab aliqua infectione culpæ abluendi. Contrarium autem est hæresis Pelagianæ ut patet per Augustinum in plurimis suis libris.⁷

Ad investigandum autem qualiter peccatum primi parentis originaliter possit transire in posteros, diversi diversis viis processerunt.

Quidam enim, considerantes quod peccati subjectum est anima rationalis, posuerunt quod cum semine rationalis anima traducatur, ut sic ex infecta anima infectæ animæ derivari videantur.⁸

Alii vero, hoc repudiantes tanquam erroneum, conati sunt ostendere

*Piana: *imitationis vel incitationis*, or incitement

⁴*Ethics* III, 5. 1114a23. St Thomas usually refers to Aristotle simply as 'the philosopher'

⁵*Romans* 5, 12

⁶*Wisdom* 2, 24. Vulgate: *introivit*

⁷cf *Retractationes* I, 9. PL 32, 598. *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione* II, 9. PL 44, 158. *Contra Julianum* III, 1. PL 44, 703. *De Dono Perseverantiæ* 2. PL 45, 996; II, 1008

⁸cf Augustine, *Contra Julianum* v, 4. PL 44, 794

⁹St Thomas is not here offering the text of St Paul as an argument from authority (cf 1a. 8, 1 ad 2), since he argues to deduce its meaning. In fact he does not use the text alone as proof of original sin here or in *CG* IV 50-2. But cf *In Rom.* 5, lect. 3. On the place of the *sed contra*, 'on the other hand', see Vol. I of this series, Appendix 1 (5); Chenu M.-D. *Towards Understanding St Thomas*, tr. Albert M. Landry, Dominic Hughes, Chicago, 1964, pp. 95-6.

¹⁰See Appendices 2, 3, 4 & 5.

¹¹The baptism of infants is not a mere sign of Catholic belief. The Church expresses

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origin. Semen, however, cannot cause sin, since it does not contain the rational part of the soul, which is alone responsible for sin. Consequently no sin can be contracted by way of origin.

4. Further, the more perfect a thing's nature, the more effective its activity. Now flesh when complete cannot infect the soul united to it, or else the soul could never be cleansed from original sin so long as it remained united to the body. That semen, therefore, can have the power to infect the soul is far less likely.

5. Further, Aristotle remarks that no one blames those who are ugly through nature, but those who become so through slackness and carelessness.⁴ But to be ugly through nature and birth is the same thing. Therefore nothing that is from birth deserves blame or is sinful.

ON THE OTHER HAND, St Paul states, *By one man sin entered into this world.*⁵ This cannot be interpreted to mean by way of imitation, because of the text of *Wisdom, By the envy of the devil, death came into the world.*⁶ It stands, then, that sin entered the world by way of origin from the first man.^c

REPLY: It is basic that according to the Catholic Faith we are bound to hold that the first sin of the first man passes to posterity by way of origin.^d On this account newly-born babies are brought to baptism as needing to be cleansed from some infection of sin.^e The contrary is part of the Pelagian heresy, as Augustine points out in many of his works.^{7 f}

In investigating, however, just how it is possible for the sin of first parents to pass to posterity by way of origin, different theologians have taken different paths.

Some, for example, appreciating that the subject of sin^g must be the rational soul, maintained the position that the rational soul is transmitted with semen. Thus from infected souls other souls similarly infected would seem to issue.⁸

Rejecting this explanation as erroneous,^h others have sought to show

her understanding of revelation in the liturgy. The saying '*lex orandi est lex credendi*' means that the liturgical life is a manifestation of the meaning of truths believed.
^fSee Appendix 2 (1 & 2).

^g'Subject of sin': this means not what sin is about (called by Scholastics the 'object of sin'), but where the sin lies.

^hSt Augustine hesitated in explaining the origin of the individual human soul between its direct creation by God and its being passed on by carnal generation (*Traducianism*). The latter was more favourable to his explanation of original sin. See Appendix 6 (2). In 1a. 118, 2 St Thomas concludes, 'Therefore it is heretical to say that the intellective soul [spiritual soul] is transmitted with the semen.' His reason is that this would amount to a denial of the soul's spirituality. On the teaching of the Church, cf Denz. 685; 1007; 3220. (In this volume references are to Edition 32, Denzinger-Schönmetzer, Herder 1963.)

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quomodo culpa animæ parentis traducitur in prolem, etiamsi anima non traducatur, per hoc quod corporis defectus traducuntur a parente in prolem, sicut leprosus generat leprosum et podagricus podagricum, propter aliquam corruptionem seminis, licet talis corruptio non dicatur lepra vel podagra. Cum autem corpus sit proportionatum animæ, et defectus animæ redundant in corpus, et e converso, simili modo dicunt quod culpabilis defectus animæ per traductionem seminis in prolem derivatur, quamvis semen actualiter non sit culpæ subjectum.⁹

Sed omnes huiusmodi viæ insufficientes sunt. Quia, dato quod aliqui defectus corporales a parente transeant in prolem per originem, et etiam aliqui defectus animæ ex consequenti propter corporis indispositionem, sicut interdum ex fatuis fatui generantur, tamen hoc ipsum quod est ex origine aliquem defectum habere videtur excludere rationem culpæ, de cuius ratione est quod sit voluntaria. Unde etiam posito quod anima rationalis traduceretur, ex hoc ipso quod infectio animæ prolis non esset in ejus voluntate, amitteret rationem culpæ obligantis ad pœnam, quia, ut Philosophus dicit, *nullus improperabit cæco nato, sed magis miserebitur*.¹⁰

Et ideo alia via procedendum est, dicendo quod omnes homines qui nascuntur ex Adam possunt considerari ut unus homo, in quantum conveniunt in natura quam a primo parente accipiunt; secundum quod in civilibus omnes* qui sunt unius communitatis reputantur quasi unum corpus, et tota communitas quasi unus homo. Porphyrius etiam dicit,† quod *participatione speciei plures homines sunt unus homo*.¹¹

Sic igitur multi homines ex Adam derivati sunt tanquam multa membra unius corporis. Actus autem unius membri corporalis, puta manus, non est voluntarius voluntate ipsius manus, sed voluntate animæ, quæ primo

*Piana: *omnes homines*, all men

†Piana: *sicut etiam Porphyrius dicit*, as Porphyry also says

⁹cf Peter Lombard, II *Sent.* 31, 3–6 (QR 1, 469–72). Also Hugh of St Victor, Anselm of Laon and other scholastics commonly

¹⁰Aristotle, *Ethics* III, 5. 1114a26

¹¹*Isagoge*, contained in PL 64, 111 with Boëthius' works. Porphyry (A.D. 233–305) a Syrian, disciple of Plotinus, wrote *Introduction (Isagoge) to the Categories of Aristotle*, which became a standard text on logic in Middle Ages

Here there is an explanation through the transmittance of the body. A form of this that St Thomas omits here is that a particle of flesh contained in Adam is passed on and continually infects posterity; Anselm of Laon (1103) in his *Sententiæ Divinæ Pagine* offered this explanation. It is continued in Hugh of St Victor, and Peter Lombard. See Appendix 6 (1). cf II *Sent.* 30, 2, 2 & ad 1; III, 3, 4, I. 3a, 3I, I. †See Appendix 6 (2). Some such explanation was common by St Thomas's time. He himself proceeds along these lines in II *Sent.* 30, 1, 2, ad 3, 4, 5. The explanation has the merit of being based upon the union and proportion between body and soul in the one nature. It would explain, then, how a defective nature can come to us. But it would not explain how having such a nature is *culpable* in the possessor. Once this

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how, even though the soul itself is not transmitted, that sin in the parents' soul is passed on to the child, on the grounds that bodily defects are in fact transmitted from parent to child.¹ For example, because of some corruption in the semen, a leper may beget a leper and a gouty parent a gouty child, even though such a corruption is not itself either leprosy or gout. For since body matches soul and the defects of one affect the other, these authors say that a sinful defect of soul likewise issues into the child, having been transmitted by the semen, although this is not actually the subject of fault.⁹ ¹

All such attempts at explanation, however, are inadequate. Of course it is conceded that physical defects pass by way of origin from parent to child, and also as a result of physical illness some psychological defects, as when now and then imbeciles beget imbeciles. Nevertheless, it would appear that the very fact of acquiring a defect by way of origin rules out culpability, since by definition fault must be voluntary. Thus even on the more extreme supposition that the rational soul itself is transmitted by generation, the possibility of the existence of fault deserving punishment would cease; the infection of soul would lack all reference to the child's will. These words of Aristotle are to the point: *one born blind is blamed by no one, but rather pitied.*¹⁰

Another approach, therefore, should be made. It is this. All who are born of Adam can be considered as one man by reason of sharing the one nature inherited from the first parent, even as in political matters all belonging to one community are reckoned to be like one body, and the whole community like one person. Porphyry also states that *by sharing in the species men are one.*¹¹ ^k

So then the many men descending from Adam are, as it were, many members of the one body. Now the act of a bodily member, the hand for instance, is voluntary, not by a will which the hand has on its own, but by the will of the soul which first sets the member in motion.¹ Hence

culpability is explained, then the point of the relation between body and soul can be invoked. Thus St Thomas's own explanation just looks to the voluntariness of original sin, then takes up the relation between body and soul (replies 2, 3 & 4). He also uses this relationship in the later scriptural commentary, *In Rom. 5, lect. 3*. ^k'By sharing in the species', i.e. by having the same nature.

Note that the unity is that based upon receiving their human nature from the one source. The collegial unity in political affairs and the logical unity noted by Porphyry are used only as examples. The explanation of St Thomas proceeds on the basis of the historical unity of all men as descended from Adam. See Appendices 6 & 7.

¹cf 1a2ae. 1, 2 & ad 3. The use of the hand as an example, since it has only a minimal place in an act of sin, is in accord with the attitude expressed in CG IV, 52, 'Nor are all men said to have sinned in him [Adam] as though *performing some act*, but in so far as they belong to his nature, which was corrupted by sin.'

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mouet membrum. Unde homicidium quod manus committit non imputaretur manui ad peccatum, si consideraretur manus secundum se ut diuisa a corpore, sed imputatur ei in quantum est aliquid hominis quod mouetur a primo principio motivo hominis. Sic igitur inordinatio quæ est in isto homine ex Adam generato non est voluntaria voluntate ipsius, sed voluntate primi parentis, qui mouet motione generationis omnes qui ex ejus origine derivantur, sicut voluntas animæ mouet omnia membra ad actum.

Unde peccatum quod sic a primo parente in posteros derivatur, dicitur 'originale', sicut peccatum quod ab anima derivatur ad membra corporis, dicitur 'actuale'; et sicut peccatum actuale quod per membrum aliquod committitur, non est peccatum illius membri, nisi in quantum illud membrum est aliquid ipsius hominis, propter quod vocatur 'peccatum humanum', ita peccatum originale non est peccatum hujus personæ, nisi in quantum hæc persona recipit naturam a primo parente; unde et vocatur *peccatum naturæ*, secundum illud *Ephes.*, *Eramus natura filii iræ*.¹²

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod filius dicitur non portare peccatum patris, quia non punitur pro peccato patris, nisi sit particeps culpæ. Et sic est in proposito; derivatur enim per originem culpa a patre in filium, sicut et peccatum actuale per imitationem.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod etsi anima non traducatur, quia virtus seminis non potest causare animam rationalem, mouet tamen ad ipsam dispositiue; unde per virtutem seminis traducitur humana natura a parente in prolem, et simul cum natura naturæ infectio. Ex hoc enim fit iste qui nascitur consors culpæ primi parentis quod naturam ab eo sortitur per quamdam generatiuam motionem.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod etsi culpa non sit actu in semine, est tamen ibi virtute humana natura,* quam concomitatur talis culpa.

*Piana: *virtute humanæ naturæ*, in virtue of human nature

¹²*Ephesians* 2, 3

^mFor other names of original sin cf II *Sent.* 30, *expositio textus*

ⁿThe following quotation throws light on replies 2, 3 & 4. 'This question [the transmission of *sin* by way of origin] is solved *easily* if a distinction is made between person and nature.' *Compend. Theol.* 196. Thus the semen, or indeed whatever enters into carnal generation, has its place in the transmittance of sin, since generation is an activity of nature. This simply means that generation is not a purely personal matter; all men are begotten in the same way; the same nature is passed on by all parents. Thus the parents do not cause human nature but cause it to come to be, in this case, their child (cf Ia. 104, 1). Original sin is a sin of nature as such, besetting the nature wherever it is found and because it comes to be. Thus whatever functions to pass on human nature by that fact and only by that fact serves to pass on original sin. Semen acts dispositiue for the begetting of nature, thus towards the passage of sin (ad 1); it does not somehow contain sin (ad 3) Appendix 6 (2). The individual bodies of the parents are personal, and not one of the common features of human generation (ad 4).

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murder which the hand commits should not be imputed as sin to the hand, as though the hand were considered to have its own life isolated from the body, but inasmuch as it is part of a human person and moved by the principle which first sets human actions in motion. So too the disorder which is in an individual man, a descendant of Adam, is not voluntary by reason of his personal will, but by reason of the will of the first parent, who through a generative impulse, exerts influence upon all who descend from him by way of origin, even as the will of the soul moves bodily members to their various activities.

Accordingly, the sin passing in this way from the first parent to his descendants is called 'original', as a sin passing from the soul to the body's members is called 'actual'. Similarly, even as an actual sin committed through some bodily member is a sin of that member only as part of the man himself, and so is called a 'sin of a man', so also original sin is the sin of the individual person only because he receives human nature from the first parent; and it is called 'a sin of nature', according to the text, *we were by nature children of wrath*.^{12 m}

Hence: 1. That the son shall not bear the sin of the father means that only if he shares in the fault is he punished for his father's sin. This is the case before us, because the fault itself is passed on by way of origin from father to son, somewhat as actual sin is by bad example.

2. Because the power of semen cannot cause it, a rational soul is not transmitted with the semen by generation.ⁿ Yet the semen does act as dispositive cause,^o so that what is transmitted from parent to child through the power of the semen is human nature, and together with nature the sickness of nature. For a new-born child becomes a partaker in the sin of the first parent by the fact that he takes human nature from him through a kind of generative impulse.

3. While the fault is not actually contained in the semen, yet human nature is there virtually,^p and this sin accompanies human nature.

^oAn agent cause is called 'perfective' by St Thomas when its activity produces the finished effect; 'dispositive' when it provides a disposition for the production of the finished effect by another agent cause. cf *In Phys.* II, *lect.* 5. Here the reference is to the fact that a person with human nature, composed of a body and a spiritual soul, only comes into being finally because God directly creates the soul. But 'one man generates someone like himself in so far as matter is disposed to receive such a form, through the power of the semen' (Ia. 118, 2 ad 4). In the relation of body to soul, the body is appropriately disposed for the soul because it is the product of human generation. Because of its function in generation, then, the semen is a dispositive cause of the soul, and thus of a person with human nature coming to be. See Appendix 7 (3).

^pTo be present virtually, that is, as effect in cause. Still it is not said that sin is

Footnote p continued on p. 12