Immaculate Conception and Original Sin in Recent Authors:
A Study in the Relationship Between
These Two Doctrines

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INTRODUCTION

"I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well (Ps. 139:14). In the very psalm from which these words are taken this is worth noticing among other things—that the inspired writer finds in the mysteries without and within him, a source of admiration and praise. ‘I will praise Thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Thy works.’"  

With these words of Cardinal Newman begins a study of the relationship between two truths of the Catholic faith: the doctrine of original sin and the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Both truths capture part of the mystery of human identity. One focuses on the dark side of human nature—that part which is imperfect and prone to sin. The other focuses on the bright side of human nature—that part which reveals a basic goodness and capacity for God. Both doctrines are held in the Church’s heart, for she has received these insights from her Lord. While the mystery of human nature can never be fully known in the finitude of this world, both of these truths help to explain this mystery.

However, this study is an attempt to find points of intersection in the coalescence of the doctrines of original sin and the Immaculate Conception. The language concerning these defined truths of the Catholic faith is inadequate to express the full depth of these mysteries, but the effort is a noble one. These precious insights arose from the Church’s pondering of the greatest mystery of faith, the Incarnation. The Church has always sought the answers as to why Jesus, flesh of our flesh yet God from God, condescended to come among lowly men to endure the suffering of the cross. In seeking the answer to this question, one must try to

understand what sickness man has that requires the healing of the Christ. How does the mystery of mankind meet His mystery? Equally as great a mystery is the woman who gave birth to such a One.

While it would be too ambitious to attempt an answer to all of these questions or to explore completely all of the inter-connections between original sin and the Immaculate Conception, it is hoped that at least some of them may be fully explored. The purpose of the study, though, lies primarily in trying to understand more deeply the mystery of original sin in the light of the mystery of Mary's Immaculate Conception. No new insights into that mystery should be expected in this study; rather, the question at hand is whether Mary's Immaculate Conception provides a confirmation of the existence of original sin.

When a painter attempts to execute a picture, he or she must first decide what to paint. After this decision, the painter determines how the subject will be treated. A favorite technique is the use of contrast between light and shadow. Careful attention to the interplay between light and darkness brings into relief the subject the artist is painting. In a literary sense, this study will employ the same technique in examining original sin and the Immaculate Conception. The subject is our own human mystery explored through the subtle contrast of light and darkness. The darkness of our human condition which tends toward sin will be contrasted with that which thirsts for God, is made in His image and likeness, and is light itself.

Certain basic assumptions necessary to the context of this argument must be enumerated. The first assumption is that expressed in Psalm 139; that is, there is a great and marvelous mystery about the human being. Human beings are more than animals which simply live a short
while and then die. Instead, humans are creatures of immense potential and desire; they are both matter and spirit, existing precariously in this world and always on the verge of discovering new horizons of being. They are light and darkness, capable of doing immense good, yet also capable of doing horrendous evil.

The second assumption is that God has fashioned humankind to be that which it is by nature, fundamentally good and not evil. The human mystery is a reflection of the mystery of God Himself. The God who created mankind is indeed all-good and all-holy and all-just. This accords well with the deepest instinct of faith. It is a faith that remembers the mercies of God from one generation to the next. As part of this faith it can not be believed that God would make humankind evil by nature. However, there is ample evidence that there exists within human nature a certain propensity toward evil and from this inclination many evil acts are committed.

The third assumption is that God and the human creature are inextricably inter-twined. Even though humans are made by God as creatures with finite natures, yet God who is infinite became one with humankind in Jesus. Faith again informs humanity that there is a purpose and direction in God's dealings, and that God is able to expand human existence beyond understanding itself. God gives reason to hope, even when the events of human lives appear meaningless and perhaps absurd. In humankind's union with God, life takes on a sacred character and direction and immense dignity. The starting point is the mystery of the Incarnation.

It is assumed, again through faith, that God does indeed speak to humankind in the mystery of His Word made flesh. This Word is the Word of life who brings salvation to all who accept Him. In the mystery of the
Word lies the meaning of all Christian doctrines and beliefs. Therefore, all that can be said about human nature as created by God and redeemed through Christ must be said as part of the revelation of God about the Word made flesh. Even the mystery of human nature's dark side which tends toward sin must be understood through the light of God's Word made flesh. The mystery of the Immaculate Conception herself can not be elucidated apart from this same Word who took flesh in her very womb.

The Church, it is believed, progresses in faith through successive insights, one building upon another. These insights form the tapestry of Christian revelation and are an integrated and cohesive system of understanding. This study is an inter-doctrinal one which assumes this well-integrated system of belief. Such beliefs can not be understood in isolation and will therefore be studied along with other related beliefs of the faith. The foundation of all these beliefs is that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

A search into the tradition of original sin yields helpful insights into the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and vice-versa if these two doctrines are carefully studied together. However, the field is extensive and it is necessary to find some way of analyzing this relationship in a more contained manner while at the same time not losing sight of the larger perspective. The approach of this study is to simultaneously examine the traditional doctrines of original sin and the Immaculate Conception and observe the points of contact between them. The reason for doing this is that these points of contact will lead further into the mystery of original sin and the Immaculate Conception, thereby lending further credence to these insights of the Church regarding the mystery of human personhood. Of course, there are many aspects of
revealed faith that are not able to be fully comprehended. The insights gained by this study may be beyond reason, but not opposed to it as such. Therefore, the results of this study should make the faith more intelligible and these mysteries able to be communicated more believably.

There are four points of contact, each of which will be focused on in its own chapter: (1) the theological meaning of Mary's personhood as revealed in the light of the traditional doctrines of the original sin and the Immaculate Conception; (2) the theological inter-connectedness of the two doctrines and whether the meaning of the Immaculate Conception can stand without reference to original sin; (3) the theological significance of the redemption in both doctrines; (4) the theological meaning of the devil in both doctrines.

In Chapter One, the four points of contact between these two doctrines will be discussed primarily in the context of five theologians under consideration: Rahner, Schoonenberg, Villalmonte, Alonso, and Fernandez. The reason for limiting the discussion to these authors is to contain the study within reasonable boundaries while faithfully reflecting the thinking of today's theologians. Modern theologians bring with them the contemporary world view, even if they have not completely accepted it or assimilated it into their theological system. Although this study is primarily concerned with these five theologians, other authors will be consulted as points of reference.

Since the 1950's there have been many attempts to define original sin. With so many scholars from which to choose, why were the five theologians mentioned above selected? Admittedly, there was some randomness in this author's choice, but there was deliberation as well. Rahner was chosen because his theological system reflects the tradition
while taking into account new ideas and insights, especially from modern philosophy. Taken as a whole, Rahner's theory remains faithful to the tradition of the Church as far as the doctrine of original sin and the Immaculate Conception are concerned. Schoonenberg was chosen because of his renowned work on original sin. His concept of the "sin of the world" was an attempt to re-think the original sin discussion in terminology independent of those seriously contended aspects of the tradition mentioned earlier; namely, the historicity of the Genesis account, the belief in evolution and polygenism, as well as other anthropological and scientific discoveries. Schoonenberg represents the voice of change and many theologians have followed in his path.

Since this study also deals with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, it is highly appropriate to include Mariologists in the discussion as well. Fortunately, three Spanish Mariologists have not only written about the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, but have done so precisely because of the crisis of original sin. Villalmonte and Fernandez represent the divergent voices that are calling for a radical change in the theology of original sin. Alonso represents the voice of tradition challenging the departure from the Church's consistent belief in the presence of this "sin."

All five theologians were contemporaries and each has added a great deal to the current discussion. One of the greatest difficulties encountered in the formulation of this study was the selection of specific treatises written by these theologians. In a comparative study such as this one, it is impossible to include in its entirety the tremendous bulk of material produced by these authors. In order to be faithful to their general theses, the author has taken great care in selecting the works
examined in this study. Each theologian was a prolific writer, and it has taken some effort to discover precisely how they understood the doctrines of original sin and the Immaculate Conception. In the first chapter the stage will be set, as it were, and the parameters of the study will be laid. A short synopsis of the doctrine of original sin and the Immaculate Conception as defined by the official Magisterium of the Church is offered. Such a summary will be helpful in analyzing the works of the writers reviewed in this study. It is this author's contention that the discussion of original sin in recent years has not been broad enough. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is a necessary corrective to this all-too-narrow analysis.

In the second chapter, a careful theological study of the personhood of Mary will yield helpful insights into the validity of the doctrine of original sin. The Church has proposed for the belief of the faithful that Mary was conceived free from all stain of original sin. This statement is an excellent point at which to commence, since the Immaculate Conception was thereby defined as belonging to the deposit of faith itself. In the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception there is an obvious relationship with the doctrine of original sin. This relationship affects Mary's personhood vis-à-vis God's grace in her and her humanity set in a world afflicted with original sin. She shines as a human being fully redeemed and yet fully dependent on God's mercies.

The third chapter examines whether or not the relationship between these two doctrines is an intrinsic one. It is the contention of this author that there is an intrinsic relationship between these two doctrines insofar as the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception can not be
understood unless the doctrine of original sin is indeed true as it has been traditionally defined by the Church.

The real issue that emerges in this study, however, is that of the redemption itself. This is taken up in the fourth chapter. How one understands redemption is of critical importance as to whether one accepts the doctrine of original sin; indeed, it is the controversy of Augustine and Pelagius revisited. What is human redemption, and what role does free will play in that redemption? How dependent on divine grace is humankind? By examining the redemption in Mary's life, which began at the moment of her conception, one understands that the very difference of this redemption for Mary illuminates the understanding of humanity's redemption as a whole.

Finally, the enigma of evil is explored in the fifth chapter. In examining the relationship between original sin and the Immaculate Conception, there emerges an aspect of the Church's teaching that has received scant attention in the modern era. That aspect is the reality of the devil, the personal being at enmity with God's plans—the one who is defeated by the Christ and the woman clothed with the sun. The neglect of this doctrine in modern times has led to an over-emphasis on trying to understand evil apart from its connection to the "Prince of this World." At the time the original sin was being formulated, the reality of the devil was taken for granted; therefore, this mysterious being is actually a part of the mystery of original sin, both in its beginnings and in its continued influence over human captivity.

The thesis of this study is that the doctrines of original sin and the Immaculate Conception are truly two sides of a coin, together revealing the truth of humans as creatures. It is perhaps a temptation of the
modern age to avoid things that seem too far beyond the pale of understanding. However, to avoid such mysteries, especially the mystery of the human person, is to impoverish the human world and wander down roads of self-destruction. Peter Henrici says that "to rationalize away the doctrine of original sin too quickly" would result in a great loss "to our understanding of the human being and to his history," and that this loss would be "incalculable."2 "Only in the full rigor of its character as a mystery can this dogma challenge theology as well as philosophy to deeper thought."3 The same can likewise be said of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. It is with this beginning framework, then, that these dogmas will be systematically revisited with the clear belief that they are God-given lights to an understanding of human nature.

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3 Henrici, p. 501.
Chapter One
The Original Sin Doctrine as a Truth to Revisit

The primary focus of this work is the doctrine of original sin. However, instead of simply trying to isolate this truth from the rest of the fabric of revelation, special attention is paid to original sin's relation to one other doctrine in particular, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Of course, other truths of the faith will also be employed in this study since they are all intertwined in this seamless garment.

As mentioned in the introduction, the question might be asked at this early stage why a study of original sin is being attempted in the first place. If original sin is a defined teaching of the faith, why must it continue to be studied? The answer is simply that this truth, even though held in the heart of the Church since the beginning, is presently being revisited by many scholarly theologians and has been intensely scrutinized for the past thirty or forty years. Some of these theologians have seriously called into doubt the very teachings of the Church with regard to this doctrine. Once these teachings are questioned, the whole doctrine must carefully be pondered again in the light of faith.4

The Church's beliefs regarding original sin must be closely examined. Because this doctrine is undergoing a profound crisis, the very foundations of the Christian belief system are shaken. As stated above, the Christian mysteries are all deeply inter-connected; thus, if any one of these mysteries is severely questioned, doubt casts a shadow upon all the others inasmuch as they are parts of an integrated whole.

4 See e.g., Siegfried Wiendenhofer, "The Main Forms of Contemporary Theology of Original Sin", Communio, 18 Winter 1991, (pp. 514-521).
In this regard, the new Catechism of the Catholic Church says: "The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the 'reverse side' of the Good News that Jesus is the Savior of all men, that all need salvation, and that salvation is offered to all through Christ. The Church, which has the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), knows very well that we can not tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ."5 One might also add that tampering with the revelation of original sin risks undermining the mystery of the human person. Since Mary is fully human, her carefully revealed mystery would also be affected by such tampering.

Before proceeding, one must explain why the doctrine of original sin is undergoing such a severe crisis in the modern era. The problem seems to center largely on the issue of a changing world view which no longer interprets the world in terms of static categories. One now sees the world as continually evolving and changing. Modern studies in anthropology and the physical sciences have raised questions about some of the Church's basic assumptions regarding human origins.6 Was there literally an Adam and Eve, or were they simply mythic personages used by the author of Genesis to illustrate a creation myth whose real intent was not a literal telling of mankind's beginnings, but rather a story of man's spiritual relationship with God and how that relationship became corrupted? In these modern times, can one still believe scientifically that the human race descended from a single pair of human beings?7

Modern historical-critical studies of the Scriptures have called into question the assumptions of the Church regarding original sin. This

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methodological approach has had profound implications as far as the interpretation of the Book of Genesis is concerned, since this Book contains, in the view of the Christian tradition, the real historical account of humankind's beginnings. Furthermore, if there were no true Adam and Eve (that is, a first pair), how did original sin begin in the human species? Was there a state of holiness and integrity (symbolized by the Garden of Eden) for this first pair, or were the first human beings primitive, undeveloped human creatures subject to all the vicissitudes of their biological world and only in the very early stages of moral reasoning? Was there really a fall from grace, an actual sin that Adam and Eve committed?\(^8\) If one adds to this evolutionist mentality the growing secularism of the modern world, the combination becomes lethal to the doctrine of original sin.

Despite the crisis of thinking with regard to original sin, the official Magisterium of the Church adheres to this doctrine which it believes to be a part of divine revelation itself. Original sin is not an optional belief in the Church, but a belief which must be professed by all who wish to be faithful to the Catholic religion. It is closely allied with the doctrine of redemption, of baptism of infants, of creation, of sanctifying grace, of the mystery of the Evil One, of the Immaculate Conception, and so forth. The removal of the belief in original sin (which some theologians are advocating) affects these other mysteries of the faith in profound ways. Is there a way to reformulate the theology regarding original sin, taking into account the various questions raised by anthropologists, scientists, and Biblical experts? Is it possible to

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reformulate the belief in such a way that the central aspects of original sin as understood by the Church are kept intact? Should original sin simply be discarded as an outdated vestige of the past, one that arose in the Church under specific historical circumstances and must now be completely eliminated in order to bring our theological system into the modern world?

These questions, posed by some of the most prominent theologians in modern times, demand an answer. In analyzing and comparing these writers' works in terms of the four points of contact mentioned earlier, it was important for this author to anchor his own theology of original sin to provide authentic comparisons with the orthodox tradition of the Church. A significant question immediately emerges regarding the tradition: What are the constitutive elements of the original sin doctrine that truly belong to the deposit of faith? The answer to this question can be found contained most prominently in the canons of the Council of Trent and in Pope Paul VI's *Credo of the People of God*, as well as in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The canons of Trent and the *Credo* certainly were a part of the context in which these five theologians worked. The new *Catechism* is the most recent affirmation of Church teaching regarding original sin, a teaching which has remained essentially unchanged at least since the Council of Trent in 1546.

The five theologians to be discussed in this study were certainly working in the context of the Second Vatican Council. While many in the Church have interpreted the conciliar reforms as a re-opening of the debates on certain Church beliefs, the Council provided no basis for doctrinal controversy. In regard to these issues of dogma, the Council sought to update the language used in the discussion of these principles.
Those who regarded the Council's decrees as a retreat from the Tradition were mistaken. While the Council provided a new language and sometimes even a new context in which to teach the truths of the faith, it believed doctrinal elements such as original sin to be integral, infallible, and objective truths. The following are excerpts from the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World:

What divine revelation makes known to us agrees with experience. Examining his heart, man finds that he has inclinations toward evil too, and is engulfed by manifold ills which can not come from his good Creator. Often refusing to acknowledge God as his beginning, man has disrupted also his proper relationship to his own ultimate goal. At the same time he became out of harmony with himself, with others, and with all created things.9

...Wounded by sin, man experiences rebellious stirrings in his body. But the very dignity of man postulates that man glorify God in his body and forbid it to serve the evil inclinations in his heart.10

Although never mentioning original sin by name, the Council most clearly affirmed its existence in the Decree of the Missionary Activity of the Church:

The sainted Fathers of the Church firmly proclaim that what was not taken up by Christ was not healed. Now, what He took up was our entire human nature such as it is found among us in our misery and poverty, though without our sin.11

The Church recognizes that the wound in human nature was not completely healed by Christ. When Jesus ascended into heaven, he took up the human nature, body and soul; however, because his nature was not subject to the wound of original sin by the special circumstances of the Incarnation, the original sin as manifested in ordinary humanity was not taken up and

10 Ibid., p. 212.
11 Ibid., p. 587.
healed. Christ offered forgiveness of sin, but He did not remove the inherent fault in human nature which causes sin.

Is it necessary for a Catholic who wishes to remain faithful to the official teaching of the Church to believe what is contained in those documents? The Magisterium clearly indicates that this is so. The documents cited above reflect the Church's tradition and are given at the highest levels of the Church's teaching authority. Paul VI summarized the Church's faith in regard to original sin as follows:

We believe that in Adam all have sinned, which means that the original offense committed by him caused human nature, common to all men, to fall to a state in which it bears the consequences of that offense, and which is not the state in which it was at first in our first parents, established as they were in holiness and justice, and in which men knew neither evil nor death... .

Most authors who treat original sin in the Tradition refer to St. Augustine's influence as making "an immensely powerful impact upon the intellect and imagination of the West." "The Augustinian picture is so familiar," according to Hick, "that it is commonly thought of as the Christian view of man and his sinful plight. Nevertheless, it is only a Christian view." Without going into the relationship between the "official" view of original sin recounted in this first chapter and Augustine's ideas regarding this mystery, suffice it to say that Hick is correct in his assessment of Augustine's powerful effect on the western tradition of original sin. However, there is also another tradition, which Hick refers to as the "Irenaean type of theodicy," that explains original

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14 Hick, p. 208.
15 Hick, pp. 217-221.
sin as the result of the first human being's undeveloped moral abilities, since according to Irenaeus Adam and Eve were "as children."\(^{16}\) This tradition stayed in the Eastern church as Hick describes: "The basic Irenaean conception of man as a creature made initially in the 'image' of God and gradually being brought through his own free responses into the divine 'likeness,' this creative process being interrupted by the fall and set right again by the Incarnation, has continued to operate in the minds of theologians of the Orthodox Church down to the present day."\(^{17}\)

However, Hick describes the alternative theodicy of Irenaeus as existing in germ form because it "remained undeveloped (like Orthodox theology as a whole) whilst in the west it was overborne by the immense contrary influence of Augustine."\(^{18}\) Irenaeus' thought is picked up by Villalmonte and Fernandez and developed into a theology that ultimately clashes with what Hick describes as the Augustinian view of original sin.

Denis Minns in a book entitled *Irenaeus* says that for Irenaeus Adam "was not created perfect, but rather created in the image of God at the end of a process of development...even though he says that Adam was created in the beginning in the image and likeness of God, there are signs of an attempt to reconcile this with the theory of humankind's gradual progress towards perfection in the likeness of God. This likeness of God was easily lost by Adam because neither humankind nor the divine plan of salvation had yet reached its fulfillment. It was necessary that humankind should first be fashioned, and that what was fashioned should be ensouled and thence receive the communion of the Spirit. Humankind needed to grow

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\(^{17}\) Hick, p. 223.

\(^{18}\) Hick, p. 225.
accustomed to learning divinity and God has to grow accustomed to learning divinity and God had to grow accustomed to dwelling in humankind."\textsuperscript{19}

In the West, influenced by the view of Augustine, Adam and Eve were viewed as mature adults capable of making mature decisions. They were created in a state of perfect integrity, and through disobedience they fell from this state to a condition of woundedness and dire need. Certainly as the Catechism makes clear from the passages cited above, the theology we presently have in the West concerning original sin continues at the official level to be viewed in an Augustinian framework.

Original sin is ultimately a very difficult mystery to unravel. As a race, humankind can not "remember" its earliest beginnings. However, human beings can look inside themselves and see that something is amiss. Why does humankind have such difficulty loving God above all things? Where does the evil in human hearts come from? Did God make humankind truly good, or both good and evil? What is the origin and meaning of evil?

To explore each of these questions would require a separate study. This author's interest remains in trying to understand original sin as it is presented in the Catholic Tradition of the West and as it relates to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. More precisely, this study is a modest attempt to see how the doctrine of original sin is confirmed in the doctrinal integrity of the faith. In any study of the mysteries of faith, one is terribly dependent on the light of the divine revelation for assistance. Even so, some questions must remain unanswered. Humankind is apparently not meant to know all at this time.

One of the primary insights of the Church regarding the redemption of humanity is that one woman, the Blessed Virgin Mary, was preserved from inheriting original sin. This truth also belongs to the Depositum Fidei. It is believed that "the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin..." The decree furthermore states that this "is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful."  

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church Mary was redeemed by Christ and "fashioned by the Holy Spirit" in such a way that she was formed as a new creature:

The 'splendor of a unique holiness' by which Mary is 'enriched from the first instant of her conception' comes wholly from Christ: she is 'redeemed, in a more exalted fashion by reason of the merits of her son.' (LG 55,56) The Father blessed Mary more than any created person 'in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places' and chose her 'in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before Him in love.' (Eph. 1:3-4)...  

The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God 'the All-Holy' (Panagia) and celebrate her as 'free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature. (LG 56) By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.  

The insight of Mary's Immaculate Conception was not meant to isolate her from the rest of humanity, however. Mary's holiness, even

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21 Ibid., p.81.  
22 *Catechism*, p.124, par.492-493.
from the moment of her conception, is held in the Church's memory with her other truths in order that one might have a more authentic view of human reality. Stefano de Fiores says:

It would be a grave error to present the Immaculate Conception, above all, as a privilege or as an exception, nearly as a condition totally diverse and isolated from all the rest of humanity. According to Scripture, everything that has come to pass in time is a realization of the divine plan of salvation designed by the merciful love and knowledge of God 'before the creation of the world' (Eph. 1:4). Likewise, the Immaculate Conception forms part of the salvific design of God of the 'sole and identical decree'---as the bull Ineffabilis Deus will say in more juridical terms---with the redemptive incarnation which God decided."

Mary's reality is ultimately turned toward humankind. In contemplating her mystery wrapped in light and grace, one sees more clearly the contours of humanity's own existence in Christ. Her human "being" inundated by the light and grace of Christ is like a beacon illuminating the mystery of the human race's own being.

The privilege of Mary is not separated from humanity nor from the Church, because the Immaculate Conception has a typological function for the Christian community and for each one of its members. The Immaculate Conception is not an aristocratic privilege, but a popular one, and in some sense, able to be participated in. Certainly, even in the splendor of the Spirit, Mary continues being anchored in the earth, in history, in the concrete fact of the human condition. Even though she has been immune from the sin and from the concupiscence that leads to evil, the Immaculate Conception has not been exempt from the most intense and vital human feelings, from the limits and from the cultural conditions, from the suffering, from the road of maturity and from the pilgrimage in the faith.

24 de Fiores, p.310.
Attempting to relate the mystery of Mary's Immaculate Conception to the mystery of original sin is an attempt to connect human reality to hers. She is thoroughly a member of the human race, and so her mystery has much to reveal. This is the first point of contact to be examined—the coalescence of the theology of original sin and the Immaculate Conception as present in the personhood of Mary. Mary was free from original sin; what does this reveal about her personhood? Does her personhood as freed from the original sin say anything about what that sin is like in the rest of humanity? Rahner and Villalmonde were selected for this first area of contact because they regard theological anthropology as crucially important in understanding the mystery of grace. Since Mary was full of grace in a singular way, her theological meaning is significant for human reality conceived without the sanctifying grace.
Chapter Two
The Personhood of Mary in the Mystery
of the Immaculate Conception

The person is the place where meaning is determined. The human person is also a revelation about God Himself according to the belief that we are an "imago Dei." Of course, the correct interpretation of a person's meaning can only be given in the light of revelation as God's self-communication of His Being to us. There are individuals in the history of salvation whose meaning is part of public revelation. Thus, David's personhood was meaningful to Israel as an image of the eternal kingship of God, finding definitive significance in the person of Jesus Christ. Indeed, all persons are truly interpreted only in the light of this one who is the Alpha and Omega of all things.

So it is with the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her very personhood, seen in the light of the revelation of Christ, becomes an interpretive key in helping the human community to understand more deeply the nature of the human person and its own purpose and final fulfillment. Because Mary perfectly reflects the whole human person in its full integrity, she becomes a symbol of God's perfect creation and elevation of the human being. This reality has been expressed in the Church in various ways, but the statement with which this study is concerned is the Church's proclamation of Mary as the Immaculately Conceived One. What does the singular privilege of being immaculately conceived reveal about her redeemed personhood, and what does this reveal about the need of human creatures for redemption? As mentioned earlier, the boundaries of this study had to be contained. Therefore, only
five authors' works have been chosen. However, other modern voices have not been entirely eliminated. The thoughts of other theologians are sprinkled throughout this work when necessary to enhance the ideas being discussed. Karl Rahner, however, provides an excellent point at which to begin the study of the relationship between original sin and the Immaculate Conception.

**Rahner**

Rahner spent a lifetime serving the theological needs of the Christian community, writing on a wide variety of subjects. He developed his theological system through transcendental categories of thought and adhered closely to Thomist theology in the Church. Rahner's interest penetrated all areas of theology (including Mariology), but he did not write a work that dealt specifically with the relationship between the Immaculate Conception and original sin. However, he did write on both subjects independently, always keeping the two doctrines in view of one another.

Rahner was often concerned with theological inquiry leading the faithful Christian to a deeper love of God and connection of the truths of the faith to daily living. In this context he wrote a work on the Immaculate Conception that expressed in laymen's terms what this mystery entailed. This work is used here to commence a discussion of how Rahner develops the theological significance of Mary's personhood in relation to the original sin.

Rahner begins his reflection by admitting that "only by an act of personal love of Mary in the Holy Spirit does the praise of her holiness, purity, and fullness of grace become more than the extolling of abstract
ideals simply labeled with her name." In terms of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, this is an important consideration to bear in mind. Some theologians try to reduce the doctrine to its mere function within the theological system, but the dogma is about a person whose transcendent meaning can not be reduced to a mere "abstract ideal." The qualities of Mary that Rahner brings to mind---"holiness, purity, and fullness of grace"---are those qualities that the Holy Spirit has inspired the hearts of Christians to ponder. Beginning with the Gospel of St. Luke, Mary was articulated as "Kecharitomene" (Luke 1:28), that is, "full of grace". Rahner fully concurred with Charles Journet, who in an article entitled "Scripture and the Immaculate Conception: A Problem in the Evolution of Dogma" says that St. Luke's attention (as well as the early Church's) was riveted upon the Incarnation. Journet asserts that "the only admissible understanding of Scripture is the profoundest: that which is most aware of the holiness of the Incarnation and of all that it entails; in a word, that which is 'mysterious' in the holiest sense." It would not be surprising, therefore, that Mariology developed along these lines: God became human, a mystery of most profound significance for the human person. God is all-holy, the one whose very name could not be spoken because of the great reverence held for Him. Who, then, is this woman who was chosen to be the mother of His Son? According to the logic of Christian faith and reflection, she too must be profoundly holy, pure, and full of the grace of God. Rahner maintained that it requires a special grace to understand the person of Mary, while at the same time this grace

was necessary to grasp the whole truth expressed by the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.27

Where is the point of contact between this mystery of Mary's holiness and the mystery of the condition called original sin? For Rahner, Mary's "existence is constructed in counterpoint to sin...The beginning of her existence is redeemed, is gratuitously preserved from the power of original sin."28 This is the commencement of Rahner's reflection on the mystery of Mary's personhood as seen in the light of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Her very existence is created "in counterpoint to sin." Journet, explaining why the faith of the primitive Church expressed Mary's mystery by the title of Theotokos, says that they recognized through the intuition of faith that she has been made proportionate to the sublime mission of giving birth, not only to the members of the mystical body, but to the divine Savior himself, insofar as it was possible for a purely human creature to be proportioned. The absolutely unique holiness of the Virgin Mary in the hidden order of grace is symbolized in the visible order by the absolutely unique miracle of her virginal conception. The salutation 'gratia plena'---full of grace---is only a pale résumé of these unimaginable favors."29

Journet's point allows for an even greater significance if one uses the exact translation of the Greek "kecharitomène" (most-favored one) than the Vulgate salutation he cites here. Journet notes that "it is in the light of this primordial intuition that we must read the entire Bull 'Ineffabilis'"; otherwise, one runs the risk of an erroneous perspective and continual misunderstandings. He then quotes from the Bull as follows:

27 Rahner, op.cit. p.131.
28 Rahner, p.131.
29 Journet, p.27.
When the Fathers and writers of the Church had carefully reflected on the fact that the Most Blessed Virgin was called full of grace by the Angel Gabriel, in the name and the order of God, at the moment when He announced the sublime dignity of the Mother of God, they taught that this singular and solemn salutation, elsewhere unheard of, showed that the Mother of God was the seat of all the divine graces, and adorned with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit; that she was indeed an almost infinite treasury and inexhaustible abyss of these gifts; so that, never having been under the curse, and participating with her Son in an everlasting blessing, she merited to hear from the lips of Elizabeth, under the impulse of the Divine Spirit, 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.'--Acta Pii IX, p.609.

In another article Rahner wrote on the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, he reminds the reader that

Mary is only intelligible in terms of Christ. If someone does not hold with the Catholic faith that the Word of God became man in Adam's flesh so that the world might be taken up redemptively into the life of God, he can have no understanding of Catholic dogma about Mary either. It may indeed be said that a sense of Marian dogma is an indication of whether Christological dogma is being taken really seriously; or whether it is being regarded (consciously or unconsciously) merely as a rather outmoded, problematic, mythological expression of the fact that in Jesus (who is basically a religious man) we undoubtedly feel God (here again a cipher for an unexpressed mystery) particularly close to us. No, this Jesus Christ, born of Mary in Bethlehem, is at once, as One and Indissoluble, true man and true Word, consubstantial with the Father. And so Mary is in truth the Mother of God. It is only to someone who truly and unreservedly confesses this that the Catholic Church can continue to speak meaningfully about her other Marian dogmas.30

Rahner and Journet state that the mystery of Mary’s immaculately conceived personhood is an indicator of the holiness of the Christ-event.

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Here is where the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception comes into meaningful contact with the event of the Incarnation. In view of the fact that an all-holy God enters the world through a human body, all that surrounds that sacred enfleshment is also touched by the grace of holiness. Only with the acceptance of this insight can a person meaningfully move on to explore the full ramification of God's coming in flesh. Thus, Mary's reality as the person closest to the event of the incarnation is also the person most affected by this Event. Indeed Mary can only be fully understood in the Christological perspective.

Rahner and Journet both indicate this method as the approach of the Church. It is in the same context that this author is studying the points of contact between the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the doctrine of original sin. One such point of contact is the person of Mary herself being uniquely graced and prepared for her mission as "Theotokos." As mentioned above, Mary's "very existence is constructed in counterpoint to sin." What could Rahner mean by this, except that God, in creating this woman, did so in view of sin itself? What makes a person most pure, most holy? Only the fact that God could fill a person with such grace that evil is rendered unable to touch its being. This statement begs the question whether a person could be so "constructed" and yet remain a human being. Knowledge of the human condition is only gained through a human nature prone to sin. All human beings are sinners; therefore, it is beyond human experience to know what being human means without at the same time being a sinner.

It would require an act of divine revelation to help one view (even from the perspective of our sinful natures) a human being created without the experience of sin. Mary is then a special sacrament for humankind---a
sign of a pure, unblemished human person. One can not say a pure human nature, since such a nature does not exist in and of itself. In reference to the desire of God to enter human history, Mary's personhood becomes an image of humanity as the race was originally created. A leap is being made here, but it is a leap that makes sense if studied thoroughly. Mary is not a separate species unto herself. She is a human being, as human as anyone else. She is a descendant of Adam and Eve. What is so profoundly different about her though is that she is a person of primal innocence with no trace of separation from God. She represents the original idea of man, but an idea that would have to wait for its definitive fulfillment in the coming of Christ. She represents the truly good creation of a truly good and holy God. She represents the mysterious plan of God for all humanity. As the early Church Fathers declared typologically, she is the new Eve. The old Eve was created in a primally innocent state as well since only good comes forth from God's creative hand and since she possessed the very breath of God as the Book of Genesis says. Eve lived as God's intimate friend until her disobedience.

Why was Eve prone to disobedience? This is indeed a great mystery, but one might conjecture that, in His inscrutable plan for humankind, God allowed Eve to fall from grace just as He granted Mary the unique grace and privilege of the Immaculate Conception in preparation for her role in the Redemption. Though this extraordinary grace was given only to Mary, her life lived out in freedom from sin becomes a visible sign to humanity of the possibilities inherent in human nature but mysteriously lost because of sin. This is certainly Rahner's meaning when he says that Mary's existence was "constructed in counterpoint to sin." What is the sin he is speaking about? The sin he speaks of is that which prevents
humankind from being the completely immaculate and holy beings they were intended to be as created in the likeness and image of God. Human life, unencumbered by sin, opens tremendous vistas of spiritual opportunity. Human lives would become a free act through which God is fully glorified and through which others receive the Word of God.

In speaking of Mary as the holy Mother of God, Rahner says: "Her life is the free act (maintained right up to the moment when she stood below the Lord dying on the cross) through which she received God's Word in faith and in her womb, for her own salvation and the salvation of all men. This was the moment for which she existed; then it was that there took place the covenant between God and humanity, which is eternal and definitive."31

Mary is the icon of humanity unspoiled, open to the Word of God, turned towards others, fruitful, and at peace with all things. One comes to know this only by pondering the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Who has opened the human mind to this truth about Mary and hence about humanity in general. What happened to humankind that it is not so constructed, so full of such marvelous grace, so unspoiled in its human nature? There must be some reason for this condition which is known (through human experience and the inspiration of God) to be flawed, weakened, wounded and ultimately sinful, inasmuch as there is not a perfection of holiness found within humankind and which seemingly ought to be there.

The person becomes in theological thinking the special locus of meaning when viewed in relation to divine revelation. Humanity's wounded and disfigured personhood has meaning, or rather can give meaning, just as Mary's holy and integrated personhood can also give meaning. To the

31 Rahner, p.205.
Church, fallen nature is meaningful in that it is the object of God's special love and concern. Rahner discusses human nature in the same context. He asks first of all

what we as Christians really think about the unbaptized infant. We say it has original sin, it is not justified, possesses no sanctifying grace, is not yet a temple of the Holy Spirit, and so on. We say all this without hesitation, and none of it calls for further discussion. But, if we go on to say that it is under the dominion of the Devil, that it is a child of God's wrath, a lost and rejected creature, then we hesitate with some justice. And yet we must grant that these assertions are identical in content with the former ones, or are their simple logical consequences. Why do we hesitate? We notice that we have abstracted from certain things in making the first set of assertions, and still more the second. This child of which we can and must make both the former and the latter assertions, is already, as unbaptized, an object of God's infinite mercy, in spite of original sin; it is included in God's vision of his only-begotten Son, and thus it has, if not yet realized, at least a 'remote' claim to inheritance with the Son... We should remember that in original sin (and so in all its formulations: enmity, wrath, damnation, dominion of the Devil and so on) we are dealing with a 'sin' which is essentially different from personal sin as the act of that freedom which permits of no deputization, a sin, then, which only falls under the same concept 'analogically.'

Rahner's reflections lead one directly to the relationship between the personhood of Mary as Immaculately Conceived and the state of sin from which she is declared preserved, namely original sin. Rahner does not mention here why the condition of "sin" exists in the unbaptized. Nor does he explain how the grace of redemption frees humanity from this sin through the sacrament of Regeneration. However, that is not his purpose here, and neither is it specifically this author's focus. The purpose of this present analysis is to discover the theological meaning of Mary's

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32 Rahner, p.207.
preservation from sin in light of the dogmas of original sin and the Immaculate Conception. Understanding of Mary's holiness and purity grew from an awareness of the holiness of the Incarnation in which she was intimately involved, but it remains to be seen how the awareness of original sin likewise grew in the Church. This is an important topic that, taken by itself, would require extensive treatment.\textsuperscript{33}

Rahner's statement that Mary was created in counterpoint to sin is an intriguing thought. Her personal creation was such that she was born into a situation of sin, though she was not to be contaminated by any sin. Her original construction, then, was necessarily unique since she alone enjoyed such a state of total sinlessness. The rest of humanity is constructed without such a protection against sin. Humankind's creation includes a propensity toward sin which seriously disfigures the original divine-like image in which it was made. Human beings were originally intended to be full of grace---created for friendship and intimacy with an all-holy God. Somehow the plan went awry, for human history did not unfold in the way originally intended by God. It unfolded toward evil and not toward God. Each human person is caught in this historical drift both individually and with the rest of humanity.

These ideas can be derived from the Church's teaching that Mary was conceived differently. She marks a new beginning, celebrated liturgically when the Church gathers to celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and the Feast of Mary's Nativity. In the liturgy of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the special privilege of Mary's freedom from sin is affirmed by the Church. In the prayer over the gifts, the celebrant

\textsuperscript{33} For a full treatment of this topic see especially Jose Antonio Sayes, \textit{Antropologia del Hombre Caido El Pecado Original}, Biblioteca de autores Cristiano, Madrid. 1991.
says: "You kept her free from sin from the first moment of her life."\textsuperscript{34} Although this part of the prayer could still be construed solely as a fullness of grace that prevents the ability to sin, the preface to the eucharistic prayer leaves no doubt as to Mary's preservation from original sin: "You allowed no stain of Adam's sin to touch the Virgin Mary." The preface absolutely confirms that Mary was not only the sinless virgin, full of grace, but was also preserved from the "stain of Adam's sin"---the same kind of language used in \textit{Ineffabilis Deus}. The fact that the liturgical evidence cited above is part of a solemnity adds even greater significance and import to the words. A solemnity, celebrated liturgically, is a salvific event important for humanity's participation in the paschal mystery. Furthermore, the prayers used for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception were maintained as part of the post-Vatican II liturgical revision. Even after the theological upheavals of the Council, original sin continued to be acknowledged officially by the Church at the highest level possible---the liturgy. This is significant because the Church recognized the truth of a very important axiom of Prosper of Aquitaine: "\textit{Legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi}" ("let the law of praying establish the law of belief"). J. Michael Joncas commenting on this axiom says that "Prosper's maxim declares that the liturgy is a primary focus for doing theology, a locus for exploring the beliefs of Christians, a source for discovering both the divine self-revelation and how it is understood and embodied by the followers of Jesus in history."\textsuperscript{35} Therefore, the fact that Mary is celebrated liturgically as having been

\textsuperscript{34} The Sacramentary according to the Roman Missal. Revised by decree of the Second Vatican Council and published by the authority of Pope Paul VI. (New York: Catholic Books, 1985).

preserved from "any stain of Adam's sin" speaks volumes in terms of the Church's belief both in Mary's immaculate conception and the doctrine of original sin.

Mary's immaculately conceived reality is a sacrament of hope. God has given this sign to humanity so that it does not end up in a state of total despair. The liturgical life of the Church attempts to capture this aspect of the good news. In the mind and heart of the Church, Mary is created to signal a turning of the historical tables. The drift into sin and alienation that humanity has experienced from the beginning is slowly being reversed until finally all things will be restored in Christ.

Mary represents full human life - what human life is intended to be. She becomes the star beckoning the human race across the sea of this life's confusion. It is not meant to be that humanity experience in a present way the freedom that Mary experienced throughout her life. For the rest of humanity the cloud of disobedience, sorrow, pain, and sin hangs heavily over human history. The amazing fact that only one person could give birth to the Son of God through her body is not meant to make Mary somehow distantly removed from the mass of the world, but is rather meant to signal a bright hope held in store for that humanity. In the end all is in God's hands determined by grace. Mary's personhood is a sacramental light. It indicated where the journey of life in Christ leads, and also points out the common need experienced by all humanity of a Savior who alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The issues, however, that need further exploration here are the justice of God that would permit original sin as understood in the traditional framework laid out above, the problem of how such sin is passed on from one generation to the next, and also why the grace of
Christ received in baptism does not destroy the effects of such sin in the baptized. Does the defined teaching of the Church regarding the freedom from sin enjoyed by Mary help to answer any of these questions? To seek some replies attention will now be directed to one who offers a challenge to the conceptual framework the Church has traditionally employed in answering these questions. Perhaps the very challenge itself will be instructive. Again there is a return to the personhood of Mary as a point of contact between the two doctrines.

**Villalmonte**

The traditional Church framework for dealing with original sin that Rahner upholds is not accepted by Alejandro Villalmonte. Villalmonte studied for a license in sacred theology at Salamanca. His doctoral dissertation examined the Trinitarian doctrine of St. Bonaventure. Villalmonte admits that he rejected the "old belief" because Haag and other scripture scholars were of the conviction that such a theory of original sin was not a biblical doctrine. Villalmonte also admits that evolution applied to the origin of man and to his history (especially as explained by Teilhard de Chardin) convinced him that the theory of original sin is incompatible with the modern conception of man and history. Furthermore, Villalmonte confesses that Flick and Alszeghy, in their study on the teaching of the Council of Trent, convinced him that the Tridentine doctrine, understood to be a theological conclusion lacking dogmatic certainty, is no longer necessarily binding for the faith. However,

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36 Personal interview with author. This quote and the following information was gathered through direct contact with Villalmonte.
Villalmonte concedes that Flick and Alszeghy themselves never fully arrive at this same conclusion.37

For Villalmonte, the Christology and soteriology of Duns Scotus concerning the initial grace of Mary ought to apply proportionately to every person that comes into the world. Villalmonte regards this as an inevitable conclusion of Scotus' thought. Although there are many contemporary reformulations of the ancient doctrine, nothing truly satisfies Villalmonte. He does not absolutely deny that man is born into a state of original sin, but he does not interpret this state of original sin as adversely affecting humanity's relationship with God. Villalmonte believes man's theological situation upon entering into existence to be one of grace and divine friendship in Christ, the universal sacrament of salvation.38

Concerning the Immaculate Conception, Villalmonte has followed the germinal content of the traditional doctrine in Scotus' Franciscan school. Thus, he speaks of Mary's original and initial fullness of grace. Since Villalmonte does not acknowledge the reality of original sin, Mary, like the rest of humanity, does not begin her existence in a sinful state. Mary's fullness of grace is one of the great symbols of the Franciscan vision of the man redeemed by Christ.

Villalmonte accepts the tradition mentioned earlier regarding the Church's deepening awareness of Mary's perfect holiness, but he does not accept as equally authentic the Tradition of the Church that accepted

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37 Personal Correspondence with the author, letter dated September 6, 1994.

"El evolucionismo aplicado al origen del hombre y de su historia (v.gr, en Teilhard de Chardin) me convencieron de que la teoría del pecado original es incompatible con la moderna concepción del hombre y de la historia. M. Flick-Z. Alszeghy en su estudio sobre la enseñanza del concilio de Trento me convencieron (aunque no llegan tal conclusión) que la doctrina tridentina al respecto carece hoy de obligatoriedad."

38 Personal Correspondence with the author, letter dated September 6, 1994.
original sin as a universal condition of all people. He expressed it thusly: "No obstante la seguridad que los teólogos y todos los creyentes han tenido durante siglos sobre esta cuestión, parece que se impone una actitud de reserva y aún de discrepancia expresa: No parece demostrada la doctrina tradicional, según la cual todo hombre contrae el pecado original en el momento de su concepción; aún cuando la palabra 'pecado' se aplique sólo analógicamente a este singular pecado primero."

Villalmonte's reason for refusing to believe in the existence of original sin is that he does not find it clearly mentioned in the sources of revelation. He believes that original sin is a theologoumenon that arose to protect the Church's doctrine that all people are in need of redemption. His argumentation is easily obtained in the work cited and in another article entitled "¿Pecado Original O Santidad Originaria?" ("Original Sin or Original Holiness?").

What is important for this study's purpose is the effect his denial of original sin has upon his understanding of the Immaculate Conception. Is Mary's personhood still understood in the same way as those who hold to a belief in original sin? This is exactly the question Villalmonte proposes for himself. Villalmonte admits "que el dogma de la Inmaculada en modo alguno confirma la creencia en el pecado original; y que aunque éste se niegue en absoluto, no por eso carecen de alcance significativo las palabras definitorias."
Villalmonte asserts that the real sense of the bull defining Mary's Immaculate Conception was that she received a singular grace and privilege. This consisted of the fact that Mary received, from the first instant of her creation, the grace of Christ and she received it in a perfect form. For Villalmonte this is a more accurate expression of the faith of the Church, more in line with the sources of revelation. Since original sin, in Villalmonte's opinion, is shown to be unsupported by the sources of revelation, the Church can still retain the authentic sense of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception without reference to an original sin. Villalmonte acknowledges that belief in original sin is an undeniable presupposition in the mind of Pius IX and of the recipient of the bull Ineffabilis. But, Villalmonte continues, "even though such a presupposition is shown to be false, it is still possible to hold the correct sense of both what is positive and negative in the bull." Villalmonte argues that the insight which led the Church to consider Mary as "La Virgin Santissima" is preserved in the Church of the East and the West. The only point in the dogma which is shown to be false is the idea that she was preserved from original sin. Considering Villalmonte's decision to eliminate original sin, one ought to recall the earlier discussion of Rahner's description of Mary as a counterpoint to sin. Rahner's approach to the theology of the Blessed Mother acknowledges a negative force that Villalmonte wants to avoid. He desires to avoid it because he does not believe in original sin. He believes instead in original blessing. Furthermore, Villalmonte does not believe that Rahner's method of understanding the grace of Mary is ultimately as fruitful as a

43 Villalmonte, p.50.
44 Villalmonte, p.50.
45 Villalmonte, p.50.
purely positive approach. In this he follows the Irenaean approach to original sin as mentioned in the first chapter.

However, although Villalmonte indicates that he wants to follow a positive approach to the human condition, an approach he believes is influenced by an Irenaen world view, in reality Irenaeus himself observed that there was a true original sin and that this sin had rather dramatic consequences. Minns indicates that for Irenaeus "the sin of Adam and Eve was a sin of disobedience, and precisely the sort of disobedience one might expect of children or adolescents. Told that something of inestimable value (likeness to God) was to be bestowed upon them when they were ready to receive it, they refused to wait. They wanted everything and they wanted it at once...Although their disobedience was thus characteristically childish, and therefore understandable and excusable, it nevertheless had momentous consequences. For it was not disobedience of an arbitrary command, but disobedience of the divine economy itself, a refusal to accept that they were only creatures and not gods, and that likeness to God was to be had only by God's gift, and only when they had grown strong enough to bear it."46

This being said, it is true, nonetheless, that Irenaeus' approach to the human condition is far more optimistic than that presented in the West by St. Augustine. Whereas for Augustine the return of the human being to a state of becoming is part of the sadness of the human condition, for Irenaeus "the very creatureliness of the creature, in the fact that its nature is to become, that is, to change, is the possibility of an unending progression and development toward Being, toward God. The creature cannot cease to belong to the World of Becoming, for that would mean it

would have to cease being a creature and become God, which, of course, is impossible. But, instead of dwelling on the instability inherent in the condition of Becomingness, Irenaeus emphasizes the possibility of growth and development which is also inherent in it... For Irenaeus", according to Minns, "to be in the condition of Becoming is simply the equivalent of ‘to be a creature’, and therefore the development of the creature, the unending progression from Becoming to Being, is only possible because God is always creating the creature, always drawing it from Becoming to Being. The whole process of development is identical with the creative act of God."47

Here we have perhaps again a re-visiting of two divergent points of view regarding human existence after the Fall. Rahner is influenced by St. Augustine and St. Thomas and views original sin as a more serious tragedy for humanity because this sin leaves the human person so wounded, so bereft of any ability to orient himself toward God. He is totally at God’s mercy. Villalmonte, however, is influenced by Irenaeus and develops a much less pessimistic view of the human condition. For him all humanity is simply in a state of being perfected, and like Irenaeus this is considered to be a positive reality.

But, even if one were to assume that Villalmonte’s denial of original sin is correct, his theology would still provide no greater insights into the mystery of Mary’s preservation from sin. As a matter of fact, this author contends it provides less insight. The mystery of evil, difficult as it is to comprehend, must be seriously dealt with as a key component in any sincere treatment of theological anthropology. Much will depend upon how one understands the fact of the influence of evil upon humanity’s

47 Minns, p. 70
relationship with God. As a human being, one is not simply oriented to
good in perfect integrity. If such were the case, humanity would not be as
inclined to evil, though the contrary is certainly true in light of human
experience. If on coming into the world human creation were totally holy
and immaculate, it would be a complete "yes" to God. The fact that
humans have the tendencies they do must come from a basic disorientation
of their nature, an unholy aspect of their being. Admittedly, this is an
Augustinian premise, but Augustine obtained it from his reading of the
Pauline epistles. Human beings in their finitude commit not only errors in
judgment, but real evil acts as well. From whence do these evil acts come
if not from a darkened human will subject to the incomprehensible
mystery of evil?

The intuition of the Church regards Mary as blessed among all women
and full of grace. For the Fathers of the Church, grace was an interior
reality that helped mankind orient his heart and mind toward God. It was
given in full measure to Mary so that she would be made truly one with her
divine Son in the work of perfecting creation. John Henry Cardinal
Newman noticed this aspect of grace in relationship to Mary and expressed
it thusly:

...If Eve had this supernatural inward gift given her from this
first moment of her personal existence, is it possible to deny
that Mary too had this gift from the very first moment of her
personal existence? I do not know how to resist this
inference:---well, this is simply and literally the dogma of the
Immaculate Conception.48

Grace is given to wounded human nature to effect a healing and
reorientation toward God. The theology displayed in this study follows

48 J.H. Newman, "Certain difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic teaching, considered in a letter addressed to the
this pattern of thinking. In the article cited above, Rahner expands the discussion to include the difficult mystery of grace in relation to human free will. Rahner points out that Mary's own freedom as a human creature "is already predestined in God's will with respect to Christ, the Incarnate Redeemer of the generation of Adam." Rahner continues: "Yet in this election is also included the choice of Mary as the Holy One, as she has been most perfectly redeemed. That is to say, in God's absolute and unconditional will the Redeemer should come from Mary and her free "Fiat," his will is that she should be the most perfectly redeemed in this free motherhood itself. For here 'office' and personal holiness must coincide."  

This is a crucial point for Rahner and a key to understanding more deeply the existence of original sin in light of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Rahner notes that in God's own mysterious will for Mary, not only her "office," that to which she is called, but also her "personal holiness" must coincide. Mary's personal holiness is the subject of the Church's definition. What is involved in "personal holiness" as far as the Church is concerned? Rahner and Villamonte both admit "that Mary is the perfect, exemplar, pure case of redemption in general." This point is important and will be explored in greater detail later on in this study. What is meant, however, by a "pure case of redemption?" Does redemption necessarily presuppose an earlier temporal condition of sin and alienation from God? This crucially important question will be discussed later in great detail, for it is too advanced for the present stage of this study. However, an impasse has been reached concerning the dialogue of Rahner.

50 Rahner, p.209.
51 Rahner, p.30.
and Villalmente. Both theologians have asserted that Mary is the perfect exemplar of redemption. Nevertheless, Rahner and Villalmente diverge on the question of original sin; for one, original sin exists and for the other it does not. This author's investigation is unable to proceed further until the question of redemption proposed above is examined in greater detail.

Thus far, one aspect of the connection between the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the dogma of original sin has been examined. The point of contact expounded upon is the personhood of Mary as she is revealed in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. An analysis of Rahner and Villalmente's writings reveals that Mary's being is understood in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception as uniquely graced, holy, immaculate, and perfectly redeemed. But, Villalmente contends that original sin is not of decisive importance in understanding Mary's Immaculate Conception and the fact that she is perfectly redeemed. As a matter of fact, even if original sin were entirely eliminated, according to Villalmente the meaning of the Immaculate Conception would remain the same. Therefore, this study has reached an important crossroad—the issue of redemption itself. How one interprets the redemption is crucial to understanding the full import of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. But before proceeding directly to an understanding of the relationship between original sin and the Immaculate Conception through contact with the doctrine of redemption, an examination will first be made of the language of the official bull proclaiming Mary's preservation from original sin. This in turn will indicate the need to examine in some detail whether there is an intrinsic relationship between these two doctrines at least as demonstrated by the language of the church's magisterium.
The Language of Ineffabilis Deus

The language in the bull *Ineffabilis Deus* suggests the presence of an intrinsic relationship between the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the doctrine of original sin. John MacQuarrie says, "It is a language which, in some respects, seems very strange to us today. For example, the imagery of sin as 'stain' (labe) may well strike us as too impersonal; while the stress on Mary's being 'preserved' (praeservatum) from original sin may well seem far too negative, as does the heavy emphasis on original sin which hangs like a cloud over the whole dogma."\(^{52}\)

Perhaps this "negativism" is what Villalmonte, and later in this study Fernandez, are reacting to in the definition of the Immaculate Conception. These theologians would like to express the truth that Mary is immaculately conceived, that she began her existence in a special state of grace, but they do not wish to refer to this special state of grace as an exemption from the human condition of original sinfulness.

MacQuarrie asks: "Is it possible to find a new and different approach to the mystery of Mary's person---an approach that will continue to assert whatever belongs to Catholic truth in the dogma of 1854 but one that will use more definitely personal and affirmative modes of expression? I think it is."\(^{53}\)

Rahner and the new catechism, as we have seen, both indicate that original sin is "sin" only analogically. It is not something committed, but something contracted. MacQuarrie argues that understanding original sin as a kind of stain suggests that sin is something quasi-physical, and more


\(^{53}\) MacQuarrie, p.93.
than that, something that can exist in its own right in a Manichaean fashion. He prefers to substitute this idea of original sin for a more personal and up-to-date way of understanding sin; namely, sin as alienation or estrangement. The sinner is alienated from God and consequently from his neighbor and even from himself. "Original sin is that corporate alienation of the whole race from God that distorts human society."54

While MacQuarrie's point is well taken it does not seem to go far enough. It is true that original sin should not be conceived in a physicalist way, but at the same time, it is something that mysteriously wounds the human person. The idea of "corporate alienation" captures only part of the reality of original sin. The other part is the woundedness inherent in each individual.

The fact that a single human person is declared exempted from that sense of "corporate alienation" should be sufficient evidence to demonstrate that it is also very much an individual phenomenon. Perhaps that is one of the implications of the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception. That is, that original sin cannot be reduced to simply "the sin of the world" or "corporate alienation". Ironically, MacQuarrie, although trying to find new language for the dogma of the Immaculate Conception that would be more personal ends up by employing language that seems more de-personalized.

The language of the bull Ineffabilis Deus tries to capture a significant aspect of Mary's existence. She is not like the rest of mankind because she has received a "singular grace". And that singular grace has to do with her preservation from original sin. As Rahner says, she is

54 MacQuarrie, p.93.
created in counterpoint to sin, particularly original sin. One of the reasons why Mary can be truly venerated in the church in such a profound way is because of the singular grace that defined her subsequent response to God. As a matter of fact, we look to her as a pure case of human holiness. Her whole being is unmarred, undeformed by sin, totally integrated, and responsive to God's word. St. Luke simply says she was "full of grace" (Luke 1:28).

One's interpretation of the origin of man is extremely important because it not only determines a certain world view, but the way in which humankind reacts to the situation of the world as well. This is why the Book of Genesis is so important in Judaeo-Christian theology---it describes the starting point of human history. It details the divergence of humankind from the path of true peace. The theology of original sin and the theology of Mary are related in this aspect. According to the Catholic tradition, Mary's origin and development are remarkably different from the other descendants of Adam and Eve. The bull Ineffabilis employs language that undoubtedly connects Mary's Immaculate Conception with freedom from original sin. This is a clear indication of the Church's understanding of Mary's privilege in receiving such a singular grace.

Although Villalmonterte and Fernandez deny the reality of original sin, the use of language in the Church's official declaration of Mary's Immaculate Conception must be dealt with as a considerable force in support of original sin. Alonso, among many others, refers to this point of contact directly. Villalmonterte's assertion that Pope Pius IX was conditioned to speak in this way is not very persuasive. Pius IX simply reiterated a conclusion the Church had arrived at after an intensive discussion lasting several centuries. The discussion took for granted the
existence of original sin and naturally had to deal with this reality in speaking of Mary's preservative redemption. Even given the language of Ineffabilis Deus, the question remains as to whether original sin must necessarily be connected with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in order to remain faithful to the Church. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception is a solemnly defined teaching of the Church, indicating that the Magisterium views this teaching as truly revealed by God. What then is the nature of the relationship between these two doctrines? The language of Ineffabilis Deus which employed such terms as "preserved from all stain of original sin", "singular grace", and "in the first moment of her conception" certainly makes it evident that the two dogmas complement one another; however, it remains to be seen whether they are in some way inter-dependent.
Chapter Three
Towards an Intrinsic Relationship Between
The Doctrines

In order to demonstrate an intrinsic relationship between original sin and the Immaculate Conception, one must leave Rahner and Villalmonte temporarily and bring three new theologians into the discussion---Joachim Alonso, Domiciano Fernandez, and Piet Schoonenberg. The writings of these authors are most pertinent to the issue which must now be explored in some detail, i.e. whether or not there is an interdependence between the doctrines under consideration.

In the last chapter, the crux of the problem in describing this relationship was identified. Rahner and Villalmonte both see Mary as the perfect exemplar of the redemption, yet both understand her redeemed personhood differently in respect to original sin. Since the two theologians both accept the general tenets of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception without agreeing on the key issue of original sin, there would at first sight appear to be no intrinsic relationship between the two doctrines. However, as was also demonstrated, the language of the bull, Ineffabilis Deus certainly suggests there is an intrinsic relationship between these two Doctrines. It is important to examine this issue more closely. Does the dogma of the Immaculate Conception need to be understood in the context of Mary's preservation from original sin? Does the sense of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception vanish if reference to original sin is eliminated? To answer these questions, other theological interpretations must be consulted.
Schoonenberg

Schoonenberg's theological position regarding original sin is an effort to reinterpret this doctrine according to the needs of the modern world. Those needs, as mentioned earlier, have to do with the changing world view, the loss of belief in Adam and Eve, and so forth. Schoonenberg's theology is problematic in that he did not attempt to construct a careful analysis of the relationship between original sin and the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. However, his theology of original sin certainly affected the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. This effect has been noted by several authors, including Alonso.

It is logical to suggest that if the traditional theology regarding original sin can be revised according to the changing world view and still retain its authentic character in relation to the other truths of the faith, then it should be done in order to clarify the doctrine of original sin for the modern person. If, however, a revision of the theology of original sin is such that it distorts or obscures the real meaning of other related doctrines, then this path is not an authentic path of revision.55

Therefore, this study will briefly examine Schoonenberg's doctrine of original sin and its effect on the theology of the Immaculate Conception. If the effect is so radical that the meaning of the Immaculate Conception as defined in the bull Ineffabilis Deus is lost, then an intrinsic relationship truly exists between these two doctrines, at least as they are understood in the context of the tradition. The Church believes that dogma develops "to the extent that the development takes place within the same sense and meaning ("eadem sensu eademque sententia"). Thus the

Council of Trent taught that, in the case of dogmas, the meaning must be continually adhered to once it is set forth by the Church. The Council therefore passed judgment on anyone who departed from that original sense under the guise and name of higher knowledge, including allegedly more profound interpretations of dogmatic formulations and scientific advances. (DS 3020, 3043)  

In understanding Schoonenberg's theology of original sin, one must note (as Alonso does) the evolution in Schoonenberg's thinking regarding original sin. His first attempt at formulating an answer to the problem began in a brief article written in 1960. He continued to revise his thinking throughout that decade. However, many critics have observed that Schoonenberg's reformulation of original sin remains rather unclear. Alonso responded to this ambiguity in Schoonenberg's theology in the article cited above. Others such as O'Connor have noted that "this theory (Schoonenberg's)..." is "incoherent in itself."  

In a later work called The Christ, Schoonenberg discusses the Immaculate Conception in the context of the history of salvation and of evil. He declares that Christ "is as situated by the history of evil as he is by the history of salvation. Yet we do not recognize original sin in him, just as little as we do in Mary, and in fact we must say: still less than Mary." How could original sin be less in Christ than it is in Mary? Schoonenberg's answer is that "Jesus is not inwardly defined by the situation, that is, he is not subjected to sin, that sin has no power over

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57 For the details concerning this evolution, see Joaquin Alonso, "Schoonenberg y su teorfa del pecado original," Semana Española de Teologia, XXIX, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, Madrid, 1970.  
him."60 Given the qualitative difference Schoonenberg sees between Christ and Mary in regard to original sin, he believes Mary is by her creaturehood "inwardly defined by the situation of sin." Earlier in his book Schoonenberg reveals his understanding of original sin as humanity's opposition to God's initiatives by which humankind as a whole "is establishing the history of evil, which is just as universally oppressive as the history of salvation is liberating..."61 This concept is the continuation of Schoonenberg's formative idea that original sin is the "sin of the world." In an article in Theology Digest in 1967, Schoonenberg defined original sin as "precisely the situated character of the human person who is born into a sinful community---a situation that exists prior to and independently of the individual's choice."62 Schoonenberg understands Mary's Immaculate Conception in relation to this situatedness of sin. As a creature she was subjected to this situation, but was not influenced by the "power in it which urges to sin."63 Thus, Mary received a special grace which enabled her to resist the power of the sin of the world:

The Immaculate Conception can also be understood as the grace which exercises its full power in the prevention of sin (1 Jn. 3,9)...In both concepts it is clear that 'immaculate conception' is realized in the highest way in Christ. If one only looks at the negative side of the prevention of sin, then the Immaculate Conception of Mary can be placed on a par with that of Christ. But, this is a purely abstract view. If one concretely sees the salvific presence of God which prevents sin, then in Christ there is the fullness, in Mary the preparation and foreshadowing. This could lead to our seeing Mary's grace as a

60 Schoonenberg, p.116.
61 Schoonenberg, p.31.
63 Schoonenberg, p.117.
part of the history of salvation of Israel, as a last stage in the conquering power of sin within the chosen people of God, before He comes, in whom this power will be so conquered, that we can all resist it on the basis of His victory.  

Schoonenberg understands the grace of Mary's Immaculate Conception as protecting Mary from the power of the sin of the world. For Schoonenberg, original sin is not only the sin of our first parents but includes all the sins of the world that created the existing situation. No one save Christ and Mary are exempt from this commission of sin, though there may be individuals who lived without sin unbeknown to the world. Schoonenberg's notion of original sin omits, of course, the concept of a biological transmission of a true sin which is inherent in humanity. According to Schoonenberg, original sin is presented in each generation through the sociological order or through moral influence.

For Schoonenberg, Mary's situation suggests that, although she should have been subjected to the power of sin by virtue of her connectedness with the rest of humanity, she was protected by grace which preserved her from the general contagion of the sinful world. In other words, the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception for Schoonenberg must be understood in relationship to sin, even if that sin is defined as the situatedness of the human condition vis-à-vis the sins of humanity. Mary's prerogative was her freedom from the power of the sin of the world, which ordinarily would have caused her to be drawn into that power had God not intervened in a special way. For Schoonenberg's theology regarding the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, original sin is understood in a re-formulated sense. His interpretation of the

64 Schoonenberg, p.117.
Immaculate Conception requires that original sin be understood in this re-formulated fashion.

Joaquin Alonso disagrees with Schoonenberg on many points regarding the doctrine of original sin. However, he concurs with Schoonenberg in acknowledging a relationship between these two dogmas "so intimate that they mutually condition each other intrinsically."\(^{66}\) Schoonenberg did not explicate such a relationship, but the manner in which he describes the Immaculate Conception assumes an intimate conditioning by the doctrine of original sin.

**Alonso**

Joaquin Alonso was born in Salamanca in 1913. He joined the Claretians and eventually studied in Rome, completing his doctoral studies in the area of created and uncreated grace. Alonso developed a keen interest in the messages of Fatima and spent a great deal of time and energy studying them.\(^{67}\) He studied the new theology of Schoonenberg and wrote a lengthy article on Schoonenberg's theory of original sin. He also responded to Schoonenberg's observations regarding Mary's virginity.

Alonso differed fundamentally with Schoonenberg on original sin, making it difficult to link the two theologies together in any substantive way. Alonso placed Schoonenberg with other theologians who tried to re-interpret the history of the dogma of original sin. Alonso remarked that such authors valued the historical circumstances of the dogma's development more than the actual content of the faith. He also accused them of authentically abusing the texts of the Magisterium which are

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\(^{67}\) Domiciano Fernandez, "In Memoriam," *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, Vol. XXXII, 1982, (pp.5-8).
considered to be a confirmation of the doctrine's dogmatic data (perhaps here Alonso is referring to Pope Paul VI's *Credo of the People of God*). Alonso claims that these modern "re-interpreters" have presented such difficulties concerning the classical conception of original sin that almost nothing of the classical aspects remain. He then lists these: the existence of the state of original justice, monogenism, the manner of transmitting original sin, and the nature of original sin. As we have noted, he also accuses these authors of confusing original sin with actual sin.68

Alonso argued that if the doctrine of original sin is emptied of its meaning, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception ought to be false as well.69 The theology of the Immaculate Conception is certainly developed poorly in Schoonenberg, though his intention was not to develop such a theology. Schoonenberg's Mariology was peripheral to the dogmas he wished to study. Therefore, he did not center much attention on Mariological themes. Even so, Schoonenberg retained some meaning in the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception, still relating it rather intimately to the doctrine of original sin as he understands it.

This study's investigation has yielded little fruitful meaning from Alonso and Schoonenberg's understanding of the relationship between original sin and the Immaculate Conception. However, it is obvious that Schoonenberg, who worked so intensely on the doctrine of original sin did indeed understand that Mary's condition with regard to that sin is expressed in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The problem is that Mary's condition vis-a-vis original sin is for Schoonenberg not necessarily

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68 Alonso, op.cit., p.119.
69 Alonso, p.120.
unique as the language of *ineffabilis Deus* indicates and as Alonso points out to his readers. But Alonso's statement regarding the mutual conditioning of the two dogmas does not necessarily provide any new insights into the relationship between these two doctrines either. The writings of Domiciano Fernandez examine more closely the nuances of the relationship between the Immaculate Conception and original sin and so will move this study further. Fernandez sees an intrinsic relationship between the two doctrines which particularly encourages a deeper understanding of original sin.

**Fernandez**

Domiciano Fernandez has been writing in the area of original sin since 1961, and the fruit of his research found expression in his 1973 book *El Pecado Original: ¿Mito o Realidad?*.70 He has been editor of the Mariological publication *Ephemerides Mariologicae* since 1978. In an article entitled "La Crisis de la Teologia del Pecado Original ¿Afecta al Dogma de La Concepción Inmaculad?," Fernandez declares that all the treatments and questions of theology are strictly related to each other. As soon as one changes the formulation of any dogma there is the immediate necessity of re-formulating other theological truths. Recent theories about original sin directly affect our formulation of this dogma.71

As demonstrated above, Alonso intimated this same awareness of dogmatic cohesion. However, rather than defending the traditional

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understanding of original sin, Fernandez is forthright in stating that "it is possible and appropriate to construct a theology free of original sin." Fernandez claims that when the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was defined the existence of original sin was not questioned, even though there had always been insurmountable difficulties in terms of defining its nature. If original sin was truly that which it was understood to be, a true sin causing the death of the soul, enslavement to the devil, deprivation of God's grace and the right to eternal life, then such a condition could not possibly be attributed to the most holy Virgin Mary. For Fernandez, it is a strange phenomenon that the Church took so many years to arrive at a general consensus about Mary's preservation or exemption from such a sin, since she was, after all, the Mother of God. He admits that the problem lay in the Church's awareness that Christ is the Redeemer of all people, including His Mother. Therefore, the possibility of Mary's creation without original sin encountered a daunting obstacle, since she was a child of Adam and therefore a member of the human race in need of redemption.

Fernandez lists various reasons why the traditional doctrine of original sin disintegrated in the minds of many post-Vatican II theologians. These reasons are basically the same as those listed in the introductory chapter of this study. In the mind of Fernandez, the express teaching of the Church is the only reason why the doctrine of original sin has not been completely eliminated from Catholic theology. He says that the Council of Trent did not dogmatically define the doctrine of original sin, but only proposed it as a doctrinal precept; original sin appeared

72 Fernandez, p.278.
73 Fernandez, p.279.
74 Fernandez, p.279.
necessary to the important truth that human beings are not able to save themselves by their own strengths (soteriological incapacity of man), and that Christ is the sole Savior of the world (necessity of the salvific mediation of Christ).\textsuperscript{75}

Because Fernandez desires to eliminate original sin entirely, he re-interprets the magisterial weight of the Council of Trent's resolutions regarding the various aspects of original sin.\textsuperscript{76} For the purposes of this study, one must look specifically at the effect of his theory upon the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. This provides an answer to the original question in this chapter regarding the existence of an intrinsic relationship between the Immaculate Conception and original sin.

According to Fernandez, the bull of Pius IX clearly presumes that an intimate and strict relationship exists between original sin and the definition of Mary's preservation from that sin. It is pre-supposed that every human being is born with original sin. Fernandez refers to Alonso, Cascante, and O'Connor, who believe that the relation between the two dogmas is essential and intrinsic; thus, if the existence of original sin is denied, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is emptied of its content.\textsuperscript{77} Fernandez quotes O'Connor as saying, "The dogma of the Immaculate Conception is not primarily a dogma about the grace of Mary

\textsuperscript{75} Fernandez, p.285.
\textsuperscript{76} Personal correspondence with Fernandez, Letter dated October 17, 1994.

In response to the question, "Where do you see yourself principally differing from the explications of Karl Rahner and Schoononberg about the original sin?", Fernandez replied:

"Pienso que ambos autores, sobre todo K. Rahner, viven muy ligados a la teología antigua y buscan liberarse de sus inconvenientes. Ambos quieren mostrar que su doctrina es compatible con las enseñanzas del Concilio de Trento. Pienso que en este punto es necesario abandonar la doctrina del magisterio, porque es insostenible."

"I think that these authors, above all K. Rahner, are much linked to the old theology and want to liberate themselves from its problematic areas. They want to show that this doctrine is compatible with the teachings of the Council of Trent. I think that it is necessary to abandon the doctrine of the magisterium, because it is not supportable."

\textsuperscript{77} Fernandez, p.290.
(even though it is that also), it is a dogma about her preservation from sin." Fernandez is willing to admit that Mary was preserved from sin, but not original sin since he does not believe there is such a thing. Fernandez must, nonetheless, attack some major difficulties in removing original sin from the way it has been traditionally understood in its relationship to the Immaculate Conception. Following is a brief list of these problems:

(1) If one denies original sin, one loses the significance of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

(2) The definition of the Immaculate Conception confirms and ratifies the dogma of the original sin.

(3) The teaching about the Immaculate Conception is a very bad parody if it defines Mary as preserved from a sin that never existed.

Since this discussion pertains so directly to the topic at hand, each of Fernandez's responses must be explored. Fernandez declares that even if one denies the existence of original sin, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception does not lose any of its significance, but actually gains in beauty and profundity. While acknowledging that the definition of the Immaculate Conception provides Mary a singular privilege in relation to original sin, Fernandez believes that it is more beautiful and profound to speak of her holiness, of her being the object of the special predilection of God since the beginning. Fernandez argues that the Orient has been expressing this same truth regarding Mary's purity and holiness for hundreds of years without mentioning original sin.

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79 Fernandez, p.291.
80 Fernandez, p.292.
To the second objection that the definition of the Immaculate Conception confirms and ratifies the dogma of the original sin, Fernandez responds:

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception makes us see that Mary was redeemed by Christ in a most sublime and perfect manner. This fact shows that the concept of redemption is not able to be limited to the liberation of sin. The original holiness of Mary, the perfectly redeemed and saved, destroys the force of this argument that is founded in a strict concept of redemption. Every human being, as a creaturely and limited being, needs the grace and salvation of Christ in order to participate in the eternal life. Grace is not limited to the liberation from sin, but it also confers on the human being the capacity to possess God. In the present economy of salvation all grace comes to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. By this manner one of the fundamentals is eliminated which would say that there is sin in all humanity: the universality of the redemption implies the universality of sin. Furthermore, since in children they are not able to attribute a personal sin, they therefore attribute a sin that comes from Adam and that affects all his descendants.81

By answering the problem in this way, Fernandez emphasizes the need to examine the redemption in the correct light. The issue of redemption will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter of this study.

Fernandez's last difficulty involves the Magisterium's definition of Mary's Immaculate Conception as preservation from a particular reality called original sin. How can this sin not exist if it is named explicitly in the papal bull? Fernandez answers this objection by stating that the Church, though acting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is limited to the context of its time. The Magisterium's proclamations reflect the culture, the mentality, and the theology proper to their generation. Fernandez argues that the traditional understanding of the dogma of the

81 Fernandez, p.293.
Immaculate Conception is limited in this way. The existence of original sin, says Fernandez, was a common belief and presupposition of the bull Ineffabilis. Even if such a sin never existed, the substance of the bull remains perfectly true: Mary was full of grace, all-holy since the first moment of her existence and throughout her life.

Fernandez expresses in a very clear way the issue of the relationship between the dogmas. Like Schoonenberg and Alonso, he recognizes that there is an intrinsic relationship between these dogmas as defined. However, he does not accept the particular dogma of original sin as a truth of the faith, but simply as a cultural pre-supposition and common belief at the time of the definition of the Immaculate Conception. However, if the dogma was fabricated on pre-suppositions regarding the existence of original sin, then the intrinsic relationship disintegrates. Furthermore, he states that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is perfectly understandable and even more profound without reference to an original sin.

It is likewise clear that Alonso, among others, insist on an intrinsic relationship between these two doctrines such that the very content of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is emptied if the doctrine of original sin is eliminated. Schoonenberg's theology, though somewhat undeveloped, indicates that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is dependent on the doctrine of original sin, even if the doctrine of original sin has been totally re-formulated.

It seems obvious that the church in trying to express the meaning of Mary's Immaculate Conception did so in clear view of the reality of

82 Fernandez, p.294.
83 Fernandez, p.295.
original sin. As was indicated earlier original sin forces the church to ponder even more profoundly the mystery of iniquity. The question emerges here of how definitively the church teaches the existence of original sin. Is it simply a "cultural pre-supposition and common belief at the time of definition of the Immaculate Conception" or does the teaching regarding the existence of original sin belong to the church's divine and irreformable faith? The canons of Trent, the Credo of the People of God, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly indicate that the doctrine of original sin is a part of the depositum fidei. Antonio Sayes, in his book entitled Antropologia del Hombre Caido El Pecado Original, says that Pope Paul VI's Credo of the People of God was the highest manifestation of the ordinary teaching authority of his pontificate.84

The teaching authority of the church does not view the doctrine of original sin simply as a presupposition or common belief. It views it instead as belonging intimately to the mystery of the Christian vision? When St. Augustine argued against Pelagius that the mystery of original sin could be found in the fount of revelation (Rom. 5:12) and earlier, he was expressing the faith of the Catholic Church. Antonio Sayes documents that "the consciousness of the original sin was developing with a slow rhythmic process, not exempt at times with difficulties, and which culminated in its maturation of the fifth century."85 This is an important affirmation because some theologians are under the impression that the doctrine of original sin was essentially invented by St. Augustine. However, Sayes and other theologians have observed that St. Augustine only gave voice to what he found already contained in the tradition.

85 Sayes, p.82.
The official language of the bull Ineffabilis clearly presumes a strict and important relationship between the Immaculate Conception and original sin. This seems to be the conclusion of the authors under consideration. However, the real crux of the problem is not so much the language itself but what is being intended by that language. Fernandez seems to be going too far in wanting to remove any vestiges of the church's ancient belief in the mystery of original sin. This is a very serious issue and affects the traditional meaning of the redemption itself. Therefore, the relationship between original sin and redemption needs to be explored in greater detail. This will be done more fully in the next chapter especially in relationship to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Fernandez indicates that redemption has traditionally been tied too closely to the notion of forgiveness of sin. He suggests that the Church ought to view redemption in a wider perspective, since babies are baptized even though they have committed no sin, and since Mary is all-holy and yet redeemed without contracting any sin. Of course, St. Augustine encountered a similar notion among the Pelagians who argued that "baptism does not wash away a sin."86 Perhaps Pelagianism is once more re-emerging in the Church as indicated by the fact that more and more theologians are not wanting to associate the beginning of human existence with "sin," even if that sin is understood analogically. This reaction is echoed in some of the New Age movements and in Matthew Fox's creation spirituality.87

The language of the bull supposes an intrinsic relationship between original sin and Mary's redemption from that sin, which in her case

86 Sayes, p.126.
87 For further reference, see Matthew Fox's Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality. Santa Fe, NM: Bear and Co., 1983.
occurred through a preservative grace. At any rate, this area of contact strongly suggests that for the church original sin can not be dismissed without losing some of the real, authentic meaning of the mystery of Mary's personhood. Her singular privilege indicates that her life is unique in that preservation from sin. To deny this unique privilege with all its implications seems in the mind of the church to deny the existence of original sin itself.
Chapter Four
Redemption and the Doctrines of Original Sin
and the Immaculate Conception

The definition of redemption is one of the real keys to understanding the intrinsic relationship between original sin and the Immaculate Conception. Before examining how Rahner and Villalbomonte view redemption in terms of the Immaculate Conception, one should pause briefly to consider the way the church presently teaches about the mystery of the redemption. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states it thusly:

In her magisterial teaching of the faith and in the witness of the saints, the Church has never forgotten that 'sinners were the authors and the ministers of all the sufferings that the divine Redeemer endured. (Roman Catechism I, 5,11; Heb. 12:3) ...The Scriptures had foretold this divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of 'the righteous one, my Servant' as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin. Citing a confession of faith that he himself had 'received,' St. Paul professes that 'Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.' (1 Cor. 15:3, Acts 3:18, 7:52, 13:29, 26:22-23) In particular Jesus' redemptive death fulfills Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Servant. (Isa. 53:7-8, Acts 8:32-35) Indeed Jesus himself explained the meaning of life and death in the light of God's suffering Servant. (Mt. 20:28) After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles. (Lk. 24:25-27; 44-45)...Consequently, St. Peter can formulate the apostolic faith in the divine plan of salvation in this way: 'You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers...with the precious blood of Christ, like that of the Lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake.' (1 Pet. 1:18-20) Man's sins, following an original sin, are punishable by death. (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor.
15:56) By sending his own Son in the form of a slave, in the form of a fallen humanity, on account of sin, God 'made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Cor. 5:21, Phil. 2:7, Rom. 8:3)...Jesus did not experience reprobation as if he himself had sinned (Jn. 8:46). But, in the redeeming love that always united him to the Father, he assumed us in the state of our waywardness of sin, to the point that he could say in our name from the cross: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mk. 15:34; Ps. 22:2; Jn. 8:29) Having thus established him in solidarity with us sinners, God did 'not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all,' so that we might be 'reconciled to God by the death of his Son' (Rom. 8:32, 5:10).  

These passages demonstrate that the redemption and significance of Christ are directed toward human sinners. But are human beings sinners at birth? Is man truly alienated from God through no fault of his own, even on first entering this world? The Church has always answered "yes" to this question, since her insight is that all humankind is born with original sin. However, Mary was not born with original sin according to the faith of the same Church. Why, then, did she need to be redeemed? She was free from original sin, never committed any personal sins, and yet she was perfectly redeemed. The redemption, though, in the mind of the Church, is primarily associated with the reality of sin. Sin is defined as "an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity...Sin sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it. Like the first sin, it is disobedience, a revolt against God through the will to become 'like gods' (Gen. 3:5), knowing and determining

88 Universal Catechism, p.155-156, (par. 601, 602, 603).
good and evil."89 "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 Jn. 8-9)90

In the mind of the Church, the entire history of humanity is disfigured by the reality of sin, beginning with the first sin of Adam and Eve. Redemption occurs primarily because human beings are sinners and God in His infinite mercy has sought to reconcile them to Himself through the gift of His Son. Ultimately, humankind is totally dependent on God for its justification, redemption, and sanctification. The Church carefully preserved this insight from every form of error. Thus, if all humans are dependent on God's grace in order to participate in His life, Mary as a creature also needed His divine grace. She too stood in need of Christ the Redeemer. This fact is admitted by every author presented in this study. The question that has emerged is whether Mary needed redemption in order to prevent her from being included in the general mass of humanity who are sinners at birth. Did Mary as the Mother of God, the all-holy One of Israel, simply need grace to preserve her from committing personal sins? Did her freedom from all sin necessarily include a freedom from the wounded human nature that leads to sin? Rahner and Villalmonde both respond to these questions.

As mentioned in the first chapter, both Rahner and Villalmonde view Mary as the perfect exemplar of Redemption. Villalmonde expresses it in this way:

Mary is the paradigmatic case, the exemplar, of the redemptive action of Christ...It is evident that Mary, prototype of the redeemed, received the influence of Christ the Redeemer and of his grace, not in order to be liberated from sin, nor in order to preserve her from some moral stain that would have

89 Catechism of the Catholic Church, p.453, (par. 1849, 1850).
90 Catechism, p.452, (par. 1847).
occurred in her. She received [redemption] for other more radical motives: In order to elevate her to the participation of the divine life, in order to deify her with the donation of grace. And for motives outside of and independent of sin: Because of her eternal election, in the same decree with her Son, to be the Mother of the Redeemer and the CO-Redeemer of the human race. As a consequence of this full and superior kind of grace, Mary neither incurred, nor was able to incur any sin, whether we call it original or something else. Mary needed and received the grace of Christ not in direct relation to sin, but because of her creaturely condition that would not permit her, without the grace of Christ, to fulfill the mission that God had assigned her at the side of her Son; not being worthy of the gift of eternal life with God, if her being and activity were not elevated by a strictly supernatural grace.91

In this passage Villalmonte comes as close as possible to the traditional understanding of Mary's redemption without including the notion of original sin and Mary's preservation from such sin. Recall that Villalmonte, like Fernandez, eliminates original sin entirely. What need for redemption does Mary have if original sin does not exist? Villalmonte points out that since Mary is a creature like any other, there is no way she can, by herself, live forever in union with God unless God elevates her "by a strictly supernatural grace."

Villalmonte explains that the exemplary case of Mary convinces us that a human being needs the redemptive influence of Christ for reasons far above and beyond whatever happens in whatever class of sin. Therefore, neither in reference to Mary, nor in reference to the rest of humanity should one continue to argue from the universality of the redemption of Christ and the absolute necessity for his grace in order to prove that the previous existence has some sin. Even less in order to place original sin in children. The primary sense of the mediation of Christ with respect to Mary, the first born and most excellently redeemed, is not able to be distinct from the primary sense that it has in

91 Villalmonte, "La Teología...," p.53.
the rest of humanity. The dogma of Mary Immaculate puts us in possession of a concept of redemption such that from it, it is not now possible to argue toward the existence of original sin in children; as if by some other way, they were not redeemed. Children, even though innocent are in need of the grace of Christ in order to be pleasing to God and gain salvation; but I do not want to say that they have sin. Is it not that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (such as the Church understands it as being a serious corrective to those who deny original sin), better constituted a strong stimulus to doubting, at the foundation, this doctrine of original sin?92

Here Villalmonote completely overturns the thought of Alonso and others who understand the dogma of the Immaculate Conception as a possible defense against the elimination of original sin. For Villalmonote, the Immaculate Conception convincingly proves that original sin is a purely theological construct. It is simply another means by which the Church protects the notion that all people need the universal help of Christ for redemption from sin, or in Mary's case preservation from sin. According to Villalmonote, this construct was established on a false premise. The Immaculate Conception dogma as seen by Villalmonote (and Fernandez) demonstrates that original sin can be entirely eliminated while the dogma of the Immaculate Conception remains intact—provided, of course, that the redemption is not understood in terms of sin. For Villalmonote, redemption is primarily the grace of Christ elevating the finite human being in such a way as to make it capable of enjoying life with an Eternal and Uncreated Being called God.

The Christian tradition regarding man's basic understanding of his sinful nature is problematic for Villalmonote's theology. Does a human being come into this world as a saint or a sinner? For Villalmonote, whether one says that men "are born a sinner or a saint...really does not

92 Villalmonote, p.53.
have relevant importance for either Christian orthodoxy or orthopraxis with respect to the human person." Villalmonte reduces the traditional doctrine of original sin to a theological anthropology, that has always maintained that man is born a "sinner." Villalmonte argues that St. Augustine's constant affirmation of original sin is the result of the Church's practice of infant baptism. The Council of Trent, enthralled by Augustinian theology, reiterated this same thought. However, Villalmonte refutes this traditional interpretation of original sin on the basis that it is not a Biblical doctrine; furthermore, the Council of Trent (understood as a product of its time) does not oblige a Catholic to believe in the doctrine of original sin.

Given this complete refutation of original sin, one must wonder exactly what Villalmonte considers to be the substance of the redeeming action of Christ. His understanding of the Immaculate Conception, even in light of the tradition, maintains that Mary was neither redeemed nor preserved from any sin. Mary's redemptive grace, which Villalmonte considers to be the grace received by all people, was the grace of Jesus, thus making her capable of divine union---divinizing her, to use another expression.

Villalmonte claims that men are not born as sinners, but are born in original holiness, free from sin. In order to understand Villalmonte's theology, one must assume a theological anthropology that views humanity's relationship with God as originally holy rather than originally sinful (even in the analogical sense). Original sin, according to

94 Villalmonte, p. 274.
95 Villalmonte, p. 275.
Villalmonte, is a theological conclusion and not a dogma. It is not a truth revealed by God, but something that theologians created in order to justify the practice of baptizing infants. The false doctrine of original sin also protected the dogma of the universal redemptive action of Christ which all people need to inherit eternal life.

Villalmonte clearly decides to use a unilateral interpretation of the Christian Tradition. He correctly reads the tradition that God has universally called each person to salvation; each person is offered that salvation as a possibility. Villalmonte agrees that salvation is not forced upon mankind. However, "if the faith in the Kerygma concerning the salvific will of God manifested in Christ is proclaimed with the realism and in the consequent form that arises out of the words of the New Testament, it appears to us impossible to harmonize it with these antique affirmations about the theological state of the person newly brought into existence."\textsuperscript{96} That theological state, of course, is original sin.

Villalmonte claims that the tradition concerning original sin does not coincide with the broader tradition that we are all called by God to salvation. For Villalmonte, this unproved relationship between original sin and the Redemption implies that human existence begins in a state of integrity and wholeness, since God is loving even more than He is just.

Villalmonte's observation would almost be plausible, except that Catholic theology is dialectical in terms of understanding man's finite condition on earth. Two realities must be held together without losing sight of either one---the classic argument that everything that exists must have a complement. Thus, Villalmonte is correct in saying that God wills all people to come to salvation. However, he forgets that another

\textsuperscript{96} Villalmonte, p.288.
aspect of the Catholic tradition must be held in dialectical tension to salvation. This complement, despite Villalmonte's claims, arises from the Scriptural tradition. Even the Old Testament "prepares the doctrine of the original sin as regards a sin of origin...and the New Testament introduces us authentically to this truth."97 Villalmonte is too quick to relinquish the tradition of original sin, even though it is a very difficult mystery to understand.

Villalmonte claims that man does not arrive in this world as a sinner; thus, there is no need to baptize infants for the remission of sins. Villalmonte aligns himself with the Pelagians, whose anthropology he perceives as being more in line with the broader tradition of Christian revelation.98 However, he refuses to accept some of their "exaggerated optimism" with regard to the nature of man.99 Nevertheless, for Villalmonte each person receives on coming into existence an integrated nature, healthy, innocent, unable to be considered fallen in any respect. "Nonetheless, he is born in a radical and invincible soteriological impotence and because of that he absolutely needs the salvific influence of Christ."100

This statement opens the possibility of a meaningful dialogue between Villalmonte and Rahner. If developed sufficiently "soteriological impotence" could possibly be "original sin" understood analogically, since this term describes some sort of real lack in human nature. For Rahner, man lacks something that should have been inherited through his nature. Villalmonte seems unwilling to accept the full implications of this

97 Sayes, p.38.
98 Villalmonte, p.293.
99 Villalmonte, p.297.
100 Villalmonte, p.293.
admission. Villalmonde indicates that Augustine distinguished between the person in a state of paradise and the fallen man; this crucial difference is where Christ the Redeemer becomes an absolute necessity for Augustine. While understanding the radical necessity of grace, Augustine attempted to preserve the idea of man's initial goodness of nature as created by God. Villalmonde indicates that Augustine went astray; humankind needed a Savior, though this weakness does not imply original sin. Man could have been created whole, integrated, and without any stain of sin in his nature, yet absolutely in need of a Savior. Christ, therefore, was necessary not only to save mankind from sin, but to allow man to enter into a union with God.

Villalmonde expresses it thus: Humanity needs the Savior and His grace because of the "disproportion existent between the 'nature' of the created being of man (even though it is thought of as whole, integrated, innocent) and the Supernatural Being, God: an intensely infinite reality that is His own self, in His essence, is an inaccessible absolute to the thinking and wanting of man. God, inasmuch as He is God, in the intimacy of the intratrinitarian life---the life most proper to Him---is not a natural object of any human dynamism: He is only able to be a 'voluntary' object as Duns Scotus expressed..." Villalmonde agrees with Augustine that human beings can not save themselves, thus he would not be completely in the Pelagian camp. He says that there exists an absolute necessity of redeeming grace. However, Augustine regarded the need of all people for salvation as the result of Adam's sin; thus, all people need the grace of the new Adam to liberate them from that sin. According to

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101 Villalmonde, p.294.
102 Villalmonde, p.300.
Villalmonte, if Augustine had understood redemption as the process by which God makes human nature (which is initially good but still determined by creaturehood), capable of uniting with a divine and uncreated nature, then the original sin theology would not have been necessary.

The problem, however, is that original sin is more than a theological construct in the context of the tradition seen as a whole. St. Augustine did not "invent" original sin—he simply incorporated and expanded a pre-existing intuition of the Church. Antonio Sayes quotes Augustine's reply to Julian, who accused Augustine of inventing original sin (Augustine invented the formula "peccatum originale," but not the content). Augustine said, "It was not I who invented original sin which the Catholic believed since antiquity." Augustine based his arguments especially on Romans 5:12, but Sayes notes that he also appealed to the liturgical tradition and to the Fathers, "citing particularly Irenaeus, Cyprian, Jerome, Basil, Gregory Naziansus, and John Chrysostom." Be that as it may, Villalmonte constructs a theology of redemption while attempting to eliminate original sin. However, he recognizes that not only human creatureliness needs salvation, but also the fact of the commission of personal sins which presents a new motive for the redemption. "It is absolutely impossible that the human could be reconciled with God [while God is detesting]...his sins and above all, that he should be liberated from them, if God did not free him by an act of merciful pardon, which returns him anew to His grace."

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104 Sayes, p.127.
105 Villalmonte, p.302.
Villalmonte asks whether the child recently born into the world arrives already "graced" by God. His answer in summary is "yes"—(a) in virtue of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, (b) every man is born already anointed by the sanctity of the Word, (c) accepted by God already in an existential state of grace and redemption, (d) positive, interior, and personally 'transnaturalized,' (e) transnaturalization that makes him a pleasing person to God, a friend of God, (f) to where there is in him a peculiar, but real mode of being in the grace of God and with God.\(^{106}\)

In summary, Villalmonte asserts that "the idea of Christ as 'Radical and Universal Sacrament of Salvation' permits us to say that everyone, without exception, already from his entrance into the world, participates in the 'holiness' and 'consecration' of Christ. This holiness is to be conceived, by the nature of things, as an initial holiness, original, possessed in germinal form, but real."\(^{107}\)

Earlier in this study, it was indicated that the effect of Villalmonte's denial of original sin implied a different understanding of the Immaculate Conception. Although Villalmonte believes that human beings are all born into a situation of grace and not of sin, Mary's fullness of grace is qualitatively more profound because of the fact that she was called to be the mother of the Savior. Recall that Rahner spoke of Mary's grace as being one which not only prepared her for her mission, but affected her very being. In line with Rahner's thinking, Villalmonte argues that Mary was preserved from the "sinful" nature that was in "Adam" and given a nature that was uncorrupted and able to mediate the grace of God.

\(^{106}\) Villalmonte, p.308.
\(^{107}\) Villalmonte, p.314.
to others. Although she shared human nature, it was human nature untainted by any imperfection concerning the moral sphere.

Rahner's theology of redemption fully accepts the doctrine of original sin. For Rahner, the human being is anthropologically in need of redemption not only because of original and personal sin, but also because humanity is incapable of gaining its own salvation. Thus far, Rahner and Villalmonde only disagree on whether original sin, understood as a real sin even if analogically, is a factor in the redemption. How important is "original sin" in terms of understanding humankind's need for redemption? Here it should be understood that in the tradition original sin is a real evil to be overcome. It has a dynamism of its own that cannot be adequately explained by reference to man's creatureliness alone. It is profoundly destructive to man's integrity and relationship with God. Villalmonde's theology of humanity's relationship to this life here on earth does not seem to take seriously enough the hidden power of this primordial evil that is manifested even from the dawn of human history.

It is this author's contention that original sin is vital to understanding the contours of the human condition before God. In other words, it helps in explaining the certain propensity men experience in wanting to do evil. The human community has perpetrated terrible atrocities against itself and God. Human beings are created in the very image and likeness of God, yet they have much difficulty in knowing their Creator. The same beings whom Villalmonde claims are originally created "integral," even "holy," conceived and carried out the Holocaust. There is more to present finite human nature than Villalmonde in his "optimistic" theology cares to admit. There is no adequate explanation for evil arising from an intact and even "holy" nature. God predestined mankind to
salvation, but this predestination does not necessarily mean that human nature is already healed from its very beginning. It does not include our having to start in a healed manner in terms of our human nature. The ancient insight that identifies a gaping "wound" in human nature is more true to our human experience. Rahner admits that "undoubtedly too there can be no solution to the *mysterium iniquitatis* in the individual and the world...Christian soteriology is effectively preached only when sin and salvation from sin are placed at once in a wider, supralapsarian context, in the light of which the 'permission' of sin can be made intelligible, as far as is possible."108

Catholic theology has always wrestled intensely with the problem of evil. Perhaps human freedom is the crucial issue in trying to understand the problem of original sin. Is human nature truly free to develop even with God's grace? Or is there an active force that continually binds human nature and frustrates its real freedom? If, as Villalmonte claims, human nature is whole when first arriving in the world, how can it be so influenced by evil as to commit the horrendous personal and social sins that are in fact committed?

Rahner asserts that "one must be very cautious, to say the least, about the indemonstrable assertion that God could have prevented sin only by eliminating freedom. Though man may not use it as a defense of sin (cf. Rom. 4:1), it remains true that God permitted sin as the condition of the manifestation of his self-communicating love, which is greater and more conditional than the offense against it. Man, who must inevitably answer

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for his free decision, has undoubtedly to distinguish between what God 'wills' and what God 'permits,' to avoid any predestination to sin."\textsuperscript{109}

Before returning to the subject of the Immaculate Conception's relationship to original sin in terms of the redemption, it might be helpful to identify what Rahner understands by original sin. First of all, for Rahner, original sin is one of the fundamental doctrines of Christian faith. He laments the fact that it "no longer has any really formative influence in contemporary man's vital conception of human reality... ."\textsuperscript{110} Rahner agrees, however, with Villalmonte's assertion that from Augustine onwards this doctrine was in fact linked with pessimistic feelings (a tragic conception of man) and with a view of salvation as restricted in extent, which was not (even though Villalmonte seems to assert the opposite) identical with the doctrine of original sin itself. Original sin was not taken as designating a feature in the constitution of human reality which is always and from the start comprised within God's salvific will for all and the powerful grace of Christ, but as the situation of all, out of which a subsequent grace saves only some; the universality of original sin was clearer than the universality of man's redeemed condition, chiefly because it was not clearly seen how the universality of God's saving will and the fact that Christ died for all men could be translated into a structural feature intrinsically characterizing the personal life of each man even prior to his justification. Consequently, the universal redemption of Christ was regarded as affecting the individual only when the process of justification itself or baptism took place.\textsuperscript{111}

If one were to discuss this last statement by Rahner, it would lead to a further clarification of his theology of redemption. However, this study is specifically concerned with Rahner's view of original sin. Rahner's theology of original sin insists

\textsuperscript{109} Rahner, p.436.
\textsuperscript{111} Rahner, p.329.
that sanctifying grace is a mystery, because it is the self-communication of the essentially holy God. This self-communication of the God who alone is essentially (ontologically) holy is, as grace, antecedent to the free decision of a creature who is ambivalent and therefore not holy by his very essence..., a lack which ought not to exist of a 'holiness' which is antecedent to the moral decision (the lack of endowment with the holy Pneuma of God) therefore posits a state of unholiness which is antecedent to the individual's moral decision. This assumes that it is possible to make it intelligible how the divine obligation of this holiness is conceivable in respect of the individual without its becoming a directly moral demand on the individual, which would be meaningless if addressed to a person who inculpably can not fulfill it. The fact that the mystery of original sin has its ground in the mystery of the bestowal of sanctifying grace also explains why the actual doctrine of original sin only appears in Scripture when the divinization of man by the Pneuma of God is explicitly grasped.112

Rahner, then, works from a theological anthropology that directly opposes Villalmonde's interpretation. Villalmonde's anthropology posits human establishment in the sanctifying grace of the act of creation: "We are all able to admit that there is in man a pre-personal, pre-deliberated 'grace,' previous to all collaboration and free acceptance on the part of the man; never a pre-personal sin."113 Villalmonde, however, asserts that the grace of a newborn and that of an adult are quite different, because the grace at the beginning of a person's existence "initiates a process of gradual progress for the man to a life of communion with God...the same sanctifying 'habitual' grace that the adult receives is but a germ of the full and eschatological grace that he will receive in heaven. The introduction of man into the divine life, the auto-donation of God to the

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112 Rahner, p.330.
113 Villalmonde, "¿Pecado Original o Santidad...," p.332.
man, is a vital process that is initiated with his existence and culminates in heaven... ."\(^{114}\)

For Rahner, the situation of man's origin is dialectical, and this is the major difference in perspective between his theological anthropology and Villalmonde's. Rahner says that "original sin and being redeemed are two existentials of the human situation in regard to salvation, which at all times determine human existence. It may be assumed that sin was only permitted by God within the domain of his unconditional and stronger salvific will, which from the very beginning was directed towards God's self-communication in Christ."\(^{115}\)

Villalmonde admits that his conceptualization of our human beginnings differs from Catholic theology as influenced by Augustine. He believes that Augustine misread the tradition regarding original sinfulness and thus diverted the Church from the real intent of the Scriptures as to the significance of Christ's grace in overcoming evil. Certainly both Sayes (mentioned above) and Rahner express another opinion. The Councils of Carthage (418) and of Trent (1546) indicate that in the beginning of human existence, tradition acknowledges a notion of original sin, not original innocence, as Villalmonde maintains.

Rahner explains original sin as the lack of God's sanctifying Pneuma in the human being precisely because he is a man and member of the human race. In regard to man, however, the will of God is that man should have the divinizing Pneuma. Consequently, if the divinizing Pneuma is not there, this is only conceivable because of guilt freely incurred (otherwise its absence would be unintelligible, in view of God's will). This lack which in this sense ought not

\(^{114}\) Villalmonde, p.334.
to exist, of a divinizing holy grace antecedent to personal
decision, has therefore in an analogous sense, the character of
sin. It is also a state in which ontological holiness is lacking,
antecedent to personal decision, but which in contradistinction
to the other consequences of sin which can not deprive their
subject of holiness, must be characterized as sin...as children
of Adam standing in a physical, historical connection with the
beginning of humanity, men do not have the divine Pneuma. The
lack of Pneuma means the lack of a dynamism which overcomes
death, an absence which affects even the concrete form of
death... . [This] also holds good of the relation between original
sin and concupiscence. In both cases it must be considered
that death and concupiscence are indeed natural, if measured
by man's 'nature.' But that does not exclude the fact that both
are in contradiction to what man is in the concrete, to the
extent that they are indices of the as yet incomplete victory of
grace...Since the possession of grace in this life is a condition
of final salvation, the blotting out of original sin is necessary
for the attainment of salvation...Even the justified still remain
in the situation of death and concupiscence, even though by
grace and its acceptance they no longer have original sin as a
state of guilt, they in their actual concrete personal life are
still directly concerned with original sin.\textsuperscript{116}

Rahner's theology of original sin faithfully adheres to the Church's
tradition. The explanation given above is necessary in order to understand
his perception of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. If Villalmonte
entirely eliminates original sin, concluding that humankind is born in total
innocence, similar to the Blessed Mother's state of existence when she
was conceived, the opposite would be true of Rahner's theology. Rahner's
theology of original sin leads one to the conclusion that Mary's state at
conception is eminently more holy than other men's because the Divine
Pneuma was given to her from the beginning while it was withheld from
the rest of humanity's beginnings. Receiving the Divine Pneuma from the
beginning oriented Mary fundamentally to the Divine Will. By a special

\textsuperscript{116} Rahner, pp.331-333.
grace Mary was preserved in her relationship to the Divine Pneuma and this because she was called to be the God-bearer and came into direct contact even in her body with the Redeemer Himself.

In considering whether Villalmonte's assertion that Mary is the perfect exemplar of the redemption one must ask whether he saw the grace of the Immaculate Conception as a truly "singular" grace. Moreover, one must determine whether Mary's redemption assumes a perfection that outdistances that accomplished for the ordinary human being. Is the grace of Mary's Immaculate Conception equally the case of pure redemption in Villalmonte and Rahner when they obviously have a very different view of original sin?

From all that has been said thus far about redemption, it should be obvious that redemption in the Christian tradition is more than forgiveness of sin---it is also the granting of the Divine Pneuma which alone constitutes man before God as holy. As mentioned previously, both aspects of redemption must be present if one is to be truly faithful to the whole of the revealed tradition. Thus, the most radically accomplished redemption occurs when the Divine Pneuma and preservation from sin are received simultaneously. There is never a moment in which Mary was not fully redeemed in the most complete sense of our tradition. However, if the aspect of "sin" is completely neglected as it pertains to man's original condition, then Mary's redemption would be in a category so unique that it could not be fully understood as human redemption. Human redemption, at its very core, involves a restoration of the Divine Pneuma that should be present and the granting of full immunity from sin, which the original sin has hindered in the rest of humankind. If this reality of original sin is not included, the full meaning of redemption is radically altered.
Understood in Rahner's sense as perfect redemption, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception points out how remarkably true it is that Mary is "full of grace." Rahner concludes his essay on "The Immaculate Conception in Our Spiritual Life" with an extremely insightful observation which makes it clear why the Immaculately Conceived One understood as redemption's pure case (as far as the tradition is concerned and not Villalmonte's interpretation) is such an important dogmatic truth to maintain in its fullest sense:

One can know what man is only by looking at both the dead beginning and the living reality, the one in original sin and the Immaculate One, and only if one can look at both just as this difference is really separated in time: here in a man, who, although embraced by the eternity of God's mercy, begins as a real sinner; there in a person who, although coming in time from Adam as requiring redemption, begins as someone really full of grace and thus standing from all eternity before God. Must we not look at Mary in order to understand that the pure light is the first and last even for the creature, so that we do not think in the end that in us---or even in God---something primitively evil, something dark and abysmal belongs to the very heart of the essence? ...Did not Mary---participating in our lot as sinners, in nescience, in pain, in standing at the foot of the Cross---look at us, so as to understand and realize that even her beginning in being and in light is grace and not some necessity of essence without which we could not conceive her? ...She who loves the Cross looks lovingly on those who have crucified her Son. Because she loves them, she sees in them what her appearance really says of God: that for no one, and hence not even for her, is there salvation apart from God. If she knows this her first morning gaze into the heights, as she shines in the purity of her rising, then this is no reason for her not to recognize it also in her evening view into those depths of blindness and of guilt from which she is preserved and from which we are saved by the one grace.117

117 Rahner, p.138.
The dogma of the Immaculate Conception is closely connected to the doctrine of the redemption, to original sin, to our very mystery as human beings, and to the beauty of God who is all-holy. Mary in her Immaculate Conception is a means of affirming even more deeply the absolute goodness of God in whom there is no evil. She reaffirms that human creation is meant to look and be like God--human beings are his image and his likeness. Her Immaculate Conception hints that there was an original pattern for the creation of human persons but that pattern became obscured through sin. Therefore, the Immaculate Conception is a picture of ultimate hope for humanity. It directs one back to the beginning, even if that beginning will never be fully "remembered"; it also directs one forward to the consummation of humanity that is still awaited in the blessed life of heaven.

This study has demonstrated several points at which the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the doctrine of the original sin meet. The last point considered was that of the redemption and is perhaps the most important in terms of confirming both doctrines as belonging intimately to the framework of the Catholic theological tradition.

There still remains however another important point of contact to be explored, one more way of elucidating the living relationship between these two doctrines. That point of contact is the Personal Evil who inserts himself into God's plan and whose presence, although mysterious, illuminates to some degree the cause of humankind's Fall and the role of the woman in our redemption. By themselves, none of these points truly confirms the tradition about original sin; taken together in the full meaning of the Immaculately Conceived One, they point us toward the faith of the Church which is a truly integrated whole. To unravel one
doctrine is to unravel them all. Perhaps without a consideration of the role of the devil there would be no real need to take seriously an actual fall from grace. Indeed, many modern theologians do not seem to recognize an actual Fall partly because they have totally eliminated a protagonist the church believes to be very real.
Chapter Five

The Presence of the Devil in the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception and Original Sin

In this study of the relationship between the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the doctrine of original sin, at least three points of contact have been observed through which that relationship has been elucidated. In regard to these three points, the five theologians selected for review provided a variety of perspectives. However, the last point of contact, the figure of the devil in the original sin and the Immaculate Conception, can not be discussed adequately through an examination of these same authors' works. Therefore, if this study is to fully pursue all points of contact between original sin and the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the five theologians heretofore discussed must be left behind. The question may well be asked why these theologians have omitted any reference to the devil in their works. The answer to this question will be presented here before beginning a theological development of the devil's relationship to both doctrines. The lack of treatment of the devil has seriously hindered modern attempts to unravel the mystery of original sin; consequently, modern interpretations of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception have been hindered as well.

The Church recognizes three sources of evil: the world, the flesh, and the devil. However, the devil is markedly absent in modern attempts to understand the original sin doctrine. This omission is actually symptomatic of a larger trend in current theology and religious thought. Father Kosicki explains it in this way: "Secularism has progressed greatly in our minds and attitudes, especially during these four centuries since
the age of enlightenment in the person of a prostitute in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris; they have seen the rise of deism and an ideology that is militaristic and communistic, and an atheism that is capitalistic and materialistic. This period of history has seen the rise of a scientific and technological society that tries to live independently of God and denies the existence of Satan and his evil spirits.\textsuperscript{118}

In an attempt to enter the modern age, humankind has thought it necessary to throw off various beliefs that to "enlightened" minds seem hopelessly antiquated. This is the secularism of which Kosicki speaks. This secularism is the attitude that tries to understand reality from a vantage point which for the most part attempts to exclude that which can not be scientifically explained. Kosicki relates it to something even more fundamental: "Secularism is the full blossoming of Pelagianism, denying original sin and holding that man has perfect freedom of will, and through his own works only can earn his salvation. Secularism is the independent lifestyle that claims to have no need of God. The fruit of secularism is atheistic communism, which, in a military way, forces its denial of God on others, and a capitalistic atheism that lures men away from God by the goods of this life on earth. Secularism is the temptation of Genesis 3: 'You will be like gods!'\textsuperscript{119}

There is a tendency as well in some modern authors to demythologize the devil and explain his reality in more psychological categories. Herbert Haag is one such representative of this modern approach to the devil. Haag says: "The history of religions teaches us that


\textsuperscript{119} Kosicki, p.4. It should be noted here that "military way" indicates the way of force which is a great violation of human dignity and human rights.
human beings have not been successful in accepting responsibility for their own actions. Their tendency has been to ascribe the origin, acts, and results of evil to demons, evil spirits, and the devil."

Haag reports that man's view of the devil began to change in the eighteenth century. "The changes came from three sides: the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation; the Enlightenment and its new emphasis on human freedom and individual responsibility; and the strides of scientific research. Not only the natural sciences and evolution, but also medicine, anthropology, sociology, and psychology have shown that human beings are basically incomplete creatures. This means that evil has to be accepted as an individual matter and that people have to accept responsibility for their own actions."  

Burton Russell spent twenty years researching the historical development of humanity's ideas about the devil. His most recent book was published in 1988. With regard to the change brought about by the Enlightenment, Russell says: "With the educated middle classes, there is a rapid decline in popular belief in the devil and demons from roughly 1800 onward." Russell goes on to say: "The intellectual leaders of the churches for the most part either tend to deny or avoid discussions of demons or diabolology, the big exception being Cardinal Ratzinger."

Despite the general skepticism about the devil's reality that pervades contemporary thought, the Church nevertheless continues to affirm that Satan truly exists. The Magisterium officially teaches in the

120 Herbert Haag, "The Devil in Judaism and Christianity," Theology Digest, 32:1 (Spring, 1985), (pp.29-33), p.29.
121 Haag, p.33.
123 Russell, p.22.
new Catechism of the Catholic Church that "behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. (Gen. 3:1-5, Wis. 2:24) Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called 'Satan' or the devil. (Jn. 8:44, Rev. 12:9)"¹²⁴ Regarding Satan and the original sin, the Catechism teaches: "Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command."¹²⁵

Lukken in his detailed study of the early Church's liturgical tradition says that "in practically all the Fathers one finds the theme of Satan's cunning and deceit at the Fall of Adam and Eve, which is also referred to so explicitly in the Holy Scriptures. Speaking of the wiles of the devil who tempted man to sin in the form of a serpent, the Fathers go on to reflect on the motive of the devil. They are almost unanimous in referring to Satan's envy of man."¹²⁶

Lukken further attests to the fact that "like the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, the liturgy also speaks of the decisive role played by Satan in the Fall of the first man. [But] in the liturgy the Fall and its consequences are always seen as part of God's plan of salvation."¹²⁷ Lukken goes on to quote from the Veronese Sacramentary a Christmas prayer which speaks of Satan as "author of perdition" in the same context as original sin, described as that reality which "mortally" wounds the human race: "God, who deigned to heal the human race, which was mortally wounded by its founder, grant we beseech you, that we shall not cling to the author of perdition, but may pass over to the company of our Savior."¹²⁸ Pope Leo

¹²⁵ Catechism, p.100.
¹²⁷ Lukken, p.35.
¹²⁸ Lukken, p.35.
the Great, Lukken reminds us, also applied the term "auctor" to Christ. "Of
the eighty times he uses the word, eleven instances refer to the devil and
sixty to God or Christ. He calls Christ, for instance, the 'auctor salutis.'
(Leo Magnus, Sermo 23). Both these appellations may undoubtedly be
regarded as antipoles of the title 'auctor perditionis' which is conferred
on the devil in our oratio"129

Lukken cites numerous references in the various Sacramentarii to
the devil in connection with the Fall of man. It was obvious in every
aspect of the Church's worship that what opposed the work of God in man
were the forces of the devil. "In his first mystagogical catechism Cyril of
Jerusalem speaks of the pre-baptismal rites. With reference to the
renunciation of Satan (apotaxis), he explains: 'What then did each of you
say when he stood there? I abjure you, Satan, evil and most cruel of
tyrants, in other words: I no longer fear your power; for Christ has
rendered this [power] powerless and made me a sharer in his flesh and
blood, whereby he destroyed death so that I might not be subjected to
slavery (douleias). I abjure you, crafty and cunning serpent. I abjure you,
tempter, who brought about all forms of disobedience under the guise of
friendship and brought our forefathers to perdition. I abjure you, Satan,
creator and accomplice of all evil (Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, Cat. Myst.,
1, 4: FP 7/2 (mel.V 75). In his second catechesis, to the illuminandi, he
points out that the 'devil is the first originator of sin and the father of
evil' (Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, Cat. 2, 4: PG 33, 385 B)."130

Antonio Sayes, in his book Antropologia del Hombre Caido El Pecado
Original, points out the same observation Lukken so forcefully

129 Lukken, p.36.
130 Lukken, p.40.
demonstrated. Sayes declares: "Always has it been brought to my attention to observe that, not only in the patristic tradition but also in the liturgy, there was always an awareness that every man, on being born, was found in the slavery of the devil until he was regenerated in the waters of baptism. This is a datum so frequently found in the tradition of the Church, that the problem is trying to find a way to summarize it."\textsuperscript{131}

In attempting to define the nature of original sin---where it originates, and what effects it produces in us---the Council of Trent reaffirmed the ancient tradition that Lukken and Sayes noted regarding the role of the devil. The very first canon of Trent says: "If anyone does not confess that the first man Adam, when he had transgressed the commandment of God in paradise, immediately lost his holiness and justice in which he had been established, and that he incurred through the offense of that prevarication the wrath and indignation of God and, hence, the death with which God had previously threatened him, and with death captivity under his power who henceforth 'had the empire of death' (Hebrews 2:14) that is, of the devil, and that through that offense of prevarication the entire Adam was transformed in body and soul for the worse, let him be anathema."\textsuperscript{132}

Specific references to the devil can also be found in the modern liturgy in regard to Mary. In a Mass commemorating Mary at the foot of the Cross, the sacramentary states in the opening prayer: "Lord our God, You placed at the side of your suffering Son his mother to suffer with him, so that the human race, deceived by the wiles of the devil, might become a

\textsuperscript{131} Sayes, op.cit., p.295.
\textsuperscript{132} Schoonenberg, \textit{Man and Sin}, p.164, quoting from DZ 788.
new and resplendent creation." Thus, one finds a consistent acknowledgment of the devil's presence in patristic theology, the Church tradition, and modern liturgical and catechetical sources.

Sayes concluded his work on original sin by attempting a new explication of this sin in terms of the "power of the devil": "With these data that we have seen, we have now the key to a new explication of original sin. On its part, the Church has been conscious that all people, on being born, are placed under the power and subjection of the devil, so long as this was not washed away through the waters of baptism. This subjection is not a consequence of original sin in us, but something that has to be seen with its own nature, such that even though the consequences of original sin do not disappear with baptism, the subjection does."

With regard to what has transpired because of Adam's sin, Sayes says "by the transgression of Adam, a diabolical force has entered into the world that has dominated the world and that is only superseded in us by the waters of baptism...Adam, through his transgression has opened the door to a superior power that has subjugated men up until the coming of Christ...Humanity divested of the friendship and gifts of God, has now passed to the domination of another lord, the prince of this world. Neutrality does not exist."

Sayes defines original sin, then, "as that sin (always analogous to personal sin) in which man is born by virtue of the transgression of Adam and by which he participates in the mystery of iniquity and hostility that

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134 Sayes, p.328.
135 Sayes, p.331.
the devil maintains with God. Only Christ liberates us from this
domination by his death and resurrection whose salvific force is
communicated to us in baptism."\textsuperscript{136}

Sayes explains that this domination of the devil is not a "diabolical
possession" in the strict sense. "But it impedes us from loving God above
all things, and consequently, prevents man from being able to live for a
long time without falling into mortal sin, so his being does not receive
divine grace. This is original sin originated: under the domination of the
devil, we are not able to enter into the salvific dialogue with God, loving
him above all things, nor are we able to remain without falling at length
into personal sins."\textsuperscript{137}

This statement clearly indicates Sayes' belief that original sin is
inextricably linked to the reality of the devil. This link has been forgotten
or simply ignored in many modern treatments of original sin for the
reasons already listed above. While it would be impermissible to ascribe
all evil to the influence of the devil (excluding the sinfulness of the world
and the flesh), it must be admitted that the reality of Satan is not often
 accorded the serious consideration it once demanded. Now that the reality
of the devil has been established both liturgically and canonically,
attention must be turned to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and
its relationship to the Prince of the World.\textsuperscript{138}

Several times in the bull of Pius IX the presence of the devil is
affirmed in relationship to Mary. In the very first lines of the bull, Pius IX
sets the stage for understanding the privilege of Mary in "terms of her

\textsuperscript{136} Sayes, p.332.
\textsuperscript{137} Sayes, p.332.
\textsuperscript{138} Wiedenhofer, in the article cited earlier, speaks of various modern paradigms of understanding with regard to
original sin. One such paradigm is called the "cosmological paradigm"---that is, original sin as dividedness and
inertia. He relates this understanding to the doctrine of angels and demons (p.526).
freedom from the 'most sorrowful ruin of the entire human race.' 139 This ruin was the result of the transgression of Adam "...by the craft of diabolical iniquity." 140 However, "from the beginning and before ages, ['the ineffable God'] chose and ordained a mother for His only begotten Son, of whom, made flesh, He should be born in the blessed plenitude of time, and followed her with so great love before all creatures that in her alone He pleased Himself with a most benign complacency." 141

Pius IX continues with this same juxtaposition of Mary against the plan of Satan: "And indeed, it was most becoming that she should shine always adorned with the splendor of the most perfect holiness, and free even from the stain of original sin, she should have the most complete triumph over the ancient serpent..." 142

Relating the dogma of the Immaculate Conception to the tradition, the Holy Father exclaims:

The Fathers and Writers of the Church, taught by the heavenly writings, had nothing more at heart, in the books written to explain the Scriptures, to vindicate the dogmas, and to instruct the faithful, then emulously to declare and exhibit in many and wonderful ways the Virgin's most high sanctity, dignity, and freedom from all stain of original sin, and her most renowned victory over the most foul enemy of the human race. Wherefore, repeating the words in which, at the beginning of the world, the Almighty, announcing the remedies of his mercy, prepared for regenerating mankind, crushed the audacity of the lying serpent, and wonderfully raised up the hope of our race, say: 'I will place enmity between thee and the woman, thy seed and hers,' they taught that in this divine oracle was clearly and openly pointed out the merciful Redeemer of the human race---the only-begotten Son of God, Christ Jesus, and that his Most Blessed Mother, the Virgin

140 McKenna, p.3.
141 McKenna, p.3.
142 McKenna, p.4.
Mary, was designated and at the same time that the enmity of both against the serpent was signally expressed. Wherefore, as Christ, the mediator of God and men, having assumed human nature, blotting out the handwriting of the decree, which stood against us fastened it triumphantly to the Cross, so the most Holy Virgin, bound by a most close and indissoluble chain with Him, exercising with Him and through Him eternal enmity against the malignant serpent, and triumphing most amply over the same, has crushed his head with her immaculate foot.\textsuperscript{143}

It is obvious from this passage that Pius IX sought to connect the "serpent" to the Fall of man, and also to indicate that Mary, as foreseen in Genesis, would be created by God in direct opposition to this Evil One. Pius IX continues: "And therefore, to vindicate the original innocence and justice of the Mother of God, they not only compared her to Eve, as yet virgin, as yet innocent, as yet incorrupt, and not yet deceived by the most deadly snares of the most treacherous serpent, but they have preferred her with a wonderful variety of thought and expression. For Eve, miserably obeying the serpent, fell from original innocence, and became his slave, but the Most Blessed Virgin, ever increasing her original gift, not only never lent an ear to the serpent, but by a virtue divinely received utterly broke his power."\textsuperscript{144}

According to Sayes, the understanding of original sin as part of the mystery of the devil himself brings to light the dogma of the Immaculate Conception: "How could Mary have been able to be subjected to the slavery of the devil? She is the woman who would crush the head of the devil (Gen. 3:15). This theme of the enmity of Mary with the devil has been recognized by the bull \textit{Ineffabilis Deus} and in \textit{Munificentissimus Deus}. On

\textsuperscript{143} McKenna, \textit{Ineffabilis Deus}, p.12.
\textsuperscript{144} McKenna, p.14.
his part, Pius IX in the encyclical *Fulgens Corona* says that if Mary had not been immaculate she would have been subjected to the devil."145

An amazing correlation exists between the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and original sin in terms of the mystery of the devil. The devil is the ancient antagonist whose plans were defeated through the Son of God born of a woman. Christian iconography has sought to capture this truth since the fifteenth century. In his article "The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception," Maurice Vloberg reports: "Not until the first years of the fifteenth century do we find a certain image of the Immaculate Virgin trampling on the head of a serpent. In 1407...Canon Ugo di Summo ordered a wooden statue of the Blessed Virgin for the Church St. Mary of Cremona, specifying that she was supposed to be 'crowned with twelve stars and with the ancient serpent under her feet..."146

Vloberg continues: "In this mixed image, in which the woman of the Apocalypse, the Blessed Virgin appears alone, without her Son, as befits her who is not yet the Mother of God, but has been prepared for that unique dignity by the unique privilege of exemption from original sin. In affirmation of this privilege, she crushes the head of the reptile who has attempted to 'bruise her heel,' according to the Vulgate rendering of Genesis 3:15."147

Pius IX wanted this image associated with the privilege of Mary's Immaculate Conception; the many references made to the crushing of the serpent in the bull *Ineffabilis* make this desire obvious. In addition, on

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145 Sayes, op.cit., p.336.
147 Vloberg, p.471.
September 8, 1857, the same Pope dedicated in the Piazza di Spagna at Rome, as a memorial of the dogmatic definition, a bronze statue of Mary Immaculate: one hand raised toward heaven, the other lowered towards the earth; she stands upon the crescent moon and the globe of the earth, on which the head of the serpent is crushed under her left foot. Pius IX himself is thought to have indicated this attitude to the sculptor. 148

In this same context, it is important to recall that one of the earliest theologies about Mary as developed by the martyr St. Justin and St. Irenaeus was that of Mary as the "New Eve." This theology was indeed instrumental to developing the idea that Mary was constructed in opposition to the plan of the Evil One. Her being proclaims the inbreaking of divine redemption and a new beginning of the human race. Just as the first Eve represented the beginnings of the old humanity held captive by disobedience, so Mary represents the new humanity liberated through her act of total obedience. For the bishop of Lyons (St. Irenaeus), the two scenes of the Garden of Eden and the Annunciation at Nazareth "are in his eyes pivotal for the history of humanity. What one woman does, the other undoes. Mary unties the knot so unfortunately tied by Eve. She accomplished this by her obedience, by her reply to the divine message transmitted by the angel; whereas previously Eve, for her misfortune and ours, had believed Satan." 149 In time, Mary as the New Eve is seen not only as representative of the New People of God freed from the power of Satan by the blood of the Lamb, but also as the very image of the empowered Christian who tramples underfoot the enemy of man.

148 Vloberg, p.497.
149 O'Connor, p.56.
As mentioned at the beginning of this study, the various mysteries of the faith are intimately associated, and if one of the mysteries is negated or simply ignored, it has serious repercussions on the other mysteries. The mystery of the devil is a mystery the Church has continued to proclaim, beginning with our Lord's own words about the Prince of this world. The Gospel writers imagined the Lord as the Savior who had come to redeem humanity from the kingdom of darkness. Thus, Jesus is represented as the Holy One sent by God to fulfill the ancient prophecy in Genesis 3:15. The finite minds of humans can not comprehend the mystery of evil, but through revelation one discovers that evil has a personal face--envious of humanity, at war with the other personal face, even that of God Himself!

After successively more profound insights into the person of the Mother of God, the Church hailed her as the Mother of all the living, as the bright dawn announcing the coming of our salvation. The mystery of Mary, as Rahner noted earlier, is constructed in counterpoint to sin. Her very meaning is made intelligible only when it is understood as God's direct assault on the Power of Evil itself. God defeats the Enemy through a miraculous intervention in human history. He takes one who is of human nature, and He makes her the very antithesis of evil itself. Her being is created in such grace that, from the beginning, she is never subjected to the Power that has ruled over humankind since the days of Adam and Eve.

The doctrines of Mary's Immaculate Conception and original sin, already linked in the tradition of the Church, are meant to remain so linked by means of the mystery of iniquity which has the devil as its author. If they are not, Christian anthropology suffers the danger of being perilously distorted. Through revelation one is taught to understand that
human reality is less than what it could have been. There are forces from without, diabolical forces, and there are forces from within, the loss of integration of our faculties, that determine human freedom. Mary is revealed in the tradition as the exception to these determinants. She is free from such forces, and thus enjoys perfect sinlessness, perfect obedience. However, if she had not been kept free from the first moment of her life by a special grace of preservation, she too would have suffered the common condition of humanity and would not have been recognized as the new "Eve" in the tradition.

A Christian anthropology that eliminates the element of the devil attributes man's "unfinished," "incomplete," or "imperfect" reality to the simple fact that humans, as created beings, are by nature limited. Questions arise from such an assertion---why would God not create man perfect since he is made in the image and likeness of His Son? Humanity's tendency toward evil must be explained. Is it too simplistic to say that human beings are imperfect creatures with free will? Given that man is created good and the "imago Dei," it is difficult to understand how human hearts can not be completely turned towards the One who is Goodness itself. This lack within man must either come from his nature or from some outside source. From whence does the wound in human nature come?

The fact that the human creature is as a creature limited and consequently sinful is not enough to explain fully the mystery of man's participation in evil; it is necessary to include some other reality in the discussion. A deeper explanation must exist, and this the Church has found in the mystery of a personal antagonist who enters into the human story from without. His presence is evil personified, directed against the good he sees in creation. He is especially at enmity with human beings,
because such "sacraments of the Good" are manifestations of the One who alone is truly Good. This diabolical force has inserted itself in human history even from the beginning, continuing to hold all things under his dominion unless specifically rejected through union with Christ, who is the manifestation of a kingdom not of this world.

One might well enumerate the examples of human reality taken up perfectly into the Kingdom of God as it steadily unfolds against evil. The person of Jesus Christ is human reality perfectly taken up by God and put in opposition to the devil. In the Church's tradition, Mary from her beginning was also taken up perfectly into God and set in opposition to the devil because of her affinity to Christ and His plan of salvation. Again, if one turns to the official Magisterium of the Church there is a confirmation of the unseen power of the devil over the human race because of sin: "The doctrine of original sin, closely connected with that of the redemption of Christ, provides lucid discernment of man's situation and activity in the world. By our first parents' sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free. Original sin entails 'captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil.' (Council of Trent (1546): DS 1511; Heb. 2:14) Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the area of education, politics, social action (John Paul II, CA 25), and morals."\[150\]

One must acknowledge the possibility that God has permitted the devil to exercise demonic power over human lives. That demonic power is still somehow mysteriously present alongside the grace of the redemption. The images of the Woman in Genesis 3:15 and the Woman of

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150 Catechism, p.108 (par.407).
Revelation suggest that in Mary, at least, that power never had any influence. This is a part of the very mystery of Mary's being, a being which was never submitted to that mysterious influence and thus was holy and immaculate from her beginning and throughout her life. This insight sheds a little more light on the mystery of original sin itself. Original sin necessarily has demonic overtones, and until all things are taken up in Christ will continue to deform the human creation.

Having completed the study of this last point of contact, the time has come to evaluate any new insights gained into the relationship between original sin and the Immaculate Conception. Among other authors, five of the great modern theologians—Rahner, Schoonenberg, Villalmonte, Alonso, and Fernandez—have been studied in regard to their position on the mystery of original sin. This study has yielded a deeper understanding of original sin in relation to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Certain elements in the relationship between these two doctrines have been especially useful in understanding original sin as presented in the tradition. In concluding this study, a synthesis of its discoveries will be formulated in addition to a definition of original sin and the Immaculate Conception.
Chapter Six
Toward a Synthesis and Further Understanding of Original Sin in its Relationship to the Immaculate Conception

Original sin has been seriously disputed by modern theologians over the past thirty years. Certain authors such as Schoonenberg, Villalmonte, and Fernandez have attempted to either reformulate the doctrine so as to make it more intelligible to modern minds or to eliminate it altogether.

This study began with the intention of demonstrating how original sin might be brought to clearer attention through an inter-doctrinal approach. Such an approach, it was hoped, would shed light on the tradition of the Church in terms of why the doctrines are formulated as they are in the fabric of Christian revelation. As such, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was chosen to help elucidate the traditional place of the doctrine of original sin in the Catholic system of belief. New insights were gained by identifying four main areas where the two doctrines of original sin and the Immaculate Conception interconnected: (1) the theological personhood of Mary, (2) the dogmatic language of Ineffabilis Deus that indicates an "intrinsic" relationship between these two doctrines, (3) the redemption applied especially to the Blessed Virgin, and (4) the role of the devil in both doctrines.

Rahner made an interesting connection in terms of the personhood of Mary. He observed that Mary's Immaculate Being reveals the real essence of human nature as good and not evil. If the original sin is omitted, therefore, it becomes difficult to view human nature as originally good and holy. This is not to say that such a revelation could not be obtained through other doctrines, but it does relate to the whole of the Catholic
faith. The tradition's theological anthropology is still profoundly optimistic, despite its admission of original sin.

Villalmonte and Fernandez, however, prefer an unqualified optimism that views human nature as initially graced and not marred by any so-called original sin. Such an assumption, which is directly opposed to the Tradition, is also contradicted by the human experience. Even from an early age, man is inclined to perform acts that are not good. When asked where these inclinations come from, it is inadequate to attribute this weakness to man's limited and finite nature. There is a more mysterious influence on human beings that prompts them toward evil, incapable of being explained simply in terms of human limitedness and creatureliness.

On the other hand, when the image of Mary's humanity is pondered in the depth of the tradition, there are few who would ascribe any sinful inclinations or evil deeds to her. The weight of the tradition has always honored her as the sinless Virgin. Thus, her immaculate personhood confirms the belief that ordinary human natures are wounded. For if all human beings were created as immaculately as Mary, there would be no concupiscence. Even allowing for an explanation of such a difference in terms of grace, one is still left wondering why the grace in Mary established her in a constant state of holiness while ordinary men, even with much grace, are still inclined to sin.

Schoonenberg, Alonso, and Fernandez approached the relationship between original sin and the Immaculate Conception from different theological frameworks. A comparison of the three authors indicated a strict relationship between original sin and the Immaculate Conception as the Church defined these doctrines. Schoonenberg related the dogma of the Immaculate Conception to his re-formulated doctrine of original sin,
consequently arriving at a re-formulated doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Alonso followed the Tradition of the Church and simply stated that an intrinsic relationship does exist between these two doctrines, such that if the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was emptied of the doctrine of original sin it would necessarily lose its essential meaning. Fernandez admitted that there is a relationship between these two doctrines as defined by the Church, though he disagreed with the presuppositions of the Church regarding original sin. Fernandez, like Villalmonte, asserted that Mary's Immaculate Conception is still a dogma of immense profundity even without a doctrine of original sin.

However, this profundity fails to materialize in comparison to the profundity of the dogma once original sin is included. As Rahner noted, the tradition views Mary as singularly blessed in her nature as well as in her mission. For Villalmonte and Fernandez, Mary is blessed almost exclusively in terms of her role as Mother of the Savior. The sense of the Church regarding Mary indicates that a profound preparation occurred within her very being so as to make her fit to be the Mother of God. This preparation, although sensed in the Church and explicated in the concept of the new "Eve," receives full confirmation in the Church's proclamation that she was never---even for a moment---infected with original sin. Thus, her holiness in view of the event of the Incarnation was predestined from the beginning, and her reality was constructed in counterpoint to sin itself.

Early in this study, it became clear that two different models of redemption were being proposed---one by Villamonte and Fernandez, and one by Rahner and Alonso. Schoonenberg was not included in this discussion. For Villalmonde and Fernandez, the redemption primarily
involved the ministry of God toward man that raises humankind from their limited creaturehood to the capacity of union with an unlimited Creator. It also involves the forgiveness of personal sins committed because of humanity's condition as imperfect creatures. This forgiveness is dependent upon man's acceptance of God's offer of salvation.

For Rahner, redemption also involved all that Villalmonde and Fernandez indicated. However, Rahner expanded the concept of redemption to include the forgiveness of original sin understood analogically. Original sin was defined by Rahner as that which Trent had affirmed. Rahner, however, employed transcendental categories to capture the real meaning of this "sin." For Rahner, original sin consisted in a lack of original grace within human nature. The Immaculate Conception is the perfect exemplar of redemption for every author studied in this thesis. However, redemption seems to mean different things to these authors depending on how original sin was employed in the discussion.

The question might be asked, however, whether ultimately these authors all tried to express a similar idea. They all agreed that redemption makes humankind partakers in the divine nature. Whether the lack of such a participation from the beginning of their existence is viewed as "sinful" or not does not make a profound difference in terms of the final result. In the end all human beings need redeeming. Each author viewed Mary as all-holy, sinless, and immaculate. Even Villalmonde and Fernandez acknowledge that Mary was always a "partaker" in divinity. Her fullness of grace kept her whole and at one with God. Therefore, Mary is considered perfectly redeemed by all of these authors.

Is original sin truly necessary, then, for a full understanding of Christ's redemption? Has the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, in
light of the redemption, ultimately shed any light on what original sin is, and whether it even exists? The answer is yes; the dogma of the Immaculate Conception makes clearer the Church's faith that all humanity begins in need of redemption, and Mary's singular redemption points to the fact that the rest of humanity is redeemed in a different way. This "ordinary redemption" is accomplished primarily through liberation from sin and the healing of man's wounded capacity to unite with God. In terms of understanding what original sin is or deciding what particular paradigm of original sin should be used, one can not fully come to this awareness through an examination of the relationship between the Immaculate Conception and original sin. One may say, however, that those who adhere to the tradition of the Church regarding the Immaculate Conception are certainly given clear indication that original sin exists and that Mary's reality is constructed in "counterpoint to sin."

Although the dogma of the Immaculate Conception does not neatly spell out an answer to original sin, it does open new paths to understanding this mystery. Original sin could be defined as the summation of all in man that lies mysteriously at odds with the Divine Goodness. In terms of man's creaturehood, this includes not only his "impotence" in attaining union with God, but also that part of human nature which actively resists the advances of divine grace. In Pope John Paul II's recent book Crossing the Threshold of Hope, he states that original sin "is truly the key for interpreting reality." In summarizing the relationship between man and the fatherhood of God, the Pope says that "in human history the 'rays of fatherhood' meet a first resistance in the obscure but real fact of original sin... Original sin is not only the

violation of a positive command of God but also, above all, a violation of the will of God as expressed in that command. Original sin attempts, then, to abolish fatherhood, destroying its rays which permeate the created world, placing in doubt the truth about God who is love and leaving man only with a sense of the master-slave relationship. As a result, the Lord appears jealous of His power over the world and over man; and consequently, man feels goaded to do battle with God."

In order to broaden the understanding of human nature's resistance to grace, one also ought to include the influence of a power unseen but real, one that is called the devil. This personified Evil, although remaining a creature, is the great antithesis of God. For reasons not fully comprehended, God permitted this one to exist and "test" the world's inhabitants until the end of time. Antonio Sayes noted how this reality has been forgotten in modern attempts to understand original sin, but that it is a key to unlocking the secret of this "sin."

Consequently, the devil is also a real key to understanding the privilege of Mary's Immaculate Conception. The tradition indicates that because of the sin of Adam, humankind inherits an unhealthy nature, spiritually diseased and dominated by the devil. Thus, man is a captive unto himself, and in a certain sense from without as well. Humanity is captive and has no means of escape except through Christ. Mary, however, was never subjected to the dominion of the devil; thus, she was never enslaved in his demonic influence. From within and from without she was always free. Baptism liberates man from the devil's dominion, but Satan's influence continues to infect humanity mysteriously through the original wound in its nature.
Thus, original sin comes into contact with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in several key ways that are a part of the larger picture. By themselves, these points of contact do not exert much force upon the belief in original sin, but together they add weight to the logic of the faith and demonstrate that the Church's doctrines are all integrally connected. However, the belief in a literal Adam and Eve, a real state of original justice, the transmission of a real "sin" from generation to generation, and the fallen human nature can still be challenged. The world is no longer perceived as static; how can traditional belief survive in a world viewed as evolutionary and dynamic?

Even if science definitively proved that human beings evolved over the course of millions of years, this would not change the fundamental insight of Christianity with regard to the wounded state of human natures, nor to the fact that men and women have been sinning as far back as Revelation records. It is part of humankind's common history that from the beginning they have needed a God of forgiveness and compassion, for they are creatures always inclined toward doing evil things. Man also possesses a great capacity for doing good things, but this does not lessen the mysterious fact of his propensity to evil.

One must always wrestle with the origins of evil, for deep within human nature is held the belief that God created man to be good---the image and likeness of God. As long as one continues to believe that God is all-good, one must struggle to understand where evil originates. How can a good and holy nature choose to do evil? Humans are not infinite beings, it is true; but even finite beings made holy and good by God, if granted His grace, should avoid the evil. Why should man not have been granted His grace, since left to itself the finite human nature could not possibly have
always chosen the good? It would seem cruel of God to place humankind in a capacity for friendship with Him, with the moral obligation to choose the good, and then not grant them the grace needed to know and always choose that good. Either God is cruel to his creatures (which can not be accepted), or man lost that original grace in which he first existed until another grace was granted—the grace of redemption.

The modern world is still troubled by the problem of evil. However, there is a tendency to place the cause of evil upon man's own selfishness and desire for security, or some such psychological factor. The Church offers its people an insight that is truly valuable for all ages. That insight is that man has a deadly wound in his nature; he is infected with a spiritual disease from the moment of his conception. Human beings are in need of a doctor even as they begin their earthly journey. Without the medicine of Christ one would die spiritually and the contagion would destroy the world. But Christ is the remedy for each individual as well as a race. The healing salve of His presence applied to the wound in human nature heals and strengthens it. However, even after the healing, human nature has been scarred and it continues to be difficult to live whole and integrated lives with God. The salve of Christ must be applied over and over again to the wound so that human nature learns to choose that which is truly good and holy.

Within the human family, God destined one to have a nature perfectly whole and intact, even from the beginning. Mary was predestined to display the awesome beauty of human nature in its pristine goodness, a nature filled with life and light, a nature fruitful and self-less. Mary was chosen to be a special sacrament of human nature upon which God could write His Word in all purity. From that wondrous nature came God—even
bodily! This is the great glory of humanity. This is what it was truly created to be from the beginning---the original and virginal reality.

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception, therefore, is God's poetry beautifully written for all people of all ages. It is God's way of telling us how truly wonderful we have been created, even if we must now accept our woundedness. The wound that oozed out corruption has not disfigured humanity's true beauty. The wound itself is beautiful to God since it pleads for His love, and without it humanity would not have merited the coming of God as suffering Redeemer: the full revelation of God's glory. Ultimately, even man's failures have been redeemed and the plans of the ancient Enemy totally destroyed. The inevitable advance of God will never be defeated and humankind is a part of that advance, carried along on the wings of God's tender mercy! Alleluia!

The relationship, then, between original sin and the Immaculate Conception is a relationship of great value to the human race in coming to see its darkness and its light. Human nature is not all light, as demonstrated by the sins that come forth from it; but mankind is not all darkness, as seen in the beauty of human nature displayed in Mary. Humankind contains both shadow and light in its earthly sojourn, but the sacrament of Mary's life also prompts it toward hope. Mankind is still being perfected and will one day, with God's grace and man's "yes," be confirmed in that perfection of which Mary is the exemplar. Until then, one must continue to ponder the human mystery in the light of God's revelation and accept the fact that for now, one must know it in a limited way---one day it shall be known fully in the light of the Son!
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