

The Metaphysics of Original Sin[†]

MICHAEL C. REA

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Various different doctrines in the history of Christian thought have gone under the label ‘the doctrine of original sin’. All of them affirm something like the following claim:

(S0) All human beings (except, at most, four) suffer from a kind of corruption that makes it very likely that they will fall into sin.

Many (perhaps most) go on to affirm the following two claims as well:

(S1) All human beings (except, at most, four) suffer from a kind of corruption that makes it inevitable that they will fall into sin, and this corruption is a consequence of the first sin of the first man.

(S2) All human beings (except, at most, four) are guilty from birth in the eyes of God, and this guilt is a consequence of the first sin of the first man.

The “exceptions” referred to in S0 - S2 are the first human beings (Adam and Eve), Jesus of Nazareth, and (according to those who endorse the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception) Mary, the mother of Jesus.

S2 is known as the *doctrine of original guilt*. It is now common for S2 to be treated as a doctrine separate from the doctrine of original sin, which many philosophers and theologians simply identify with S0 or S1. But it was not always so; and it will be convenient for present purposes just to stipulate that S2 is part of the doctrine of original sin. I will also stipulate that S1

[†] Work on this paper was supported in part by an NEH Summer Stipend (2004). A version of this paper was discussed at the Metaphysics of Human Persons Workshop (February 2004), sponsored by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trust, and also by the weekly reading group hosted by the University of Notre Dame’s Center for Philosophy of Religion. I am grateful to the participants in these groups for valuable advice and criticism—especially (from the Pew Workshop) Godehard Bruntrup, Peter Forrest, Hud Hudson, Trenton Merricks, Richard Swinburne, Peter van Inwagen, and Dean Zimmerman; and (from the Center for Philosophy of Religion group) E. J. Coffman, Jeff Green, Tom Flint, Carl Gillett, Todd Long, Michael Murray, James Rissler, and Kevin Timpe. I would also like to thank Michael Bergmann, Jeff Brower and Tom Crisp for their very helpful comments on earlier drafts.

is part of that doctrine. Thus, for purposes here, nothing counts as a theory of original sin or as an expression of the doctrine of original sin (hereafter, ‘DOS’) unless it includes commitment to both S1 and S2. For ease of exposition, I will talk as if the story of the Fall as recorded in *Genesis* 3 is literally true. I do not think that this story must be literally true in all of its details in order for S1 and S2 to be true. But I will not discuss here questions about which details are required by suitably developed versions of DOS, nor will I discuss questions about which details would have to be modified if, as many now believe, the *Genesis* account of creation were literally false.

DOS has played an important role in the history of Christian thought. Among other things, it provides an explanation for the universality of sin, and it also provides critical underpinning for the view that all human beings—even the youngest of infants—are in need of a savior.¹ It was accepted by most of the medieval philosopher-theologians from Augustine through Duns Scotus, and it is affirmed by many of the most important post-Athanasian creeds of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and evangelical protestant churches.² *Prima facie*, however, it conflicts with the following intuitively plausible “principle of possible prevention”:

(MR) A person P is morally responsible for the obtaining of a state of affairs S only if S obtains (or obtained) and P could have prevented S from obtaining.

¹ Hence, Augustine writes in one of his anti-Pelagian treatises:

Now, seeing that [the Pelagians] admit the necessity of baptizing infants—finding themselves unable to contravene that authority of the universal Church, which has been unquestionably handed down by the Lord and His apostles—they cannot avoid the further concession, that infants require the same benefits of the Mediator, in order that ... they may be reconciled to God.... But from what, if not from death, and the vices, and guilt, and thralldom, and darkness of sin? And, inasmuch as they do not commit any sin in the tender age of infancy by their actual transgression, original sin only is left. (*On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins*, Bk. 1, Ch. 39; in Augustine 1999: 30.)

² See, for example, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Fifth Session (in Schaff 1998a: 83 - 89); *The Orthodox Confession of Faith*, Part I, Question 24 (in Mohila 1975); *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem*, Chapter VI, Decree XVI (Orthodox Eastern Church 1899: 139 - 143); *The Augsburg Confession*, Part I, Articles II - III (in Schaff 1998b: 8 - 9); *The Heidelberg Catechism*, Questions 4 - 11 (in Schaff 1998b: 308 - 311); *The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, Article IX (in Schaff 1998b: 492 - 3); and *The Westminster Confession*, Chapter VI (in Schaff 1998b: 615 - 617).

The reason is simple. According to DOS, human beings are born guilty. But one cannot be guilty *simpliciter*. If one is guilty, then there must be something—presumably, the obtaining of some state of affairs—for which one is guilty. But, one might think, whatever states of affairs obtained at or before the time we were born were not states of affairs whose obtaining we had the power to prevent. So if MR is true, it would seem to follow that we can be guilty only for things that happen *after* we are born. But then we cannot be guilty from birth as DOS requires.³

Whatever scriptural or systematic theological objections one might have against DOS, the apparent conflict with MR is almost certainly the primary source of purely philosophical resistance to it. On the other hand, some theologians, particularly in the Reformed tradition, treat the apparent conflict between DOS and MR as reason to reject MR.⁴ In the hands of these theologians, DOS plays an important role in paving the way for the view that moral responsibility is compatible with determinism—a conclusion which, in turn, constitutes an important premise in defense of the view that freedom is compatible with determinism. Thus, Christians who are interested in preserving their commitment to DOS while at the same time resisting compatibilism about freedom and moral responsibility would do well to examine carefully the question whether there is straightforward conflict between DOS and MR

³ It has been suggested to me that perhaps the alleged conflict with MR could be dismissed out of hand on the grounds that MR talks about “individual guilt” whereas original sin concerns “collective responsibility”, the idea being that we humans are somehow collectively, though not individually, guilty or responsible for the behavior of Adam. Peter Forrest (1994) develops a view of original sin roughly along these lines, a view according to which a society itself might be viewed as a moral person and the individuals who comprise it might, accordingly, be held collectively responsible for its acts. My own inclination, however, is to think that groups of persons are not themselves moral persons, and that whatever collective guilt or responsibility might be, it will, in any case, depend on facts about individual guilt or responsibility. For example: The mob is collectively guilty for the damage to the city; but what that means is just that various individuals who were parts of the mob are individually guilty for their contributions to the damage. The notion of collective *debt* is, to my mind, more promising. (As is the notion of collective *liability*. See, on this, Wainwright 1988: 45ff.) A group might owe \$1,000 to someone even if there is no specific amount of money that any particular member of the group owes to that person. But as Richard Swinburne (1989) emphasizes, claiming that we collectively inherit only a *debt* from Adam is precisely to reject the doctrine of original guilt, which I am here taking as central to DOS.

⁴ Jonathan Edwards most notably (*Freedom of the Will*, Pt. 3, Sect. 4; in Edwards 1992: 47 – 51); but see also, for example, Hodge 2001, Ch. 8, and Schreiner 1995.

In what follows, I will show that there is no straightforward conflict. My discussion will be divided into three sections. In Section 1, I will provide a brief survey of theories of original sin. With the exception of Edwards's theory, which shall be deferred to Section 2, all of the theories that I will discuss there are in tension with MR. We will see, however, that none of these theories explicitly contradicts MR. Rather, the tension arises because none of the theories offers the resources for denying the following very plausible assumption which, in conjunction with DOS, does contradict MR:

- (A1) No human being who was born after Adam's first sin could have done anything to prevent Adam's first sin; and no human being who is born corrupt could have done anything to prevent her own corruption.

The conflict to be resolved, then, is not, strictly speaking, between DOS and MR; rather, it is between DOS, MR, and A1. Of course, it is a hollow victory to show that DOS can be reconciled with MR if the price for reconciliation is denying what any sane person would be inclined to accept. A more substantive victory would be achieved if one could actually develop a theory of original sin that rests on metaphysical assumptions that are both deserving of serious consideration and inconsistent with A1. Thus, in Sections 2 and 3 I will describe two such theories. One is a development of a view defended by Jonathan Edwards.⁵ The other rests on assumptions that naturally accompany a Molinist account of divine providence. Section 2 describes the Edwardsian view; Section 3 describes the Molinist view.⁶

⁵ Interestingly, the fact that Edwards's theory of original sin can be reconciled with MR is bad news for Edwards, since Edwards wants to appeal to the alleged *conflict* between DOS and MR to support the claim that moral responsibility is compatible with determinism. Thus, an additional and important lesson to be drawn from the discussion in Section 2 is that, given Edwards's own metaphysical commitments, it turns out that a crucial premise in his defense of compatibilism is undermined

⁶ In calling these theories 'Edwardsian' and 'Molinist' respectively, I do not at all mean to suggest that Edwards, Molina, or any of their contemporary followers would necessarily endorse these theories as I am developing them. Edwards, Molina, and their followers might be blamed for saying things that inspired and encouraged the development of these views, but that is all.

Both of the views described in Sections 2 and 3 come with substantial and controversial metaphysical commitments. But in each case, the commitments in question are ones that have been ably defended and taken very seriously in the contemporary literature. I do not, in the end, claim that any of these commitments ought to be accepted; nor do I claim that they must be accepted by anyone who wishes to endorse both DOS and MR. For all I am willing to commit myself to here, it might be that there are other ways of reconciling DOS and MR, and it might also be that none of the ways of reconciling those two doctrines is worth the intuitive price. My aim, again, is simply to show in some detail that there *are* ways of reconciling those doctrines, and that those represent “live options” that cannot simply be dismissed out of hand.

1. Theories of Original Sin⁷

I will begin by providing a brief sketch of the various lines along which the central claims of DOS (i.e., S1 and S2) have been fleshed out. The purpose of doing so is to help make it clear where on the landscape of possible views the views developed in Sections 2 and 3 will fall. Doing so will also make it clear just how hard it is to generate a plausible theory of original sin that avoids conflict with MR. I will organize my discussion around three questions that might be raised about S1 and S2: (i) What is the nature of the corruption mentioned in S1? (ii) What is it that we are guilty of from birth? and (iii) Is what we are guilty of something that *we* have done, or not? It is perhaps tempting to think that once the answer to (ii) is settled, the answer to (iii) will be settled as well. But, as we shall see, that is not the case.

⁷ In addition to the sources cited throughout this section, the following works have influenced the discussion of different theories of original sin in this section: Adams 1999; Kelly 1978; Quinn 1984 and 1997; Urban 1995; and Wiley 2002.

1.1. The Nature of Our Corruption. S1 says that all human beings (except three or four) are corrupt. But there are at least two different ways of understanding the nature of this corruption. On one view, Adam's first sin brought about a fundamental change in human nature. Whereas human beings prior to the Fall lacked the inclination to disobey God, all human beings after the Fall possess such an inclination. Thus, for example, Augustine writes:

Man's nature, indeed, was created at first faultless and without any sin; but that nature of man in which every one is born from Adam, now wants the Physician, because it is not sound. All good qualities, no doubt, which it still possesses in its make, life, senses, intellect, it has of the most High God, its Creator and Maker. But the flaw, which darkens and weakens all those natural goods, so that it has need of illumination and healing, it has not contracted from its blameless Creator—but from that original sin, which it committed by free will. (*On Nature and Grace*, Ch. 3; in Augustine 1999: 122.)

And Calvin:

Original sin, then, may be defined as the hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature. This reaches every part of the soul, makes us abhorrent to God's wrath and produces in us what Scripture calls works of the flesh. ... Our nature is not only completely empty of goodness, but so full of every kind of wrong that it is always active. Those who call it lust use an apt word, provided it is also stated...that everything which is in man, from the intellect to the will, from the soul to the body, is defiled and imbued with this lust. To put it briefly, the whole man is in himself nothing but lust. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk. 2, Ch. 1, Sec. 8; in Calvin 1986: 90 - 91)

This sort of view was also endorsed by Luther, and it has been the typical view of theologians in the Reformed tradition.⁸

Another view, however, maintains that the change brought about by the Fall was not so much the positive addition of a new kind of wickedness to a once pristine human nature, but rather the withdrawal of a certain kind of grace that made perfect obedience to God possible. On Anselm's view, for example, original sin is the loss of original justice, where original justice is the *God-given* rightness of will that Adam and Eve possessed but lost for themselves and their posterity when they sinned.⁹ Aquinas likewise identifies original sin with the loss of original justice, but he characterizes original justice not as a sort of God-given *rectitude of will* possessed by our first ancestors, but rather as a supernatural gift that made it possible for Adam and Eve to appropriately order the various inclinations that (in us) give rise to sin. Insofar as they were, in Eden, capable of ordering their inclinations appropriately, Adam and Eve were able to refrain from sinning. The corruption brought about by the Fall was the disordering of our inclinations as

⁸ See, e.g., Luther 1976: 95; Edwards, *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended* (in Edwards 1992: 146ff); Turretin 1992: 639 – 40; Shedd 2003: 577ff. Cf. also *The Formula of Concord*, Article I (in Schaff 1998b: 97 – 106); *The Heidelberg Catechism*, Questions 4 – 11 (in Schaff 1998b: 308 – 311); and *The Westminster Confession*, Chapter VI (in Schaff 1998b: 615 – 617).

⁹ See his *The Virgin Conception and Original Sin*. As Jeff Brower [forthcoming] explains,

Rightness of will, as Anselm conceives of it, is not something that rational creatures, at least in the first instance, are responsible for acquiring; rather it is something they are responsible for preserving once it has been given. In this respect, rightness of will, on Anselm's view is more like a theological virtue than it is like one of the cardinal virtues—that is to say, it is something supernaturally infused as opposed to acquired by repeated action. Indeed, according to Anselm, God created rational nature—both angels and the first human beings—with rightness of will precisely because they could not be happy without it. ... According to traditional Christian doctrine, the first human beings and certain of the angels fell from grace by sinning. Anselm explains their sin in terms of their abandoning, or failing to preserve, rightness for its own sake. ... [I]n the case of the bad angels (i.e., Satan and his cohorts), Anselm thinks their loss is permanent or irretrievable. In case of the first human beings, however, and their descendents to whom the original loss was transmitted, Anselm thinks that, at least prior to death, their rightness of will can be recovered—though here again the recovery is primarily a matter of grace (co-operating with free will) rather than the result of any effort on the part of individual human beings.

a result of the withdrawal of the supernatural gift.¹⁰ This sort of view, according to which original sin consists in the *loss of a supernatural gift* rather than the *acquisition of a new kind of corruption in our nature* is sometimes characterized, by way of contrast with the Augustinian view, as one according to which human nature is *wounded* rather than *totally corrupted*.¹¹ The major confessions of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches strongly suggest this sort of view, and it was also tentatively endorsed by James Arminius.¹² So far as I can tell, the Edwardsian development of DOS described in Section 2 is neutral between the Augustinian and Anselmian views. As we shall see in Section 3, the Molinist development of DOS can be made to accommodate both views as well.

1.2. For What Are We Guilty? According to S2, we are guilty from birth. But for what are we guilty? As far as I know, all of the existing theories of original sin give one of two answers: (i) we are guilty both for the corruption that makes it inevitable that we will fall into sin, as well as for the particular sin of Adam that caused that corruption, or (ii) we are guilty only for our corruption. The difference between these two answers is commonly characterized as a difference with respect to the question whether the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity is *immediate* (answer (i)) or *mediate* (answer (ii)).¹³ On both views, our own corruption is a consequence of Adam's sin and something for which we are guilty. Thus, either way we bear guilt as a result of something Adam has done. The difference is that answer (i), but not answer (ii), maintains that we are *directly accountable* for Adam's first sin.

¹⁰ See especially Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Part 1 of Part 2, Q. 82, Art. 2; in Aquinas 1945: 674 - 5.

¹¹ Cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., secs 400 and 405 (Catholic Church 1994: 112, 114 - 15).

¹² See *The Canons and Dogmatic Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Fifth Session (in Schaff 1998a: 83 - 89); *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., secs. 400 and 405 (Catholic Church 1994: 112, 114 - 15); *The Orthodox Confession of the Eastern Church*, Questions 23 & 24 (in Mohila 1975); *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem*, Chapter VI, Decrees VI, XIV, and XVI (Orthodox Eastern Church 1899: 118 - 119, 132 - 135, 139 - 143); and Arminius 1999: 150 - 157, 374 - 76, and 717.

¹³ Cf. Crisp 2003 and Quinn 1999 for useful discussion.

Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin all explicitly endorsed the doctrine of immediate imputation, and endorsement of that view is typical of theologians in the Reformed tradition. It is harder to find theologians who explicitly endorse the doctrine of mediate imputation. Anselm does.¹⁴ So too does the 17th Century Reformed theologian, Joshua La Place; though his view was formally condemned at the National Synod of France in 1645, and condemned again shortly thereafter by other churches and theologians throughout Europe in the 17th Century.¹⁵ The view is also sometimes, though I think, mistakenly, taken to be the official position of the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁶ The Molinist view that I will develop in Section 3 is also committed to it.

The main question that arises in connection with the doctrine of immediate imputation is the question of *how* we can be guilty of Adam's sin given the apparent fact that none of us is identical to Adam and none of us existed when Adam sinned. Here there are only two possibilities. One is to deny the appearance, maintaining that we are guilty of Adam's sin because there is some meaningful sense in which *we ourselves* committed or participated in the committing of that sin. The other is to claim that it is somehow just for God to impute to us guilt for a sin in whose commission we did not participate. Adapting some terminology from G. C. Berkouwer (1971, Ch. 12), we may refer to views that embrace the first possibility as *Personal Guilt* (PG) theories and to views that embrace the second as *Alien Guilt* (AG) theories. In the next subsection, I will discuss these views in reverse order.

The doctrine of mediate imputation, by contrast, faces only the general problem of explaining how we could justly be held responsible for a state of affairs that we could not have

¹⁴ See *The Virgin Conception and Original Sin*, ch. 22 (in Anselm 1969: 197 – 98).

¹⁵ See Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 205ff for useful discussion.

¹⁶ See Murray 1955: 153 – 55. There, Murray claims (again, I think mistakenly) to find the position expressed in the Decree on Original Sin produced by the Council of Trent.

prevented. In other words, it faces only the general problem of apparent conflict with MR. Notably, Anselm seems content to reject MR.¹⁷

1.3. AG-Theories. AG-theories of original sin maintain that we are guilty both for the corruption of our nature and for the sin of Adam, and that we are so guilty despite the fact that we in no way participated in the committing of Adam's sin. The main challenge for such a theory is to explain how it could possibly be just for God to hold a person guilty for a sin she did not commit. The standard response to this challenge is to claim that we are guilty for Adam's sin because Adam is the *federal head, or representative* of the human race. The basic idea is that Adam represented us before God in much the same way that a head of state might represent one nation before another. If a head of state commits a crime against another nation, the nation she represents may well be implicated in that crime and be held accountable for it. War might ensue, and it might turn out that peace can be restored only if the nation whose representative started the war manages to find another representative who can behave in such a way as to rectify the trouble. Thus, for example, Francis Turretin explains:

[T]he bond between Adam and his posterity is twofold: (1) natural, as he is the father, and we are his children; (2) political and forensic, as he was the prince and representative head of the whole human race. Therefore the foundation of

¹⁷ In defending the view that even infants deserve condemnation by God, he writes:

If you think it over... this sentence of condemnation of infants is not very different from the verdict of human beings. Suppose, for example, some man and his wife were exalted to some great dignity and estate, by no merit of their own but by favor alone, then both together inexcusably commit a grave crime, and on account of it are justly dispossessed and reduced to slavery. Who will say that the children whom they generate after their condemnation should not be subjected to the same slavery, but rather should be gratuitously put in possession of the goods which their parents deservedly lost? Our first ancestors and their offspring are in such a condition: having been justly condemned to be cast from happiness to misery for their fault, they bring forth their offspring in the same banishment. (*The Virgin Conception and Original Sin*, Ch. 28; in Anselm 1969: 209 – 10.)

See also Chapter 22 of the same work.

imputation is not only the natural connection which exists between us and Adam (since, in that case, all his sins might be imputed to us), but mainly the moral and federal (in virtue of which God entered into covenant with him as our head). Hence Adam stood in that sin not as a private person, but as a public and representative person—representing all his posterity in that action and whose demerit equally pertains to all.

For Adam to be a public and representative person, it was not necessary that that office should be committed to him by us, so that he might act as much in our name as in his own. It is sufficient that there intervened the most just ordination of God according to which he willed Adam to be the root and head of the whole human race, who therefore not only for himself only but also for his (posterity) should receive or lose the goods. (Turretin 1992: 616)

This view is known as the *federalist* theory of original guilt. It is endorsed by many theologians in the Reformed tradition (including Turretin) and also tends to be endorsed by theologians in the Arminian tradition (e.g., John Wesley and Richard Watson).¹⁸

Not surprisingly, federalism is typically coupled with a doctrine of the atonement according to which Jesus counts as *another* representative of the human race—a “second Adam”—whose behavior, unlike Adam’s, is sufficient to restore us to fellowship with God if only we embrace him as our representative. On this view of the atonement, just as the guilt of Adam is imputed to all of us from birth, so too the righteousness of Jesus is imputed to those who embrace him. It is perhaps worth noting that the imputed-righteousness theory of the atonement does not go hand-in-hand with the federalist or any other AG-theory of original sin.

¹⁸ Wesley, *The Doctrine of Original Sin, According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience*, especially Part 3, sec. 6 (in Wesley 1978: 332 – 4); Watson 1834: 52ff.

That is, one can and many do accept the former without accepting the latter. But, obviously enough, it is hard to see why one should find the imputation of alien guilt objectionable if one is not inclined to object to the imputation of “alien righteousness”.

But the AG-theory, as it stands, is in obvious tension with MR. For nothing in the theory even so much as suggests that there was anything that any of us could have done that would have prevented Adam’s sin. In other words, nothing in the theory suggests any reason for thinking that A1 is false. But, again, A1 together with DOS flatly contradicts MR.

Is it possible to produce a credible AG-theory that is inconsistent with A1? I doubt it. One might be tempted to suggest that we have *counterfactual power* over Adam’s sin. To say that we all have counterfactual power over Adam’s sin is to say that, for each of us, there is something we could have done such that, had we done it, Adam would never have sinned. If we do have such power, then A1 is surely false. But, leaving aside worries about the very possibility of our having counterfactual power over the past,¹⁹ the problem with this proposal is that there is absolutely no reason—and certainly no reason arising out of the AG-theory—for thinking that it is true. At best, then, it could only be an ad hoc addition to the AG-theory. Alternatively, one might be tempted to resist A1 by arguing that there is some sense in which we were all present and able to act at the time of Adam’s sin. If that were true, then we would at least be moving in the direction of a reason to think that A1 is false; and, as we will see shortly, there are various stories one might tell that imply that we were present and able to act at the time of Adam’s sin. Unfortunately, however, all of the extant stories of this sort are either incredible or have the implication that we all actually *participated* in Adam’s sin (as some PG-theories, but no AG-

¹⁹ In Section 3 we will consider another view that presupposes that we can have counterfactual power over the past, and there I will briefly explain why many philosophers think that worries about this presupposition *ought* to be left aside.

theories, maintain). Thus, it is doubtful that any of these stories could be used to supplement the AG-theory in such a way as to make even remotely plausible the denial of A1.

It is worth noting that, on the federalist theory, since part of the explanation for our guilt from birth is the fact that Adam represents us, and since it is within our power to do something—namely, embrace Jesus as our representative—that will make it the case that Adam no longer represents us, it is to some extent up to us whether we *remain* guilty for Adam’s sin. But, as the quotation from Turretin makes clear, the federalist theory still takes it for granted that the fact that Adam represented us from birth was not something we could have prevented. Thus, it looks as if those who wish to endorse *both* DOS and MR must endorse some sort of PG-theory of original guilt.

1.4. PG-Theories. The main challenge faced by someone who wants to say that we bear *personal* guilt for the sin of Adam is to explain how we could possibly have participated in the committing of Adam’s sin.

One way of meeting this challenge is to endorse a view according to which all of us existed as distinct individuals at the time of Adam and somehow participated in or concurred with Adam’s sin. One way to motivate this sort of view is to endorse a doctrine of pre-existing souls.²⁰ Another way is to urge a metaphysically loaded reading of the suggestion (in Hebrews 7: 9 – 10) that Levi was present *as an agent* in the loins of Abraham, and then to extend this idea to

²⁰ Shedd attributes a view of this sort to Ashbel Green. (Shedd 2003: 447) Origen also famously endorsed a doctrine of pre-existing souls, according to which human souls sinned “before their birth in the body” and “contracted a certain amount of guilt” which, in turn, is supposed to explain at least some of the distribution of pain and suffering in the world. (See Origen, *De Principiis*, Bk. 3, Chap. 3; Origen 1999: 336 – 7). But it is not clear whether or to what extent Origen’s doctrine of pre-existence is supposed to be connected with the doctrine of original sin.

all members of the human race, claiming that everyone was present as an agent in the loins of Adam.²¹ But these sorts of views are neither plausible nor popular.

More popular are views according to which we do not co-exist as distinct individuals with Adam, but we do somehow enjoy a certain kind of metaphysical unity with him. Here we have two main views, one sometimes, though perhaps mistakenly, credited to Augustine; the other associated with, among others, Aquinas and Edwards. The former view goes under the label ‘Realism’, and its chief and most explicit proponent is W. G. T. Shedd (2003). The latter view, the one associated with Aquinas and Edwards, is what is sometimes called the ‘Organic Whole’ theory. I will discuss each in turn.

In three of his anti-Pelagian works, Augustine makes remarks that suggest the rather startling view that somehow we *are* Adam, and that not just Adam but *human nature itself* committed the sin that brought about our corruption. For example:

By the evil will of that one man all sinned in him, since *all were that one man*, from whom, therefore, they individually derived original sin. (Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Bk. 2, Ch. 15; in Augustine 1999: 288; emphasis added.)

All good qualities, no doubt, which [human nature] still possesses in its make, life, senses, intellect, it has of the Most High God, its Creator and Maker. But the flaw, which darkens and weakens all those natural goods, so that it has need of illumination and healing, it has not contracted from its blameless Creator—but

²¹ Berkouwer (1971: 440ff) and Murray (1956: 26) both briefly discuss views of this sort without citing references. Anselm (1969: 199ff) also seems to take this sort of view seriously.

from that original sin, which *it committed* by free will. (*On Nature and Grace* Ch. 3; in Augustine 1999: 122; emphasis added.)

Anselm likewise makes remarks along these lines:

Each and every descendant of Adam is at once a human being by creation and Adam by generation, and a person by the individuality which distinguishes him from others. ... But there is no doubt from what source each and every individual is bound by that debt which we are discussing. It certainly does not arise from his being human or from his being a person ... [for] then Adam, before he sinned, would have to have been bound by this debt, because he was a human being and a person. But this is most absurd. The only reason left, then, for the individual's being under obligation is that he is Adam, yet not simply that he is Adam, but that he is Adam *the sinner*. (Anselm, *The Virgin Conception and Original Sin*, Ch. 10; in Anselm 1969: 183 – 84; emphasis added.)

According to Shedd, what Augustine and Anselm are both trying to express with these rather cryptic remarks is roughly this: Human beings have two modes of existence. We can exist *as individuals*, or we can exist *en masse* as a “single specific nature not yet individualized by propagation” (Shedd 2003: 446). When Adam sinned, all of Adam's posterity were literally present in Adam in the latter way, as the undifferentiated human nature. Moreover, as Augustine suggests, it was as much that nature as Adam who committed Adam's sin. Human nature did not act consciously (not being the sort of thing that can *be* conscious); but, he thinks, the nature of its

union with Adam and Eve is sufficient to make it blameworthy for their crime. And since all of humanity together is nothing other than human nature as “individualized by propagation”, we too are blameworthy.²²

Shedd’s view is an heroic attempt to reconcile the claim that each of us is to blame for Adam’s sin with the principle that no one can justly be blamed for a sin in whose commission she did not participate. But even if his view could be made plausible (which seems unlikely), it still would not fare well with respect to MR. It might turn out on his view that human nature “not yet individualized by propagation” could have prevented Adam’s sin; but it will not at all follow from this that *any of us* could have prevented Adam’s sin. (For example: The unruly mob could have prevented the riot; but it does not follow that Fred, who was part of the mob, could have prevented the riot.) Thus, though Shedd’s view might turn out to be of some help in reconciling DOS with *some* of our moral intuitions, it will not help us to save MR.

The ‘Organic Whole’ theory faces similar problems. The idea, in short, is that *humanity*, *human nature*, or *the human race* is an organic whole with the following properties: (a) it is a moral agent; (b) every individual human being is a part or instance of it; and (c) it committed the sin of Adam by virtue of having a part or instance—namely, Adam—that committed that sin. On this view, it is by virtue of being parts, instances, or members of this whole that individual human beings other than Adam participated in Adam’s sin and share the guilt for it. But, as is clear even from this rough sketch, the obvious challenge for the view is to explain in what sense,

²² As I have already indicated, however, Anselm explicitly (and repeatedly) denies that anyone other than Adam bears personal guilt for Adam’s sin. For example, in Chapter 22 of *The Virgin Conception and Original Sin*, he says “I do not think the sin of Adam passes down to infants in such a way that they ought to be punished for it as if each one of them had personally committed it, as Adam did.” (Anselm 1969: 197) On Anselm’s view, as I have already said, what we are guilty of is *simply* the corruption of our nature. The passage quoted above, and cited by Shedd (2003: 445), is from a chapter wherein he attempts to explain how we could be guilty of *that*, not how we could be guilty of Adam’s sin. (Of course, the claim that each of us *is Adam* is in superficial tension with the claim, clearly implied by the remark from Ch. 22, that none of us *committed the sin of Adam*. But I will not attempt to sort that out here.)

if any, the non-Adamic parts or instances of the whole could have prevented the sin of Adam. *Prima facie*, they could not have.

The problem is seen most clearly in Aquinas's version of the view. Aquinas develops his version by way of analogy. Roughly, the analogy is as follows: If you move your hand in such a way as to commit a crime, we won't blame your hand as such; but your hand will share in your guilt and will justly suffer the consequences of your sin. Your hand shares in your guilt because it is a part of the whole person who committed the sin, *and* it is a part that was involved in the sin.²³ Likewise, all human beings together comprise an organic whole, and human nature itself was involved in Adam's sin. Indeed, says Aquinas,

[A]ll men born of Adam may be considered as one man inasmuch as they have one common nature, which they receive from their first parents; even as in civil matters, all who are members of one community are reputed as one body, and the whole community as one man. Indeed, Porphyry says that *by sharing the same species, many men are one man*. Accordingly the multitude of men, born of Adam, are as so many members of one body. (*Summa Theologica* Part II, Sect. 1, Q. 81, Art. 1; in Aquinas 1945: 666; emphasis in original.)

Thus, when Adam sinned, Humanity—the body of which all human beings are parts—sinned.²⁴

And just as all of your parts share in the guilt of whatever sins proceed from your will and involve your whole body, so too all of the parts or members of Humanity share in the guilt of this

²³ Cf. *Summa Theologica* Part 2, Sect. 1, Q. 81, Art. 1 (in Aquinas 1945: 664 – 667), and *De Malo* Q. 4, Art. 1 (in Davies 2001: 327 – 41)

²⁴ It is not clear to me how seriously Aquinas really wants to take the idea that there is a physical object composed of every human being who ever did or ever will live. Some of his remarks suggest that the idea might *just* be a metaphor—that it is not literally the case that Adam and the rest of humanity comprise a single body, but that things are only “as if” that were true. But if this is so, then it is hard to see how the hand analogy manages to illuminate the doctrine of imputation. For, after all, the main initial question about the claim that we bear guilt for Adam's sin is how it can be just for God to treat us *as if* we had committed that sin when, to all appearances, we did not commit it. And it is hardly helpful to answer this question by saying simply that God is also treating us *as if* we were members with Adam of a single body, even though we are not. But for now I will simply ignore this concern.

one sin that proceeded from Adam's will and involved human nature; for it was by Adam's will that Humanity committed that sin.

Of course, one worry with this analogy is that it looks like it might imply that more than just the guilt for Adam's first sin could be imputed to Humanity and thus, ultimately, to everyone. Why not Adam's second sin, for example? Or, for that matter, why not my sins or yours? Aquinas is aware of this worry, and his response, in short, is that only the guilt for Adam's first sin can be imputed to Humanity (and thus to everyone) because Adam's first sin was the only sin that involved human nature as such.

Aquinas's view is more satisfying than Shedd's if for no other reason than that it is somewhat easier to see how all human beings could be at least analogically treated as parts of a common whole than it is to see how we all could exist in an "unindividualized" way in a single person. But it still leaves important questions unanswered. For example, it is hard to see why Adam's first sin, *and that sin alone*, would involve all of human nature in the way required by the analogy. Even if we grant that there is a sense in which your hand, but not your foot, is to blame for sins you commit with your hand, still it is hard to see why Adam's first sin was a sin *committed with his whole nature*, as it were, rather than a sin that simply involved him as an individual. Most important for our purposes, however, is the fact that, as indicated above, Aquinas's view lacks the resources to explain how we could have prevented the sin of Adam. Indeed, if we take the analogy seriously, his view straightforwardly implies that we could not have prevented Adam's sin. According to the analogy, individual human beings other than Adam are related to the impetus behind Adam's sin as a hand is related to a particular movement of the will of the person of which it is a part. But then, just as your hand is powerless to prevent any

particular exercise of your will, so too we must be powerless to prevent the exercise of Adam's will that resulted in the Fall. Thus, Aquinas's view, like Shedd's, is of no help in preserving MR.

We come now, at last, to Edwards's theory (though, as I will note in Section 2.4, it is ultimately only on one of several possible interpretations that his view properly counts as a version of the Organic Whole theory).²⁵ Famously, Edwards appeals to a sort of divine command theory of persistence over time to account for the possibility of our bearing guilt for Adam's sin. I will save the details of his view for the next section; but what will become clear in that section is that, on either of the two main ways of fleshing out Edwards's view, conflict with MR can easily be avoided. Edwards, of course, has no interest in reconciling his views with MR. But the fact that his view of original sin is consistent with MR constitutes at least an *ad hominem* argument against his claim (in *Freedom of the Will*) that attention to the doctrine of original sin provides reason to think that MR is false.²⁶

2. Jonathan Edwards and the Doctrine of Original Guilt

As I have already indicated, there are at least two different ways in which Edwards's theory of imputation may be fleshed out. On one way of developing it, Edwards's view counts as a version of the Organic Whole Theory, is committed to a theory of persistence that I'll refer to

²⁵ Interestingly, Edwards's view is often, perhaps even typically, characterized as a *federalist* theory; but I think that this characterization is mistaken. (But see Crisp 2003 for a persuasively argued opposing view.) Part of the problem is that Edwards seems to appeal rather freely to various models for understanding Adam's relation to the rest of the human race. (For example, Charles Hodge 2001: 207 – 8 finds not only an affirmation of federalism in Edwards, but also an outright endorsement of Shedd's *realist* theory.) The theory I will present here, however, is the carefully worked-out view that he offers in direct response to the question of how it could be just for God to impute Adam's sin to his posterity. And I think that *that* view is not properly understood as a federalist view, even though it is consistent with the claim that Adam is the federal head of the human race. The reason is that, whereas federalism takes it that it is Adam's *federal headship* that explains the imputation of guilt to the rest of humanity, Edwards's response to the question of how it could be just for God to impute Adam's sin to his posterity takes it that something else—a kind of *metaphysical unity* with Adam—is the basis for the imputation.

²⁶ Pt. 3, Sect. 4; in Edwards 1992: 47 – 51.

below as ‘worm theory’, and suffers from some of the same problems that Aquinas’s view suffers from. On the other way of developing it, there is no commitment to worm theory, and the main problems associated with the Organic Whole Theory do not arise.

I will begin in section 2.1 below by presenting, largely in his own words, the main lines of Edwards’s view about how it is that we bear guilt for Adam’s sin. In section 2.2, I will digress briefly and describe several different theories of persistence. I will argue in that section that, contrary to what seems widely to be taken for granted, there is no compelling reason to attribute to Edwards belief in what a worm theoretic account of persistence. Then, in sections 2.3 and 2.4, I will describe in more detail the two different ways of fleshing out Edwards’s theory of imputation. We will see that both ways provide theories of imputation that are consistent with MR, but I will argue that the one that carries no commitment to worm theory has distinct advantages over its rival.

2.1. Edwards’s Theory of Imputation. Edwards’s theory of imputation is presented in its fullest detail in the last part of *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended* (in Edwards 1992). Whereas Aquinas uses the metaphor of a body in developing his version of the Organic Whole theory, Edwards relies more heavily on the metaphor of a tree. It is worth quoting him at length since, despite the fact that his theory of original sin is well-known and widely discussed, it is often mischaracterized.

He begins thus:

I think, it would go far towards directing us to the more clear conception and right statement of this affair, were we steadily to bear this in mind: that God, in every step of his proceeding with Adam, in relation to the covenant or

constitution established with him, looked on his posterity as being *one with him*. And though he dealt more immediately with Adam, it yet was as the *head* of the whole body, and the *root* of the whole tree; and in his proceedings with him, he dealt with all the branches, as if they had been then existing in their root.

From which it will follow, that both guilt, or exposedness to punishment, and also depravity of heart, came upon Adam's posterity just as they came upon him, as much as if he and they had all co-existed, like a tree with many branches; allowing only for the difference necessarily resulting from the place Adam stood in, as head or root of the whole. Otherwise, it is as if, in every step of proceeding, every alteration in the root had been attended, at the same instant, with the same alterations throughout the whole tree, in each individual branch. I think, this will naturally follow on the supposition of there being a *constituted oneness* or *identity* of Adam and his posterity in this affair. [Edwards 1992: 220; emphasis in original.]

Then, in a note, he goes on to develop the tree metaphor more fully as follows:

My meaning, in the whole of what has been said, may be illustrated thus: Let us suppose that Adam and all his posterity had co-existed, and that his posterity had been, through a law of nature established by the Creator, united to him, something as the branches of a tree are united to the root, or the members of the body to the head, so as to constitute as it were one complex person, or one moral whole: so that by the law of union there should have been a communion and co-existence in acts and affections; all jointly participating, and all concurring, as one whole, in the disposition and action of the head: as we see in the body natural, the whole

body is affected as the head is affected; and the whole body concurs when the head acts. Now, in this case, all the branches of mankind, by the constitution of nature and law of union, would have been affected just as Adam, their common root, was affected. When the heart of a root, by a full disposition, committed the first sin, the hearts of all the branches would have concurred; and when the root, in consequence of this, became guilty, so would all the branches; and when the root, as a punishment of the sin committed, was forsaken of God, in like manner would it have fared with all the branches; and when the root, in consequence of this, was confirmed in permanent depravity, the case would have been the same with all the branches; and as new guilt on the soul of Adam would have been consequent on this, so also would it have been with his moral branches. And thus all things, with relation to evil disposition, guilt, pollution, and depravity, would exist, in the same order and dependence, in each branch, as in the root. [Edwards 1992: 221, n.; emphasis in original.]

Here we are just invited to *imagine* that “through a law of nature” Adam and his posterity are unified as parts of a single moral agent. But later in the essay Edwards makes it clear (a) that he endorses a theory about laws of nature according to which laws are just divine decrees, (b) that he endorses a theory about persistence according to which facts about persistence depend solely on divine decrees, and (c) that, by divine decree, Adam and his posterity are “one” in the same sense in which a sapling and the tree that it grows into are one. Thus:

Some things are *entirely distinct*, and *very diverse*, which yet are so united by the established law of the Creator, that by virtue of that establishment, they are

in a sense *one*. Thus a *tree*, grown great, and a hundred years old, is *one* plant with the little *sprout*, that first came out of the ground from whence it grew, and has been continued in constant succession; though it is now so exceeding *diverse*, many thousand times bigger, and of a very different form, and perhaps not one atom the very same: yet God, according to an established law of nature, has in a constant succession communicated to it many of the same qualities, and most important properties, as if it were *one*. It has been his pleasure, to constitute an union in these respects, and for these purposes, naturally leading us to look upon all as *one*. ...

And there is no identity or oneness [between the successive stages of a created substance] but what depends on the *arbitrary* constitution of the Creator; who by his wise sovereign establishment so unites these successive new effects, that he *treats them as one*, by communicating to them like properties, relations, and circumstances; and so, leads *us* to regard and treat them as *one*. When I call this an *arbitrary constitution*, I mean, that it is a constitution which depends on nothing but the *divine will*; which divine will depends on nothing but the *divine wisdom*. In this sense, the whole *course of nature*, with all that belongs to it, all its laws and methods, constancy and regularity, continuance and proceeding, is an *arbitrary constitution*. In this sense, the continuance of the very being of the world and all its parts, as well as the manner of continued being, depends entirely on an *arbitrary constitution*. [Edwards 1992: 224; emphasis in original.]

So, on Edwards's view, the unity that obtains between Adam and his posterity is metaphysically on a par with the unity that obtains between the successive stages of any ordinary persisting thing.

But here we encounter a fork in the road; for there are two different ways of unpacking the claim that the unity that obtains between Adam and his posterity is metaphysically on a par with the unity that obtains between successive stages of ordinary persisting things. I will refer to these two ways of characterizing Adam's unity with his posterity as the *Organic Whole Theory* and the *Fission Theory*. According to the Organic Whole Theory, Adam and his posterity are all together parts of a single, spatiotemporally extended object. On this view, Adam and his posterity comprise successive stages of a persisting individual which is (in some sense) a moral agent and which is such that all of its stages, or temporal parts, are personally accountable at least for the one salient crime committed by its Adamic parts. I said earlier that it is only under one interpretation of his view that Edwards's theory counts as a version of the Organic Whole Theory, and this is it. The Fission Theory, on the other hand, says that Adam and his posterity are distinct individuals who share a common temporal stage or set of temporal stages (namely, whatever stages of Adam were involved in Adam's sin, and perhaps all of the preceding ones as well). On this view, Adam undergoes fission at the time of his first sin, splitting into billions of different people, only one of whom gets kicked out of Eden, fathers Cain and Able, and does the various other deeds traditionally attributed to Adam. As we will see more clearly in sections 2.3 and 2.4, the Organic Whole Theory presupposes the worm theoretic account of persistence, but the Fission Theory may be developed independently of that assumption. But first I want briefly to distinguish several different theories of persistence and explain why there is no compelling reason to attribute to Edwards belief in the worm theoretic account.

2.2. Theories of Persistence. Notably, though Edwards is commonly cited as a proponent of the view that familiar material objects are four-dimensionally extended “spacetime worms”,²⁷ the whole of his view as presented above is consistent with an alternative account of persistence. Let me explain.

An object persists just in case it exists at multiple times. But what does it take for an object to exist at multiple times? A fairly commonsensical view about persistence says that existing at multiple times is just a matter of being *wholly present* at more than one time. In other words, an object persists just in case *the whole thing* exists at more than one time. Persisting in this way is typically referred to as ‘enduring’; and so the corresponding theory of persistence is typically called ‘endurantism’. According to endurantism, every moment of an object’s career is occupied by the object itself.

The main rival to endurantism is ‘perdurantism’, which I will simply characterize as the thesis that objects persist without enduring. According to the most familiar version of perdurantism—I’ll call it ‘worm theory’, for reasons that will become clear shortly—objects persist by having distinct temporal parts at every moment at which they exist. On this view, material objects are extended in time just as they are extended in space; and just as objects have distinct *spatial* parts in every subregion of the total region of space that they fill at a time, so too they have numerically distinct *temporal* parts at every time or period of time in their careers. An object exists at a time, then, just in case it has a temporal part at that time; and an object exists at multiple times just in case it has proper temporal parts at multiple times. A temporal part T of an object X, according to the common intuitive definition, is just an object that exists for part of the

²⁷ Chisholm (1976: 138 – 9), Helm (1997, Ch. 7), and Sider (2001: 75) are among those who characterize him as holding this view.

total duration that constitutes X's career, and that has X's spatial boundaries at all of the times at which T exists.

As it is usually fleshed out, worm theory says that whatever name we use for an ordinary material object will typically refer to the four-dimensionally extended "spacetime worm" that fills the entire spacetime region that we would normally say is filled by the "career" or "lifetime" of that object.²⁸ Thus, for example, the name 'David Letterman' typically refers to the four-dimensionally extended object that fills the region occupied by the event that we would call *Letterman's lifetime*; the expression 'that table' refers to the spacetime worm that fills the region occupied by the event that we would normally characterize as the career of the table in question; and so on. Attributions of temporary properties to things are to be analyzed in terms of attributions of permanent properties to their temporal parts. So, for example, to say that Letterman was short but is now tall is just to say that Letterman has a temporal part that is (eternally) short and another temporal part that is (eternally) tall, and that the short part is earlier than the tall part.

But there is another version of perdurantism, usually called "stage theory". Assume that there are instants of time.²⁹ The stage theorist will agree with the worm theorist that every instant of an object's career is occupied by a distinct thing—a *stage* of the object. She will probably (though not necessarily) also agree that the stages of an object compose a larger, temporally extended object, a spacetime worm of which those stages are temporal parts. But the stage theorist will *not* say that ordinary names typically refer to spacetime worms. Rather, according to

²⁸ I say 'typically' because worm theorists also say that sometimes (perhaps often) familiar referring expressions refer to temporal parts of things rather than to the things themselves. Thus, for example, I might now say not only that I am human, but also that I am hungry. In the first case, 'I' can clearly refer to a spacetime worm; but in the second case 'I' plausibly refers only to my present temporal part.

²⁹ There is some question about whether stage theory can be developed apart from the assumption that there are instants, but I won't pursue that here. See Stuchlik 2003 for relevant discussion.

stage theory, an ordinary name typically refers to a stage—to what a worm theorist would call the thing's current temporal part. Thus, for example, *Letterman* is nothing other than whatever momentary Letterman-stage exists right at this very instant; and *this table* is just the present table-stage that stands before us.

According to stage theory, attributions of presently-possessed temporary properties are unproblematic. The claim that Letterman is tall, for example, is not given an analysis in terms of temporal parts as it is on DTP. Rather, it can simply be taken at face value as expressing the proposition that Letterman himself (the *whole* person) has the property of being tall. Past- and future-tense predications, however, are another story. Letterman was short (when he was a child); but if Letterman is identical to whatever Letterman-stage *presently* exists, then, strictly speaking, Letterman never existed before now and will not exist later than now. Stage theorists handle this problem by offering a counterpart-theoretic analysis of temporal predications. In short, the claim is that predications of the form 'x was ϕ ' or 'x will be ϕ ' are equivalent, respectively, to claims like: 'There is a *y* such that *y* is ϕ , *y* exists at an earlier time than *x*, and *y* is a counterpart of *x*'; and 'There is a *y* such that *y* is ϕ , *y* exists at a later time than *x*, and *y* is a counterpart of *x*'.³⁰ The counterpart relation is then analyzed in terms of *relevant similarity*, which, in turn, is normally taken to be a context-sensitive notion. In most contexts, stage theorists argue, the past stages that are relevantly similar to you are precisely those that the worm theorist would take to be your past temporal parts; and these, in turn, are just the stages that an

³⁰ This way of telling the stage theorist's story about temporal predications presupposes that merely past and merely future objects are somehow available to have properties, stand in relations, and fall within the scope of the quantifier. Can this presupposition be done away with? I think that it can be. As I see it, stage theory will fare as well (or not) under the supposition that there are no merely past or future objects as a counterpart theoretic account of modal properties will fare under the supposition that there are no merely possible objects; and most counterpart theorists think that the supposition that there are no merely possible objects poses no problem whatsoever for their view. This view is controversial, but resolving the controversy would take us too far afield. For reasons to doubt that counterpart theory is viable if there are no merely possible objects (reasons which carry over as reasons to doubt that stage theory is viable if there are no merely past or future objects), see Merricks 2003.

endurantist would identify with you at various times. Thus, the stage theorist is able, by and large, to affirm temporal predications (like “I was once a baby, but I was never a baby alligator”) that respect our commonsense intuitions.

Both stage theory and worm theory are typically—and some would say, necessarily³¹—developed under the supposition that *presentism* is false, where presentism is the view that it always has been the case and always will be the case that there are no non-present objects. Moreover, as I have indicated, stage theory is normally developed under the assumption that some things have temporal parts. Given this assumption, stage theory, like worm theory, is committed to the view that composition is not restricted in such a way that only objects existing *at the same time* can compose something. But suppose we drop these assumptions and yet retain stage theory’s counterpart theoretic analysis of temporal predication. We will then have a view according to which, strictly speaking, (a) *nothing* that now exists did, does, or will exist, at any time other than the present, (b) nothing has temporal parts, and yet (c) claims like ‘Fred was once a child’, ‘this table will probably be here ten minutes from now’, and so on still express truths. Insofar as stage theory counts as a theory of *persistence* (which is debatable, but generally accepted), this view too should qualify as a theory of persistence. It would be a version of perdurantism without any commitment to the existence of temporal parts.

It is important to point out here that stage theory, unlike worm theory, belongs to a family of theories about persistence whose members maintain that familiar objects exist at multiple times in the “loose and popular” sense while at the same time *denying* that they do so in the “strict and philosophical” sense. In other words, stage theory is one among several views according to which it is appropriate and meaningful, but strictly and literally false, to say of familiar objects that they exist at more than one time. David Hume endorsed a view like this, as

³¹ See note 29.

did Anthony Collins.³² Hume is often characterized as a believer in temporal parts. But, in fact, the view he describes—which seems basically the same as Collins’s view—sounds a lot more like a view that has, in recent times, been defended by Roderick Chisholm (1976), who is not a temporal parts theorist. According to Chisholm, only mereologically constant things (masses of matter, simples, etc.) persist in the strict sense. But other things (most familiar objects—tables, chairs, human bodies, etc.) persist in a “loose and popular” sense by virtue of having “stand-ins” at the various times that constitute what we take to be their careers. Chisholm’s view is not quite stage theory. For one thing, Chisholm believes that some things endure, whereas the paradigmatic stage theorist does not. But still, the two views are similar—and more similar to one another, I think, than either is to worm theory.

I mention all of this because it is relevant to the question of how to interpret Edwards. Clearly enough, worm theory provides one way—and perhaps the most natural way—of fleshing out Edwards’s claim that Adam and his posterity are “one” in the way that the root and branches of a tree are one. And this is the view that is commonly attributed to Edwards, particularly by contemporary philosophers interested in saying something about the history of the worm theoretic account of persistence. But to move from Edwards’s use of the tree metaphor to the conclusion that Edwards was definitely presupposing a metaphysics of temporal parts is to rest a lot of interpretive weight on the details of that metaphor; and it is not clear that this is warranted. For one thing, Edwards’s tree metaphor is substantially similar to Aquinas’s body metaphor. But no one wants *on that basis* to credit Aquinas with endorsing the existence of temporal parts. More importantly, we have to reckon with the fact that (a) in the 18th Century, no doctrine of temporal parts had yet been clearly articulated (even by Edwards), (b) the explicit (and non-metaphorical) metaphysical claims that Edwards commits himself to are clearly consistent both

³² Hume 1978; Collins 1709. See also Bishop Butler’s characterization of Collins’s view, in Butler 1849: 307 – 8.

with stage theory and with the views of Collins and Hume, and (c) the views of Collins and Hume were already in circulation at the time when Edwards wrote his treatise. I will not go so far as to say that it is a mistake to attribute to Edwards belief in a worm theoretic account of persistence rather than belief in the Collins/Hume view. But I do think that attributing to Edwards something like the latter view is at least as reasonable as attributing to him belief in the worm theoretic account. Indeed, superficially it seems more reasonable to do so, in light of his remarks to the effect that each successive stage is a “new creation” that is “treated as one” with its predecessors by “arbitrary divine constitution”.

That said, let us now compare the virtues and vices of our two interpretations of Edwards. I will begin with the Organic Whole Theory which, again, carries commitment to the worm theoretic account of persistence. After that, I will discuss the Fission Theory, which can be developed independently of worm theory.

2.3. *The Organic Whole Theory.* According to the Organic Whole Theory, every human being is part of Humanity, a four-dimensionally extended object composed of every individual human being, including Adam. If the worm theory were false, there would be no such thing as Humanity (or, at any rate, it would not be the sort of thing that could include both Adam and us as parts). It is for this reason that the Organic Whole Theory is committed to that view. And, on this view, we all bear guilt for Adam’s sin because we are all temporal parts of Humanity, which committed the sin of Adam by way of its Adamic temporal part.

But now four questions immediately arise. First, is it really true that we hold the temporal parts of a person guilty for the sins committed by that person? That is, if I, by way of my current temporal part, commit a crime, do we really blame any of my *temporal parts* for that crime? Or

do we simply blame *me*, the entire spacetime worm? Second, is this view consistent with MR? Third, is it really appropriate to view *Humanity* as a thing that *acts* and is thereby subject to praise and blame? Fourth, why, if this account is correct, do we bear guilt *only* for Adam's first sin and not (say) for his second sin, or for the sins of people other than Adam? I will take each of these questions in order.

Consider what a worm theorist will say about ordinary ascriptions of praise and blame. Initially, one might think that the temporal parts of a person are fitting objects of praise and blame because those temporal parts have all of the right equipment, so to speak, to think and act in the ways that ordinary persons do. Indeed, on worm theory, the only way an ordinary person can think and act is by having a temporal part that tokens particular thoughts and acts. But is tokening a thought or act sufficient for *having* the thought or *doing* the act? In my view, the worm theorist should say 'no'. The reason is that if she says that tokening a thought or act *is* sufficient for having the thought or doing the act, then she will be committed to the view that, for every thought I have, there is at least one other thinker (namely, the temporal part of me in which it is tokened) that shares that thought; and for every act I perform, there is at least one other agent that performs that act.³³ But that is absurd. If I am a spacetime worm, then the thoughts tokened in my temporal parts are *my* thoughts, not theirs; and the acts tokened by my temporal parts are *my* acts, not theirs. But then the responsibility for those acts is *my* responsibility, not theirs. And so I am the appropriate object of praise or blame for my acts, and they are not. To be sure, if I am punished for my acts, my temporal parts will receive the blows. But that no more implies that *they* are punished or blamed for my acts than the fact that my hand is slapped as punishment for a crime implies that my hand is blamed or punished. In the case of the hand-slap, *I* am punished

³³ Some worm theorists are apparently content with this consequence. See, e.g., Lewis (1983: 74ff). Donald Smith, (2004, Ch. 2) presses this point as an objection against worm theory; but, as the present discussion makes clear, I doubt that worm theorists are, as such, committed to the view that temporal parts of thinkers are themselves thinkers.

by having damage inflicted upon my hand. Likewise, in the case of ordinary punishment, the *agent* is punished by having something inflicted upon her temporal parts.

So far, then, the Organic Whole Theory seems to be in trouble. Note, however, that the views just expressed depend crucially on the assumption that the temporal parts of thinkers are not themselves thinkers. But what if this assumption were false? What if each of our temporal parts were an agent and a thinker in its own right? Then it would seem that directing condemnation at or inflicting damage upon a later temporal part for the crime of an earlier one would be a way of blaming and punishing the later part for what the earlier one had done. Would this be unjust? Not obviously so. But if not, then it must be the case that those later parts are in some sense guilty of the crime of the earlier parts. Of course, it would be misleading to say that the later parts bear guilt for the crime in precisely the same sense in which the earlier temporal parts, or the person as a whole, bear guilt for it. But perhaps we could do justice to our intuitions here by saying that the parts that commit the crime, and the person as a whole, bear guilt in the *primary* sense whereas the later parts bear guilt for it in a *derivative* sense (derivative upon their standing in the relation of genidentity to the criminal parts).

Presumably this is the sort of thing that Edwards (taken as an Organic Whole Theorist) would want to say about Humanity. On this view, Humanity is a moral person that committed the sin of Adam by way of its Adamic temporal part. Both Adam and Humanity are blamed for that sin, and both bear guilt in the primary sense for it. But the post-Adamic parts suffer the consequences of that sin, and they do so justly. Thus, they bear guilt in the derivative sense for that sin.

But doesn't this violate MR? Initially, one might think that it does. The later temporal parts of Humanity could not have prevented Adam's sin, and yet they are held guilty. Note,

however, that once we have the distinction between primary and derivative responsibility, MR is ambiguous. We can resolve the ambiguity by identifying three distinct readings:

- (MRa) One is morally responsible in the *primary* sense for the obtaining of a state of affairs only if one could have prevented that state of affairs from obtaining.
- (MRb) One is morally responsible in the *derivative* sense for the obtaining of a state of affairs only if one could have prevented that state of affairs from obtaining.
- (MRc) One is morally responsible in *any* sense for the obtaining of a state of affairs only if one could have prevented that state of affairs from obtaining.

The Organic Whole Theorist who believes that the temporal parts of persons can themselves be persons can insist that it is MRa rather than MRb or MRc that best expresses the intuitions that initially led us to endorse MR; and so she can claim that, once it has been suitably clarified, her view is consistent with MR. It is so consistent because, though later temporal parts of Humanity are held responsible for something they could not have prevented, they are *not* held responsible in the primary sense.³⁴ Whether this move will be plausible or not is, of course, debatable. But the point is just that once the distinction between primary and derivative responsibility is on the table, the conflict between the Organic Whole theory and MR is not at all straightforward.

³⁴ Note that this strategy enables the Organic Whole theorist to preserve MR without rejecting A1. Obviously enough, then, the claim (which I have made in several places throughout this paper) that the conjunction of DOS and A1 contradicts MR presupposes that MR is not ambiguous in the way described here.

Still, this version of DOS faces some serious problems. For one thing, it seems wholly inappropriate to view something like Humanity as a moral agent.³⁵ This is for the same reason that it seems inappropriate to view the temporal parts of persons as moral agents. Many, if not all, of my post-natal temporal parts have the right equipment to be moral agents. They have brains (or, at any rate, temporal parts of brains), and their brains (or brain-parts) token thoughts, acts of will, and the like. But, so I would say, none of my temporal parts is the *subject* of its thoughts, and so the thoughts tokened in my temporal parts are not appropriately ascribed to them.³⁶ For the same reason, none of my temporal parts are appropriately regarded as the agents of the acts of will tokened in them. It is not *their* experiences, beliefs, and desires that give rise to those acts of will; and so there is no reason to regard them as the agents of those acts. And the same is true for Humanity. It has a brain—indeed, multiple brains. And its brains token thoughts, acts of will, and the like. But, like my temporal parts, Humanity is not the subject of the thoughts tokened in those brains, and so there is no reason to regard it as the agent of the acts of will that are tokened in them.

Moreover, like Aquinas's view, the Organic Whole Theory lacks the resources to explain why it is only the guilt for Adam's first sin that gets imputed to all of the temporal parts of Humanity. And whereas Aquinas could at least *try* to insist that only Adam's first sin involved all of human nature, Edwards (on this interpretation) could not do so, for the metaphysical presuppositions that support the attribution of Adam's guilt to all of us transparently imply otherwise.

³⁵ Wainwright (1988) raises this objection against Edwards, though he does not develop it in the way that I do.

³⁶ As indicated above (note 33), there is room for disagreement on this point. But, as we have seen, saying that each of my temporal parts *is* the subject of its thoughts leads to an absurd multiplication of thinkers.

2.4. The Fission Theory. The Fission Theory, on the other hand, is much more promising. For one thing, it is more exegetically plausible since it, unlike its competitor, is compatible with theories of persistence that were actually in circulation at the time that Edwards wrote his treatise on original sin. Moreover, it provides the resources either to answer or to obviate all four of the troublesome questions that arose in connection with the Organic Whole Theory.

To see this, let us begin by considering a straightforwardly stage theoretic development of the Fission Theory. Recall the following remark:

And there is no identity or oneness [between the successive stages of a created substance] but what depends on the *arbitrary* constitution of the Creator; who by his wise sovereign establishment so unites these successive new effects, that he *treats them as one*, by communicating to them like properties, relations, and circumstances; and so, leads *us* to regard and treat them as *one*. (Edwards 1992: 224; emphasis in original)

In the light of a counterpart theoretic account of persistence (together with a counterpart theoretic understanding of modal predications), we may flesh out remarks like this and others along the following lines. What temporal predications are (objectively) true of an individual depends entirely upon what stages God chooses to treat as counterparts of that individual. The counterpart relation may still be analyzed in terms of relevant similarity; but, on this view, relevant similarity is an *objective* relation grounded in God's judgments. For the most part, we may assume that God's judgments coincide with our own intuitive judgments. In other words, for the most part, those stages that are objectively relevantly similar to us, or to other objects, are precisely the stages we would expect to be relevantly similar to us if our commonsense judgments about

persistence were true. And so those judgments *are* true. I was once a baby; I was never a baby alligator. And so on. However, we learn from revelation (plus, perhaps, a bit of systematic theologizing) that a rather unexpected set of temporal predications is true of each of us. It turns out that, according to revelation, the stages of Adam that committed Adam's first sin are relevantly similar to us in a way that suffices for their being our counterparts. In other words, for each of us, there is an x such that x is our counterpart and x committed Adam's sin. Thus, given our counterpart theoretic account of persistence, it is true of each of us that *we committed Adam's sin*. Notably, it is also true of each of us that *we were Adam*. But, as we have seen above, that hitherto cryptic remark has been affirmed by luminaries of the Church since the time of Augustine. Only now we have the resources to make sense of it. On the present view, it is literally true that *we sinned in Adam*, and that by Adam's sin, *the many were made sinners*.³⁷

Consider now the four troublesome questions that arose in connection with the Organic Whole Theory. Do we really blame later stages for the sins committed by earlier stages? On this view, yes. For, on this view, what it means to say that I (a momentary stage) committed some sin in the past is just that there is some earlier stage that committed the sin and is my counterpart. Is there conflict with MR? No. For, though I am blamed for Adam's sin, it is also true that I could have prevented Adam's sin. After all, *I was Adam*, and, by hypothesis, Adam could have prevented Adam's sin. Thus, A1 is false, and MR is preserved. Is Humanity a moral agent? On the present view, that question is obviated; for the present view makes no commitment even to the existence of such an object, much less to its moral agency. Is there an answer to the question of why only Adam's first sin and not his later sins or the sins of other ancestors of ours are imputed to us? Yes: the answer is that, so far as revelation teaches us, only the stages of Adam

³⁷ The claim that "we sinned in Adam" is based on an inaccurate translation of Romans 5:12b, one which greatly influenced Augustine's development of the doctrine of original sin as well as much subsequent thought on the topic. (See Wiley 2002: 51 for discussion.) The claim that "the many were made sinners" is from Romans 5:19.

that were involved in committing his first sin stand to each of us in the (objective) counterpart relation.

Of course, one might well note that, at this point, a fifth difficult question arises: On this view, it is entirely up to God whether, for any person P, the parts of Adam that committed Adam's sin are counterparts of P. Thus, except in the case of those very stages of Adam that actually committed Adam's sin, it is entirely up to God whether claims of the form '*p* committed Adam's sin' are true. Likewise, then, it is entirely up to God whether claims of the form '*p* is to *blame* for Adam's sin' are true. Why, then, would God choose for *everyone* to have those sinning stages of Adam as counterparts? Wouldn't we expect a loving, compassionate, and forgiving God to arrange things so that as *few* people as possible (rather than as *many* people as possible) are to blame for the sin of Adam?³⁸ Perhaps; but it is important to keep in mind here that, just as it is up to God whether to hold *me* guilty for Adam's sin, so too it is up to God whether to hold later stages of *Adam* guilty for Adam's sin. If it were really true that a good God would minimize overall guilt, then it should follow (if the Fission theory is correct) that a good God would not even hold later stages of Adam guilty for Adam's sin. But that is a counterintuitive consequence. The Fission theorist therefore has reason to reject the claim that a good God would minimize overall guilt; and, if her theory is to have any hope of respecting ordinary moral intuitions, she will have to sign on to a view according to which there is something good, fitting, or wise about God's choosing to ascribe guilt to a great many more stages than those that are actually involved in the commission of the various sins that have been committed throughout human history. Once she has accepted this sort of view, however, the way is open for her to argue that precisely what makes it good, fitting, or wise for God to ascribe guilt (say) to me for the sins of some of my yesterday-stages also makes it good, fitting, or wise for

³⁸ I thank Michael Murray for raising this objection.

God to ascribe guilt to me for the sins of Adam's stages. Notably, this is precisely the sort of approach that Jonathan Edwards himself takes in response to the question of why a good God might choose to ascribe guilt for Adam's sin in the ways that the Fission Theorist says that he does. (Edwards 1992: 225.)

I have so far been fleshing out the Fission Theory under stage theoretic assumptions, but it is important to note that the story could as easily be fleshed out under other assumptions. All we need is a theory of persistence that enables us to make coherent and plausible sense of the central claim that Adam underwent fission, splitting into billions of different people. That claim is singularly implausible under, say, endurantist assumptions; for there was simply no event in Adam's life that looked even remotely like an enduring substance splitting into billions of different people. But, to my mind, the claim that Adam underwent fission will be equally plausible (or not) on any theory of persistence according to which, at least for the most part, the persistence of ordinary things is only persistence in the "loose and popular" sense and temporal predications are to be analyzed in terms of predications of "stand-ins" or counterparts. For, on any of these theories, it will not be hard to tell a story according to which Adam, or some stage of Adam, counts as a suitable stand-in for all of us, thus grounding the attribution to all of us of the property *having committed Adam's sin*.

But what about worm theory? After all, worm theory does *not* fit into that family of theories whose members say that familiar things, for the most part, do not exist at multiple times. On worm theory, the central claim of the Fission Theory amounts to the claim that all human beings *overlap* Adam, having some relevant temporal part of him as their first temporal part. There is nothing incoherent in this; but there is at least one worry to be raised. The worry is that this claim does not fit naturally with assumptions that typically accompany worm theory. Worm

theorists typically want to say that the temporal parts of persons are unified by spatiotemporal and causal relations of a sort that seem not to hold between (say) Adam's temporal parts and mine.³⁹ Thus, there is a real question of motivation here: Why, apart from the fact that it is required by a particular theory of original sin, should we believe that Adam has undergone fission and split into billions of different people? Here, worm theory has trouble accommodating the Fission Theory for much the same reason that endurantism does: there is no *event* in Adam's life that looks like his splitting into billions of different people. And so it is hard to see what would explain, or ground, the alleged fact that Adam's temporal parts are among *my* temporal parts. After all, my temporal parts bear relations of biological and psychological continuity to one another that they do not bear to any part of Adam; and it is hard to see any other plausibly relevant spatiotemporal or causal relations that my parts bear to Adam's that they do not bear to the parts of many other people. Thus, absent further argument, the claim that Adam and I share temporal parts in common is implausible.

One might reply by saying that the temporal parts of Adam and me (and so of persons generally) are unified by brute, unanalyzable genidentity relations. But saying this sheds no light on why Adam's initial temporal parts and none others are shared by everybody. To claim that it is just a brute fact that this is so is perfectly coherent, but it is, to my mind, unacceptably *ad hoc*. But there is a more promising move that can be made. One might say that (a) sometimes, even if not always, the temporal parts of persons are unified by nothing more than certain kinds of *similarity* relations, and (b) only the temporal parts of Adam up through the time of his first sin are similar enough to the temporal parts of everyone else to count as temporal parts of everyone else. So far as I can tell, adding this claim to the worm theoretic development of the Fission

³⁹ See, for example, the discussion of identity criteria and persistence across temporal gaps in Hudson 2001 (chs. 4 and 7).

Theory puts it on a par with the stage theoretic development of that theory. So long as one is prepared to analyze our genidentity with Adam in terms of relevant *similarity*, there seems to be no reason to prefer one to the other apart from whatever reasons there are in general to prefer worm theory over stage theory or vice versa.

2.5. Conclusion. I have argued in this section that Edwards's theory of original sin is consistent with MR regardless of whether it is interpreted as affirming a worm theoretic account of persistence. Moreover, I have identified two interpretations of Edwards's theory (the Organic Whole Theory and the Fission Theory), and I have argued that the Fission Theory is both more plausible exegetically (since it, unlike the Organic Whole Theory, is compatible with theories of persistence that were actually in circulation at the time Edwards wrote his work on original sin) and also more philosophically satisfying than the Organic Whole Theory. The fact that either way of fleshing out Edwards's view is consistent with MR is actually bad news for Edwards, since Edwards wants to argue that attention to the doctrine of original sin provides reason to reject MR and related principles. Appeal to the alleged conflict between original sin and MR is an important premise in his argument for compatibilism about determinism and moral responsibility. But for those who wish to retain MR without giving up DOS, this fact is good news—at least if they are willing to reject endurantism and to analyze genidentity at least partly in terms of relevant objective similarity. For many of us, however, this will be too high a price. It would be nice, therefore, if an alternative were available. Happily, one is (though, as we shall see, it too comes with controversial metaphysical commitments). I will develop that alternative in the next section.

3. Original Sin and Conditional Transworld Depravity

The version of DOS that I will develop in this section depends on two assumptions, the first of which is central to a Molinist account of divine providence and the second of which is a natural concomitant. Those assumptions are as follows:

- (M1) For every human person P, there are counterfactuals of freedom, including some with false antecedents, that are true of P.

- (M2) For any counterfactual of freedom C that is true of a human person P, P is or was able to prevent C from being true of P.

For purposes here, a *counterfactual* is any conditional of the form ‘if P were the case then Q would have been the case’.⁴⁰ Counterfactuals of freedom, then, are conditionals of the form ‘if S were in circumstances C, S would freely do A’.

Many philosophers are inclined to reject M1 on the grounds that, in the case of counterfactuals of freedom with *false* antecedents, it is hard to see what could possibly ground their truth. The idea, roughly, is that if a person S is free and would remain free if (non-actual) circumstances C were to obtain, then there is nothing about S that makes it the case that she *would* do one sort of action rather than another. Perhaps it is true that S *would probably* do one sort of action rather than another; but, according to those who are inclined to lodge the so-called “grounding objection”, that is the strongest that can be said.

⁴⁰ The label applies most naturally when the relevant conditional has a false antecedent; and sometimes the label is used in such a way that a conditional counts as a counterfactual *only if* the antecedent is false. Often enough, though, the label is also used in the way that I am proposing to use it—to cover any sort of ‘if...would’ conditional.

Many philosophers are also inclined to think that, even if there are true counterfactuals of freedom with false antecedents, the truth values of those counterfactuals are not in any meaningful sense up to us. It is tempting to say that such counterfactuals are grounded in our character and that, if we are free, our character is up to us. The trouble with this, however, is that our character seems to be entirely constituted by facts about our history plus a variety of ‘would probably’ facts; and it is hard to see how these facts alone could ground claims about what we would (definitely) do in various kinds of non-actual circumstances. Moreover, those who endorse a Molinist account of divine providence typically want to say that God’s knowledge of counterfactuals of freedom entered into his decision about what world to actualize. But this claim, together with the claim that it is up to us which counterfactuals are true of us, might seem to generate a kind of explanatory circle. Since God’s knowledge of counterfactuals of freedom plays a role in his decisions about what worlds (and so what individuals) to create, it looks as if the truth of any particular counterfactual of freedom *C* about an agent *S* must be explanatorily prior to the existence of *S*. But if the truth of *C* is supposed to be up to *S* (or at least preventable by *S*), then it looks as if *S*’s existence must be explanatorily prior to the truth of *C*. And, assuming that explanatory priority is a kind of dependence, it would appear that this little circle is vicious: the truth of *C* depends on the existence of *S* which, in turn, depends on the truth of *C*.⁴¹

For these reasons and others, M1 and M2 are highly controversial. And so, unless the objections can be addressed, any theory of original sin that depends on them must be seen as a theory with substantial metaphysical baggage. My own view is that Molinists have gone a long way, though not the whole way, toward answering the objections that have been leveled against

⁴¹ For discussion of these and related objections, see (for starters) Adams 1977 and 1991; Craig 1991 and 2001; Flint 1998; Hasker 1989; and van Inwagen 1997.

M1 and M2.⁴² But it is beyond the scope of this paper to defend that claim. For the remainder of this section I will simply assume that M1 and M2 are true and attempt to build a theory of original sin around them.

Let us begin by defining some terminology:⁴³

x is *significantly free* =_{df} x is free with respect to some action that is morally significant for x .

A is a *morally significant action for* x =_{df} A is such that it would be morally wrong for x to perform it, but right for x to refrain, or *vice versa*.

x *strongly actualizes* S =_{df} x causes S to be actual.

The state of affairs S *includes* the state of affairs S^* =_{df} necessarily, if S obtains then S^* obtains.

S is the *largest state of affairs strongly actualized in* W by x =_{df} x strongly actualizes S in W and, for every state of affairs S^* that x strongly actualizes in W , S includes S^* .

P *suffers from transworld depravity* =_{df} for every world W such that P is significantly free in W and P does only what is right in W , there is a state of affairs T and an action A such that (i) T is the largest state of affairs strongly actualized in W by God, (ii) A is morally

⁴² See especially Craig 1991 and 2001, and Flint 1998.

⁴³ All of the following definitions are either duplicated or adapted from Plantinga 1974: 166, 173, 186.

significant for P in W, and (iii) if God had strongly actualized T, P would have gone wrong with respect to A.

Given these definitions, being free and suffering from transworld depravity (TWD) guarantees that one will fall into sin. This may be shown as follows. Let T* be the largest state of affairs strongly actualized in some world W by God; and let P be a person who is both free and suffers from TWD in W. Either W is a world in which P freely does something wrong, or not. By definition, if P suffers from TWD in W, then if God were to actualize T*, P would freely do something wrong. Thus, W cannot be a world in which P fails to freely do something wrong. Thus, necessarily, if P suffers from TWD in a world W, P will freely do something wrong. Obviously, however, it does not follow from this that it is necessary *simpliciter* that P fall into sin. The fact that suffering from TWD guarantees that P will fall into sin is perfectly consistent with the claim that it is possible that P not fall into sin (assuming, of course, that there is a possible world in which either P is not free or P does not suffer from TWD).

Given the truth of M2, each of us has the power to prevent our suffering from TWD. The reason is that a necessary and sufficient condition for a person P's suffering from TWD is that a certain range of counterfactuals of freedom be true of P; and, according to M2, for any counterfactual of freedom C that is true of P, P has the power to prevent C from being (or having been) true of her. Still, even though it is up to us whether we suffer from TWD, there is good reason to think that TWD is not an acquired property. To see why, suppose there is a person P who, up until time *t* does not suffer from TWD and then, at *t*, comes to suffer from it. Let T* be the largest state of affairs that God strongly actualizes. Now, consider the following counterfactual:

(CF) If God were to strongly actualize T*, P would freely do something wrong.

Given the definition of TWD, if P suffers from TWD after t but not before, then CF is true after t but not before. Could CF change its truth value like that? Some counterfactuals, of course, can become true or false. Suppose you undergo a change of heart toward your enemy. In such a case, it may well be that after the change, but not before, if you were given the opportunity to become reconciled with your enemy, you would do so. Thus, a certain counterfactual would have been true of you at one time but not at another. But CF is not like that; for CF is equivalent to a claim whose consequent quantifies over all times, i.e.:

(CF*) If God were to strongly actualize T*, it would be the case that there is (was, or will be) a time at which P freely does something wrong.

But now consider the following premise:

(P1) If P does A at t , then the proposition that P will do A at t was true at every time prior to t .

P1 is very plausible. Moreover, though some philosophers (including some theists) reject it, traditional theists have compelling reason to accept it. For, after all, traditional theists believe, among other things, that God foreknows all of the future free acts of all of his creatures; but such foreknowledge is impossible unless, for every free act A, the proposition that A will occur was true prior to A's occurrence. This, to my mind, constitutes good reason even apart from its intrinsic plausibility to endorse P1. But if P1 is true (as I shall henceforth assume), then, obviously enough, CF* cannot change its truth value. And if CF* cannot change its truth value, then TWD cannot be an acquired property. Thus, if it is ever true that P suffers from TWD, it is *always* true that P suffers from TWD. TWD, then, is a condition we have from birth.

Some, no doubt, will find it hard to swallow the claim that each of us now has the power to prevent the obtaining of a state of affairs that obtained when we were born. But the claim might go down a bit more easily if we keep in mind that one of the most popular responses to fatalist arguments is to say that we have counterfactual power over a great many facts about the past.⁴⁴ As we saw in Section 1.3 above, an agent S has counterfactual power over the obtaining of a past fact F just in case there is some act A that S has the power to do such that, had S done A, F would not have obtained. There seems to be no in-principle obstacle to our having such power over at least some facts about the past (e.g., facts like *its having been true one million years ago that I would mow my lawn today*, or *God's having believed one million years ago that I would mow my lawn today*); and Alvin Plantinga (1986) has argued persuasively that divine foreknowledge together with the possibility of divine 'fore-cooperation' imply that *most* facts about the past are such that we might have counterfactual power over them.⁴⁵ Thus, it is at least *prima facie* plausible that we might have such power over the fact that, from birth, we have suffered from TWD.

One might object here that, if we are willing to invoke counterfactual power over the past in our theory of original sin, then preserving MR becomes too easy: one might simply say that, for each of us, there is something that we could have done such that, had we done it, Adam would never have sinned. There is, then, no need for controversial Molinist assumptions or a stage theoretic apparatus; MR can be saved by the simple expedient of postulating counterfactual power over the past.

⁴⁴ This is the 'Ockhamist' response to fatalism. For discussion and development of this response, see the papers reprinted in Fischer (ed.) 1989, especially Plantinga 1986.

⁴⁵ At any rate, there seems to be no obstacle to our having counterfactual power over the past if presentism is false. As I have argued elsewhere, however, if presentism is true, the Ockhamist response is untenable. (See Rea [unpublished]).

But, as I argued in Section 1.3, the trouble with this proposal is that there is absolutely no reason to think that it is true. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, even if it were true, we would still face difficult questions about how we could be held accountable for Adam's sin. After all, if there *is* something I can do (or could have done) such that, had I done it, Adam would never have sinned, I have no idea what it is. So it is hard to see how I could be held accountable for not having done it. One might be tempted to think that *refraining from sin* is the thing that I could have done that would have prevented Adam's sin, and I can certainly be held accountable for not doing *that*. But keep in mind that, according to traditional Christian belief, Jesus of Nazareth refrained from sinning; and he did not thereby prevent Adam from sinning. Thus, it is hard to see why we should think that our refraining from sinning would have prevented Adam's sin.

On the other hand, by refraining from sinning, Jesus of Nazareth arguably *did* prevent himself from suffering from TWD; and, likewise, if we were to refrain from sin, we would prevent ourselves from having suffered from TWD. And so here is one of the main advantages that the present Molinist proposal enjoys over the proposal that we have counterfactual power over Adam's sin: Suppose that TWD is identified with the corruption of our nature that was produced by the Fall. Since refraining from sin would keep us from suffering from TWD, and since refraining from sin is clearly something that we can be blamed for not doing, it is easy to see how we might both have counterfactual power over the fact that we have been corrupt from birth *and* be held accountable for failing to act in a way that would have prevented our being corrupt from birth.

One option, then, for those interested in developing a theory of original sin under Molinist assumptions is to identify TWD with the sort of corruption that DOS takes to be a

consequence of the Fall. After all, it seems to be the right *sort* of property. We have it from birth, and we have it contingently. Moreover, there is no in-principle obstacle to supposing that our suffering from it is, in some sense, a consequence of Adam's sin. We have already acknowledged that, though the counterfactuals that constitute us as TWD-sufferers have been true from the beginning of time, there are nevertheless things we can do (or could have done) such that, had we done them, we would not have suffered from TWD. But if it is coherent to say this, then surely it is also coherent to suppose that if there had been no Fall, we would not have suffered from TWD. This by itself doesn't *guarantee* that our suffering from TWD is a consequence of the Fall. But my point here is just that there is no obvious reason to deny that our suffering from TWD could be a consequence of the Fall. Finally, since we have the power to prevent our ever having suffered from it, if TWD *were* identified with the corruption that is brought about by the Fall, the resulting theory of original sin would be consistent with MR.

But there is a complication worth mentioning. Earlier I said that the Molinist theory of original sin that I'd be developing would be consistent with both an Augustinian and an Anselmian view of the nature of the corruption that is original sin. But if we identify TWD with the corruption in question, it looks as if Anselmian views are ruled out. The reason is that, according to Anselmian views, our corruption consists mainly in the loss of a supernatural gift possession of which would enable us to remain free of sin. Of course, any view according to which we are free and according to which one can be blamed only for things that one freely does will be a view according to which we are in some sense able to remain free of sin. But I take it that, on the Anselmian view, it is not the case that the supernatural gift merely makes it *possible* for us to remain free of sin. (That was possible already.) Rather, the supernatural gift is such that, had God given it to us, we *might have* remained free from sin. In other words, on the

Anselmian view there is something that God can do for us (namely, restore to us the supernatural gift that Adam and Eve lost for the human race) such that, had he done it, we might have always freely done what is right. But to say that we suffer from TWD is precisely to deny this. To say that we suffer from TWD is, in effect, to say that even if God had done whatever he does in worlds where we always freely do what is right, we still *would have* sinned. Thus, there is nothing God could have done (consistent with our being free) such that, had he done it, we *might* always have done what is right. The Anselmian view, then, is ruled out.⁴⁶

Perhaps it is not such a bad thing to rule out the Anselmian view.⁴⁷ But it would be nice to be able to accommodate it if possible. Thus, I offer the following, second option to the Molinist: Build a theory of original sin around a notion of *conditional transworld depravity* (CTWD) rather than around TWD. Informally, to say that someone suffers from CTWD is just to say that there is some condition C such that, even if God had done whatever he does in worlds where both condition C obtains and we always freely do what is right, we still would have sinned. More formally, CTWD may be defined as follows:

P suffers from conditional transworld depravity =_{df} there is some condition C that does not include any of P's free acts and is such that, for every world W such that P is

⁴⁶ Here I assume (what is standard in the literature on counterfactuals) that 'if p were true, then q would have been true' entails and is entailed by 'it is not the case that, if p were true, then q might not have been true'.

⁴⁷ One reason for thinking that it would not be so bad to rule out the Anselmian view is that the Anselmian view might be thought to raise questions about the goodness of God. On the Anselmian view, we are subject to sin and death only partly, and not entirely through our own fault. For God could have chosen to withhold the sort of grace that was present in Eden only from those who sinned in the way that Adam and Eve did (and he could also have chosen to quarantine such people so that they could not interact with those who had not yet sinned). If he had so chosen, then at least some of us might have enjoyed the great benefit of a perfectly sinless life and a robust friendship with God. And so it seems that it would have been better for God to have so chosen. But if that is right, then it looks as if God's choosing to withhold the grace that was present in Eden from all of Adam's posterity is inconsistent with his perfect goodness. To my mind, however, this objection is far from decisive. For the problem here seems just to be an instance of the problem of evil generally; and so it seems that familiar strategies for responding to the latter problem will also apply to the former. Thus, perhaps there are great goods that God could obtain only by withdrawing his supernatural gift from the human race; or perhaps God's withholding his grace from us is the permission of a gratuitous evil, but, contrary to our intuitions, it is not inconsistent with God's perfect goodness to permit gratuitous evils; and so on.

significantly free in W, P does only what is right in W, and C obtains in W, there is a state of affairs T and an action A such that (i) T is the largest state of affairs strongly actualized in W by God, (ii) A is morally significant for P in W, and (iii) if God had strongly actualized T, P would have gone wrong with respect to A.

Like TWD, CTWD will be a permanent property of the persons who suffer from it; it will be a contingent property; and whether we suffer from it will be preventable by us. But, unlike TWD, suffering from CTWD is consistent with there being something God might have done such that, had he done it, you might (or even *would*) always have freely done what is right.

We may then flesh out our CTWD-based theory of original sin as follows. Consider again Aquinas's theory about the nature of the corruption that is original sin. On his view, the inclinations that lead us into sin were present in human nature from the beginning, but God had given Adam and Eve a supernatural gift, or a certain kind of grace, that enabled them to order their inclinations in such a way as to avoid falling into sin. On Aquinas's view, *absent that grace*, it is inevitable that we fall. Thus, we might say, it has always been true that human beings (at any rate, all of those who will in fact be created) have suffered from a form of CTWD whose relevant condition is just the absence of whatever gift or grace was initially bestowed upon Adam and Eve. This form of CTWD is not itself original sin; but, as Aquinas might put it, it is the 'matter' of original sin whereas the absence of the supernatural gift is the 'form'.⁴⁸ Moreover, we might add, the first sin of Adam brought it about that the relevant condition was satisfied. That is, it is partly because of Adam's sin that God chose to withhold the supernatural gift thenceforth from Adam and his progeny. And so the first sin of Adam is among the salient causes of our being such that we will inevitably fall into sin. But, since (by refraining from

⁴⁸ Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part I of Part 2, Q. 82, Art. 3; in Aquinas 1945: 676 – 7.

sinning) we are able to prevent our having ever suffered from CTWD, and since, on this proposal, we have the power to refrain from sinning, A1 is false: there is something we could have done have done such that, had we done it, we would not have suffered from the corruption that makes it inevitable that we will fall into sin. And so our being held guilty for the fact that it is inevitable that we will fall into sin is not contrary to MR.

We have seen, then, two ways in which our central Molinist assumptions M1 and M2 might contribute to the development of a theory of original sin—one Augustinian, the other Anselmian. Both views, however, must come to grips with at least one significant cost (besides commitment to M1 and M2) and one important objection (besides those that might be leveled against M1 and M2). I'll close this section by discussing each of these in turn.

The cost is that neither version of the Molinist the view offers any real explanation for the universality of either TWD or CTWD. On the Augustinian version TWD is universal as a consequence of Adam's sin; but it is hard to see *why* Adam's sin should have universal TWD as a consequence. On the Anselmian version, CTWD is apparently universal simply by divine decree (even Adam and Eve suffer from it). The cost is important since, as indicated at the outset of this paper, one of the main historical functions of the doctrine of original sin has been to explain (ostensibly in a deep, rather than merely superficial, way) the universality of sin. The two versions of the Molinist theory now under consideration purport to explain the universality of sin either by appeal to the universality of TWD or by appeal to the universality of CTWD and the absence of a certain kind of divine grace. But the depth of the explanation is threatened by the fact that it is hard to see what further explanation could be offered either for the connection between TWD and Adam's sin or for the universality of CTWD.

The cost, I think, is bearable. But reflection on the cost suggests an objection that, if sound, would be harder to bear. So far, I have simply taken it for granted that the universality of either TWD or CTWD would explain, at least in part, the universality of sin. But one might object that in fact this presupposition is false. For (one might argue) what counterfactuals are true of us depends in large part on what we do; thus, it appears that our behavior explains our suffering from either TWD or CTWD rather than the other way around. If this is right, then if the doctrine of original sin were developed along either of the two Molinist lines I have here suggested, it would be unable to fulfill one of its main historical functions.

Perhaps we could live with this; but it would be better if the objection could be shown to be unsound. And I think that it can be. Consider an analogy. The crystal vase is fragile. What this means, in part, is that, under “normal” circumstances, if it were struck (by a suitably hard, suitably fast-moving object) it would break.⁴⁹ But its being struck, even in circumstances that count as “normal”, does not *entail* its breaking: there are worlds where it is struck and does not break. So what shall we say about such worlds? Are they worlds in which the vase is not fragile, or are they worlds in which it is fragile but (miraculously) fails to break? Plausibly, they are worlds in which the vase is not fragile. For, after all, a vase that does not break when struck under normal circumstances is clearly not such that it *would* break if struck in such circumstances; and so, *ceteris paribus*, it does not satisfy one of the defining conditions of fragility. Whether a vase counts as fragile, then, depends in part upon what it actually does if and when it is struck; but if it is struck and breaks, its breaking will nevertheless be partly explained by its fragility. Likewise, then, in the case of TWD and CTWD. Those two

⁴⁹ The qualifier “under normal circumstances” is, of course, hopelessly vague. But I include it simply to signal the fact that I am here ignoring complications that arise from the possibility of more unusual circumstances—e.g., circumstances in which the vase’s disposition to break is masked, or ‘Finkish’, etc. Taking account of these issues would add greater complexity to the present discussion but, I think, would not substantially affect my basic point.

deficiencies are relevantly like (though perhaps not exactly like) dispositions to sin. To be sure, whether one has it depends in part on what one freely does; but (as in the case of other dispositions) that is consistent with the claim that what one freely does is partly explained by the fact that one suffers from it.

4. Conclusion

I have shown in this paper that there are at least two ways of reconciling the traditional doctrine of original sin with MR, the principle that one is morally responsible for the obtaining of a state of affairs only if that state of affairs obtains and there was something one could have done that would have prevented it from obtaining. The most significant metaphysical commitments associated with the strategies that I have developed are, on the one hand, a commitment to some sort of non-endurantist, probably similarity-based understanding of persistence over time, or, on the other hand, a commitment to the claim that there are true counterfactuals of freedom (including ones with false antecedents) and that it is up to us what counterfactuals of freedom are true of each of us. Neither of these commitments is wildly popular; but, if the arguments in this paper are sound, embracing one or the other will provide one with metaphysical underpinnings for an MR-friendly development of a fully traditional doctrine of original sin.

REFERENCES

- Adams, Robert (1977), 'Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14: 109 – 17; reprinted with additional notes in Adams, *The Virtue of Faith and Other Essays in Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987)
- (1991), 'An Anti-Molinist Argument', *Philosophical Perspectives* 5: 343 – 53.
- (1999), 'Original Sin: A Study in the Interaction of Philosophy and Theology', 80 - 110 in F. J. Ambrosio (ed.), *The Question of Christian Philosophy Today* (New York: Fordham University Press).
- Anselm (1969), *Why God Became Man and The Virgin Conception and Original Sin*, trans. Joseph Colleran, (Albany, NY: Magi Books)
- Aquinas, Thomas (1945), *The Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 2, ed. by Anton Pegis (New York: Random House)
- Arminius, James (1999), *The Works of James Arminius*, vol. 2, James Nichols (trans.), (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House)
- Augustine (1999), *On the Merits and Remission of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants*, in Philip Schaff (ed.), Peter Holmes and Robert Wallis (trans.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 5: *Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers).
- Berkouwer, G. C. (1971), *Sin* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmanns)
- Brower, Jeffrey (forthcoming), 'Anselm's Ethics', in Brian Davies and Brian Leftow (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Butler, Joseph (1849), *The Works of Joseph Butler*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

- Calvin, John (1986), *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House)
- Catholic Church (1994), *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday)
- Chisholm, Roderick (1976), *Person and Object* (La Salle, IL: Open Court)
- Collins, Anthony (1709), *An Answer to Mr. Clarke's Third Defense of His Letter to Mr. Dodwell*, 2nd edition (London: J. Darby).
- Craig, William Lane, (1991), *Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Leiden: E. J. Brill)
- (2001) 'Middle Knowledge, Truth-Makers, and the Grounding Objection', *Faith and Philosophy* 28: 337 – 52.
- Crisp, Oliver (2003), 'On the Theological Pedigree of Jonathan Edwards's Doctrine of Imputation', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56: 308 – 27.
- Davies, Brian (ed.), and Richard Regan (trans.). 2001. *The De Malo of Thomas Aquinas*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Edwards, Jonathan (1758), *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth)
- Fischer, John Martin (1989), *God, Freedom, and Foreknowledge* (Stanford: Stanford University Press)
- Flint, Thomas (1998), *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press)
- Forrest, Peter (1994), 'Inherited Responsibility, Karma and Original Sin', *Sophia* 33: 1 – 13.
- Hasker, William (1989), *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press)
- Helm, Paul (1997), *Faith and Understanding* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmanns)
- Hodge, Charles. 2001. *Systematic Theology*, vol. II, *Anthropology*, (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers)

- Hume, David (1978), *A Treatise on Human Nature*, 2nd ed., ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Kelly, J. N. D. (1978), *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper San Francisco)
- Luther, Martin (1976), *Commentary on Romans*, J. Theodore Mueller (trans.), (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications)
- Merricks, Trenton (2003), 'The End of Counterpart Theory', *Journal of Philosophy* 100: 521 – 49.
- Mohila, Peter (1975), *The Orthodox Confession of Faith*, trans. Peter Popivchak, <http://esoptron.umd.edu/ugc/ocfi.html>
- Murray, John (1955), 'The Imputation of Adam's Sin', *Westminster Theological Journal* 18: 146 – 62.
- . (1956) 'The Imputation of Adam's Sin: Second Article', *Westminster Theological Journal* 19: 25 – 44.
- Origen (1999), *De Principiis*, 239 – 384 in Philip Schaff (ed.), Peter Holmes and Robert Wallis (trans.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4: *Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origin, Parts First and Second* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers).
- Orthodox Eastern Church (1899), *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem*, trans. by J. N. W. B. Robertson (London: Thomas Baker)
- Plantinga, Alvin. 1974. *The Nature of Necessity*, (New York: Clarendon Press)
- Quinn, Philip (1984), "Original Sin, Radical Evil, and Moral Identity." *Faith and Philosophy* 1: 188 – 202.
- (1997), 'Sin and Original Sin', 541 – 555 in Philip L. Quinn and Charles Taliaferro (eds.), *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell).

- Rea, Michael (unpublished ms.), 'Presentism and Ockham's Way Out'.
- Schaff, Philip (ed.) (1998a), *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. II, *The Greek and Latin Creeds*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books)
- Schaff, Philip (ed.) (1998b), *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. III, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books)
- Schreiner, Thomas (1995), 'Does Scripture Teach Prevenient Grace in the Wesleyan Sense?', 365 – 382 in Thomas Schreiner and Bruce Ware (eds.), *Grace and the Bondage of the Will* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House)
- Shedd, W. G. T. (2003), *Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd edition, ed. Alan W. Gomes, (Philipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing).
- Sider, Theodore (2001), *Four-Dimensionalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Smith, Donald (2004), *Persistence, Persons, and Vagueness*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame.
- Stuchlik, Joshua (2003), "Not all Worlds are Stages," *Philosophical Studies* 116: 309 – 21.
- Swinburne, Richard (1989), *Responsibility and Atonement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Turretin, Francis (1992), *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 1, *First through Tenth Topics*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., (Philipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing)
- Urban, Linwood (1995), *A Short History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- van Inwagen, Peter (1997), 'Against Middle Knowledge', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 21: 225 – 36.
- Watson, Richard (1834), *Theological Institutes; or A View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals and Institutions of Christianity*, vol. 2 (New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason)

Wesley, Jonathan (1978), *The Works of Jonathan Wesley*, 3rd edition, vol. 9: *Letters and Essays*
(Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House)

Wainwright, William (1988), 'Original Sin', 31 – 60 in Thomas V. Morris (ed.), *Philosophy and
the Christian Faith* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press)

Wiley, Tatha (2002), *Original Sin: Origins, Developments, Contemporary Meanings* (New York:
Paulist Press)