

*THE SIN OF THE WORLD:
SCHOONENBERG'S THEOLOGY AS A HERMENEUTIC
FOR THE PROBLEM OF CHILD ABUSE*

by

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Thesis submitted to the Department of Religious Studies and
the School of Graduate Studies, University of Ottawa, in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of
Philosophy.

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ISBN 0-612-15676-1

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For Harv,
with thanks for years of friendship

ABSTRACT

The magnitude of the problem of the abuse of children is finally beginning to be recognized in our society. While statistics vary widely, there can be no question that the problem needs serious attention. Repeatedly, studies have shown that we cannot view child abuse as an isolated phenomenon, or as a recent one. Instead, there is a long history of the misuse of children. In order to deal with the problem as a society, we need first to understand it: where it comes from, how it is transmitted, what its effects are; and then to determine how we can end it.

The Roman Catholic Church has recognized that child abuse needs to be dealt with and as a result, there is a growing literature on pastoral responses. As yet, however, even though humanity has traditionally turned to religion to explain why evil exists, there have been no attempts at a theological explanation for the existence of the problem of child abuse. Such an explanation is needed, both in order to aid the pastoral interventions and to help the church make sense of the existence of such evil in the world. In this thesis, therefore, I propose that an explanation for the presence of child abuse can be found in the sin of the world theology as outlined by Piet Schoonenberg. I use the theories of psychoanalyst Alice Miller to outline the magnitude of the problem of child abuse, and its means of transmission.

Schoonenberg's theology takes full account of the history of abuse, and of the weight of this history: the sins of the generations are such that no-one can any longer be born without being contaminated by them. Society and even the teachings of Christianity inevitably bear signs of this abuse and in turn transmit it to the next generation. But it is the immediate situation into which each child is born that Schoonenberg, and Miller, see as the primary means of the transmittal of the sin of the world. Schoonenberg's concept of situation is far more abstract than Miller's real documentation of child abuse, but it does provide a conceptual framework for the reality that she exposes.

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NOTE: In order to use inclusive language in my thesis, I make use of the singular they, for the third person singular pronoun. This usage has a long history, according to the *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage*.

INTRODUCTION

One of the major issues facing society today is the problem of child abuse. Newspapers and magazines are continually filled with reports of the latest outrages; the courts are backlogged with cases. According to Michael Clifford, "of all the social issues that have emerged... during the last generation, aggression against children is surely among the most disturbing. Yet, today, aggression against children is a problem of staggering dimension".¹ The abuse occurs primarily in the home, and takes many forms: physical, sexual, and emotional. It is widespread throughout all of society: "it happens in both wealthy and poor families, among all races and religions, in all geographic areas, at all socioeconomic levels, in all cultural groups, and among all educational levels."² And it represents a problem that we must come to terms with; it is a type of human evil that we must face and understand.³ Alice Miller points out that, "if we turn our backs on

¹ Michael Clifford, "Narcissism, 'Nuclearism,' and 'Inner Infanticide': Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Idea of the Child in the Nuclear Age", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 1983, p. 35.

² Virginia D. Ratliff and J. Bill Ratliff. "Abused Children", *When Children Suffer: A Sourcebook for Ministry with Children in Crisis*, Andrew D. Lester, ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987, p. 126.

³ Many authors now explicitly see child abuse as one example of human evil. See for example: Mary Potter Engel, "Evil, Sin, and Violation of the Vulnerable", *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, Susan Brooks, Thistlethwaite & Mary Potter Engel, eds. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1990), pp. 152-164; James Garbarino, and John K. Hershberger, "The Perspective of Evil in Understanding and Treating Child Abuse", *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 20, No. 3, Fall 1981, pp. 208-217; and Jim McHugh, "An Abuse of Power, A Betrayal of Trust", *Grail*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1991, pp. 18-39.

Garbarino and Hershberger point out in their article that social science has tended to dismiss the question of evil from all consideration of child abuse: "According to this paradigm, abuse and neglect are seen as manifestations of social stress, of inadequate relationships with potent, pro-social support systems, of dangerous values about the use of force in domestic relations, of inappropriate expectations and standards for child care

something because it is difficult to understand and indignantly refer to it as 'inhuman,' we will never be able to learn anything about its nature. The risk will then be greater, when next we encounter it, of once again aiding and abetting it by our innocence and naïveté."⁴

How do we understand why adults abuse children? How do we comprehend why an uncle would sodomize then strangle his three year old nephew?⁵ How do we explain "the almost inconceivable depravity - the three year old girl with gonorrhoea, the eleven year old boy anally raped by his mother with the handle of a toy dagger, the eight year old hired out for sex by her father"?⁶

Humanity has traditionally turned to religion for help in understanding the causes of human evil. Christianity has offered both the concept of the devil⁷ and the doctrine

and of psychopathology." [Garbarino and Hershberger, "The Perspective of Evil", p. 209] But they find these explanations insufficient to account for the enormity of the problem. They contend that it is vitally important to acknowledge "the reality of evil individually and corporately at work in situations of child abuse" since "to include evil as a working hypothesis in situations of child abuse strengthens the philosophical framework of physicians, social scientists, and therapists, and thereby expands the therapeutic resources available to them." [*Ibid*, p. 215]

⁴ Alice Miller, *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence*, trans. Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980), p. 143.

⁵ The sexual assault and murder of Paul Bourguignon Jr. by his uncle, Claude Bourguignon was covered extensively by the local media. See, for example, the eight page report in *The Ottawa Sun*, Sunday, March 3, 1991, pp. 25-32, which attempts to piece together Claude's history and life to understand why he committed such an atrocity.

⁶ Gay Search, *The Last Taboo: Sexual Abuse of Children* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 3.

⁷ I shall not be examining the devil in this thesis. Excellent analyses abound; see: Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Donald Nugent, *Masks of Satan: The Demonic in History* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1983); Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil*

of original sin to account for the presence of evil in the world. The latter, especially, was used to account for the wickedness of humanity, particularly since the writings of Augustine, who pioneered the doctrine.⁸ In the narrative of the Fall contained in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 3,

The origin of human evil is not in some primordial chaos woven into the fabric of being and against which the gods struggle for life. Evil is not older than creation, nor contemporary with the origin of things. Creation is good, not evil. Evil is the corruption that occurs within a creation that is already complete and good. The Adamic myth thus takes an anthropological approach that traces evil not to the world or its good Creator but to human beings.⁹

This story has allowed Christians to believe in a good God while acknowledging the reality of human evil.

The doctrine of original sin, however, has declined in popularity during this century, and is therefore considered by many to be no longer a valid explanation for human wickedness. Karl Rahner traces the decline in the doctrine's influence to at least three misunderstandings that he says have undermined it. These are: the idea that humanity is basically good but has flawed social structures that can be fixed through human agency; the contradictory belief that humanity is totally flawed and never was or

from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), *Lucifer, the Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), and *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); and William Woods, *A History of the Devil* (London: W. H. Allen, 1973).

⁸ There is a large literature on Augustine's influence on the doctrine of original sin. For two examples of contemporary work on the subject, see Paul Rigby, *Original Sin in Augustine's Confessions* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1987); and Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988).

⁹ Stephen J. Duffy, "Our Hearts of Darkness: Original Sin Revisited", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 49, 1988, p. 598.

will be capable of being otherwise; and the idea that original sin is identical with personal sin and therefore not worth mentioning.¹⁰ Rahner says that, due to the prevalence of these beliefs, "it is understandable but not on that account excusable that the doctrine plays a very small part in the contemporary presentation of Christianity."¹¹ He points out that the doctrine hasn't been rejected by the church, but that it plays little or no role in the church's practice: "it is atrophied and largely a catechism truth, mentioned at its place in the system and then forgotten in daily life and average preaching."¹² For this reason, the doctrine of original sin has lost its usefulness as an explanation for the reality of human wickedness. Rahner views this as an unfortunate development.

Sharon MacIsaac locates a different reason for the decline in the doctrine's influence. She says that, "the exclusion of environmental influence from the exposition of original sin must, in part, explain why a subject which is so profoundly significant has for so long remained an obscure, at worst, far-fetched and peripheral issue in theology."¹³ The concept of original sin expresses a vitally important truth, she contends, one that has been lost by the emphasis in traditional theology on "hypothetical and deductive elements on the periphery of the central message" such as "original justice, polygenism, the state of limbo, etc."¹⁴ For her, the real import of the story lies in its expression of the fact that there are "deep-seated, destructive influences at work in human behavior" which are

¹⁰ Karl Rahner, "Original Sin", *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. IV, ed. Karl Rahner, et al (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 328.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 329.

¹² *Ibid*.

¹³ Sharon MacIsaac, *Freud and Original Sin* (New York: Paulist Press, 1974), pp. 115-116.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 1.

"experienced as in some real sense autonomous, removed from conscious control."¹⁵

Peter de Rosa also finds that theology has too often concentrated on the doctrine of original sin "in isolation from the sinful state of society which is the condition, and often the proximate cause of the failings of individuals."¹⁶ He is surprised by the emphasis on the individual's state, since for him, the doctrine reveals an essentially communal aspect to sin. As a result, he thinks that the traditional doctrine of original sin "is too facile a solution" to the question of human evil. De Rosa thinks that it might even be argued "that Christians have tended to blame Adam for all the ills and woes of the world and to exonerate the human race!"¹⁷

Even though the doctrine's usefulness seems to have declined, the reality that it once highlighted still exists. Human violence remains a troubling problem for society and other ways of understanding it have therefore been sought. Stephen Duffy, author of the article "Our Hearts of Darkness",¹⁸ points out that, in the modern world, most people no longer view evil as a religious issue. Instead, it is seen as "simply a problem of personal psychology and/or human social arrangements. Its remedy would be intelligent human response, not the invocation of divine aid."¹⁹ When evolutionary concepts began to be applied to culture as well as biology, "parascientific myths of progress surfaced and with them an optimism which considered evil as in principle perfectly amenable to human

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2.

¹⁶ Peter de Rosa, *Christ and Original Sin* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company), 1967, p. 121.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 124.

¹⁸ Stephen J. Duffy, "Our Hearts of Darkness: Original Sin Revisited", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 49, 1988, pp. 597-622.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 606.

manipulation."²⁰ Society began to believe that it could eliminate evil if only it used science correctly, if only it could find the proper theories in the social sciences.

Such beliefs faltered, however, in the face of what Duffy calls the "mystery of iniquity". The dreadful violence that has occurred in the 20th century has caused optimism and the naïve belief in science to wane. Even though we have advanced enormously in our knowledge and use of technology, evil has not vanished but has instead gained better tools for its expression. We have realized, according to Duffy, that science, rather than offering the potential to free us from evil, has become yet another perpetrator of it: "Paradoxically, the silver wings of science and technology, on which soared the hopes of the industrialized societies, carried the ultimate menace to the human prospect."²¹ It is within this context that new attempts were made in theology to understand the problem of human evil: "Revisionist theologians sought to reconstruct an anthropology adequate to our disconcerting experience of evil as a grim constant, appropriate to the Christian tradition, and sensitive to the problems that led to a loss of creditability for the classical doctrine, which appeared riddled with contradictions."²²

While new interpretations of the doctrine of original sin began to appear,²³ none took specific account of the problem of child abuse. The Roman Catholic Church's attempts to deal with the problem have so far been either descriptive or prescriptive.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ For an overview of the theologies, see: James L. Connor, "Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, June 1968, pp. 215-240; James P. Mackey, "New Thinking on Original Sin", *The Mystery of Sin and Forgiveness*, ed. Michael J. Taylor. Staten Island, NY: Society of St. Paul, 1971, pp. 215-232; and Brian O. McDermott, "The Theology of Original Sin: Recent Developments", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3, September 1977, pp. 478-512.

Many works have been published on priests' abuse of children²⁴ and many on how Christianity contributes to child abuse.²⁵ Other works describe pastoral responses to help people heal from childhood traumas.²⁶ To date, however, there has been little attempt to understand the existence of the problem itself. There has been a lack of theological

²⁴ See: Annie Laurie Gaylor, *Betrayal of Trust: Clergy Abuse of Children* (Madison, WI: Freethought Today, 1988); Jim McHugh, "An Abuse of Power, A Betrayal of Trust: The Emperor Has No Clothes", *Grail*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1991, pp. 18-39 and John Theis, "Power and Sexual Abuse in the Roman Catholic Church", *Grail*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1992, pp. 34-49. Michael Harris gives a detailed account of the Mount Cashel tragedy in his book, *Unholy Orders*, (Markham, Ont.: Penguin Books Canada, 1990).

²⁵ See for instance: Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds., *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989); Donald Capps, "Religion and Child Abuse: Perfect Together" (Presidential Address, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Nov. 1991), *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 31, March 1992, pp. 1-14; Mary Potter Engel, "Evil, Sin, and Violation of the Vulnerable", *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, eds. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1990, pp. 152-164.; and Sheila Redmond, "The Father God and Traditional Christian Interpretations of Guilt, Anger, Suffering and Forgiveness as Impediments to Recovery from Father-Daughter Incest", Ph.D. dissertation (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1992).

²⁶ See: Donald Capps, "Religion and Child Abuse: Perfect Together" (Presidential Address, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Nov. 1991), *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 31, March 1992, pp. 1-14; John Chrysavgis, "Child Abuse - The Role of the Church", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 1989, pp. 357-364; Mary Potter Engel, "Evil, Sin, and Violation of the Vulnerable", *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite & Mary Potter Engel, eds. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1990), pp. 152-164.; Edward Hastings, "Child Abuse: Viewing It as a National Problem and the Church as a Resource", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Claremont, CA: Claremont School of Theology, June 1975); Mary D. Pellauer, Barbara Chester and Jane Boyajian, eds., *Sexual Assault and Abuse: A Handbook for Clergy and Religious Professionals* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); and Virginia D. Ratliff and J. Bill Ratliff, "Abused Children", *When Children Suffer: A Sourcebook for Ministry with Children in Crisis*, Andrew D. Lester, ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), pp. 125-137.

reflection on why people hurt children.²⁷ John Chryssavgis has noticed this lack. He asks, "What is... the 'theology'—or lack of theology—behind child abuse? The social issue of child abuse has been variously and exceedingly analyzed in recent times. Yet unfortunately, there is very little by way of theological appraisal".²⁸ Such theological reflection is clearly needed. When speaking of the suffering that results from abuse, Elizabeth Bettenhausen points out that, "a theological interpretation of suffering is essential. Until suffering is eliminated, its agony is fed when no sense can be made out of it."²⁹

It is therefore useful to look for a theology that can contribute to the discussion by providing a framework that can aid understanding of why child abuse occurs. For James Garbarino and John Hershberger, this is necessary since they contend that "the social scientist's view of the human condition is inadequate to situations of child abuse".³⁰

²⁷ Many feminist theologians theorize that patriarchal theology is the origin of domestic abuse. Rita Nakashima Brock says, "I believe that patriarchy is the encompassing social system that sanctions child abuse. Theologically, the patriarchal family has been and continues to be a cornerstone for christological doctrines, especially in father-son imagery". [Rita Nakashima Brock, "And A Little Child Will Lead Us: Christology and Child Abuse", *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds. (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), p. 42. Two other chapters in the same work offer similar criticisms; see: Karen L. Bloomquist, "Sexual Violence: Patriarchy's Offense and Defense", pp. 62-69 and Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?", pp. 1-30.] Analyses of patriarchal theology do not however seek a theological explanation for the problem of child abuse, but rather criticize the theology for causing the problem.

²⁸ John Chryssavgis, "Child Abuse - The Role of the Church", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 1989, p. 358.

²⁹ Elizabeth Bettenhausen, "Forward" to *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds. (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), p. xii.

³⁰ Garbarino and Hershberger, "The Perspective of Evil in Understanding and Treating Child Abuse", p. 210.

Garbarino and Hershberger believe that religion can help society to become aware of and combat the problem of abuse. They see the beginnings of a theology that can account for this evil in Christianity's "insistent awareness of both personal and corporate manifestations of sin." For them, "the acknowledgement of sin in the human situation is good news."³¹ They call on the church to work on this issue since, "theologically speaking, it is upon and through the base of the Christian community that other structures are changed."³²

Therefore, since humanity has turned to religion throughout history for help in understanding the problem of evil, it is important that religion contribute to the discussion of this specific type of evil: of why child abuse occurs, why it is so widespread in society, and why it is passed from generation to generation. It becomes even more urgent that contributions be sought when one considers that "religion has often been society's most vocal advocate for children against their adult abusers, and religion has often provided legitimation and motivation for some adults' active condemnation of child abuse."³³

In this thesis, I concentrate on the enormity of the problem of this type of human evil and propose a Roman Catholic theology that I believe can offer a framework for understanding the presence and transmission of child abuse. I contend that the doctrine of original sin can help us to understand this particular evil, when it is interpreted in the

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 213.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ Donald Capps, "Religion and Child Abuse: Perfect Together", p. 12. It must be noted that some see a different motivation for Christianity to find such a theology. Mary Potter Engel maintains that it is necessary because, traditionally, "Christianity and North American culture have both chosen, through their indifference and participation in the 'conspiracy of silence,' to be passive and active accomplices in these crimes against the vulnerable." [Engel, "Evil, Sin, and Violation of the Vulnerable", p. 153.]

manner outlined by several contemporary theologians, as the "sin of the world."³⁴ Before beginning my exposition of the "sin of the world" theology as outlined by Piet Schoonenberg, however, I first concentrate on what child abuse is: how it is defined, how it affects people, and how it is transmitted. I use the work of Alice Miller to explore these aspects of the problem.

I have chosen a psychoanalytic theorist³⁵ instead of a theorist from one of the other social science disciplines because I believe that psychoanalytic thought can make a valuable contribution to the specific question of child abuse. Psychoanalytic theory can be successfully applied to answer the questions posed by the problem, "because a central precept of psychoanalysis is that a variety of behaviors—such as the spectrum of aggression against children...—can be accounted for by a single set of underlying psychodynamics, which, despite the variety of its manifestations, is nonetheless structurally unified."³⁶ But while psychoanalysis is at ease answering questions about the influences on human behaviour, it has traditionally been less comfortable with the aggressive side of it, with the

³⁴ This theology, also known as situationist theology, takes its name from the phrase, "sin of the world", found in the Gospel of John (1:29). Piet Schoonenberg defines "sin of the world" by saying that "there exists a community of sin, just as men share together in Christ's redemption. This 'original sin' affects man's origin and whole existence precisely because it is common to the individual and all his fellows." [Piet Schoonenberg, "Original Sin and Man's Situation", *The Mystery of Sin and Forgiveness*, Michael J. Taylor, ed. (Staten Island, NY: Society of St. Paul, 1971), p. 243] For situationist theologians, "the specific nature of original sin...[is] that it comes to us from others, thus besetting our existence from the very start." [Piet Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin: A Theological View*, trans. Joseph Donceel (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), p. 198.]

³⁵ Miller rejects this label now but, as we shall see in Chapter One, her theories grew out of her psychoanalytic practice and are grounded in psychoanalytic theory.

³⁶ Michael Clifford, "Narcissism, 'Nuclearism,' and 'Inner Infanticide': Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Idea of the Child in the Nuclear Age", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 1983, p. 37.

causes of human evil.³⁷

Psychoanalytic theorist Barry Magid contends that, "psychoanalysis, in seeking to provide a comprehensive theory of the mind, both in health and in illness, has only with great difficulty grappled with the recurrent tendency of the human race to erupt into violence and engage in willfully destructive acts."³⁸ However, he does not think that psychoanalysis has ignored the problem completely. Instead, it has tended to equate human evil with psychopathology. Magid points out that, "as psychoanalysis developed historically, it sought first of all to encompass all human behavior under the vicissitudes of instinctual, drive-based phenomena. Psychoanalysts tended to see evil as the eruption of unrestrained primitive aggression, or the frustrated outcome of unmodulated libidinal wishes, that is, as the breakthrough of uncontrolled id impulses through a barrier of repression."³⁹ Magid rejects this perspective, since he doesn't believe that evil is "reducible to the vicissitudes of aggression, in whatever theoretical guise."⁴⁰ Miller also rejects it and proposes, as we shall see, a different explanation.

There are many different psychoanalytic perspectives on the causes of human

³⁷ Even the word 'evil', itself, has been questioned by psychoanalytic theorists. Jeffrey Burton Russell, a historian whose primary research area has been the history of the concept of the devil, points out that, "most modern psychologists avoid the term 'evil,' preferring 'aggression.'" [Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p. 242.] Furthermore, he says that most actually "dismiss the notion of evil and prefer to use the social concept of violence or the psychological concept of aggression." [*Ibid*, p. 248.]

³⁸ Barry Magid, "The Evil Self" in *Dynamic Psychotherapy*, Vol 6, No. 2, Fall/Winter 1988, p. 99.

³⁹ *Ibid*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 100.

evil.⁴¹ Alice Miller's perspective is particularly valuable for this thesis since she deals specifically and exclusively with child abuse, examining why it occurs, how it is transmitted throughout the generations, and what its effect is on adult behaviour. Moreover, unlike many psychoanalysts, Miller does not hesitate to use the term evil explicitly, to describe both child abuse and the violent adult behaviour that she sees as a direct result of it.⁴²

Another reason for studying Miller's work is that she is widely acknowledged to be one of the foremost theorists studying the problem of child abuse today. All but one of her books⁴³ are bestsellers, reprinted constantly, and her work is frequently cited in

⁴¹ The following two works offer excellent analyses of two different psychoanalytic interpretations of child abuse: Julia Ann Bishop, "Treatment of Child Abuse: Tradition and Change," *Journal of the Otto Rank Association*, 14, No. 2 (Winter 1979-80), 27-39, and Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962). Other psychoanalytic works containing theories about the origin of evil in humanity are: Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York: Fawcett Crest Books, 1973) and *The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980); Morton Schatzman, *Soul Murder: Persecution in the Family* (New York, Random House, 1973); and Anthony Storr, *Human Aggression* (London: Penguin Books, 1970) and *Human Destructiveness* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1975).

Freud also commented briefly on aggression and its origins in a few of his early works (see for example *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Volume 7, and *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes*, Volume 14, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey [London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-1974]), but the following works contain the main body of his theory: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Volume 18, *Civilization and its Discontents*, Volume 21, *The Ego and the Id*, Volume 19, and *New Introductory Lectures*, Volume 22, *Standard Edition*.

⁴² Unlike Schoonenberg, Miller does not explicitly define the terms she uses. Instead, she seems to assume that their definitions are self-evident, and so uses the terms destructiveness, violence, and evil interchangeably. For just a few examples of her use of these terms, see Miller, *For Your Own Good*, pp. vii-xii, 261-268, 283.

⁴³ Miller's art book, *Pictures of a Childhood* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985), has not sold as well as her other books.

studies of the issue.⁴⁴ David Harrington, for example, chose to test Miller's theories partly because he believes that she is concerned with important phenomena and partly because her work has had such an impact on lay readers through the medium of social

⁴⁴ The major works in the literatures of psychology and religious studies which expressly examine Miller's theories are: Michael Clifford, "Narcissism, 'Nuclearism,' and 'Inner Infanticide': Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Idea of the Child in the Nuclear Age", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 1983, pp. 35-73; Gary F. Greif, "Alice Miller's Revision of Psychoanalysis" in *Psychotherapy*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Summer 1992, pp. 310-317; David M. Harrington, "Child-Rearing Antecedents of Suboptimal Personality Development: Exploring Aspects of Alice Miller's Concept of the Poisonous Pedagogy" in *Studying Lives Through Time: Personality and Development*, David C. Funder, et al, eds (Santa Cruz, CA: American Psychological Association, 1993) pp. 289-313; Barry Magid, "The Evil Self" in *Dynamic Psychotherapy*, Vol 6, No. 2, Fall/Winter 1988, pp. 99-113; Suzanna Rose, "The Contribution of Alice Miller to Feminist Therapy and Theory", *Women and Therapy*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1991, pp. 41-53; and Edward P. Shafranske, "The Betrayal of the Child: The Contributions of Alice Miller" in *Psychotherapy Patient*, Vol 8, No. 3-4, 1992, pp. 27-40.

Many other theorists use Miller's work as the basis for their own analyses. See for example: Rita Nakashima Brock, "And A Little Child Will Lead Us: Christology and Child Abuse" (pp. 42-61) and Sheila A. Redmond, "Christian 'Virtues' and Recovery from Child Sexual Abuse" (pp. 70-88) in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1989); and Mary Potter Engel, "Evil, Sin, and Violation of the Vulnerable", *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite & Mary Potter Engel, eds. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1990), pp. 152-164.

It must be emphasized that there are as yet few scholarly critiques of Miller's work. Shraffanski is primarily concerned with providing a summary of her theories whereas Magid uses Miller's theories to contrast with his own, though he does also offer some critique of them. Harrington offers an empirical test of Miller's theories about the transmission of poisonous pedagogy, while Rose is interested in Miller's theories from a feminist viewpoint.

Harrington acknowledges the dearth of critical analyses of Miller's theories and says that, "as far as I have been able to determine... Miller's concept has received little or no systematic empirical evaluation beyond case studies." (p. 292) He hopes that his own study will begin this evaluation.

A few criticisms of Miller's work do exist, however. Gary Greif says that Miller presents her theories "without any attempt to present a systematic, structural account of the source and development" ("Alice Miller's Revision of Psychoanalysis", p. 310). To be fair to Miller, it must be acknowledged that she is not attempting to present an objective, academic theory but rather to draw attention to the enormous problem of child abuse and its repercussions for all of society.

scientists and popular psychology.⁴⁵ Miller is therefore an appropriate theorist to use for an understanding of the dynamics of the abuse of children.

P. C. Vitz and J. Gartner contend that psychoanalysis, when examined from a Christian perspective, can be seen as a "useful theoretical representation of the psychology of sinful humans".⁴⁶ This is precisely where I see Miller's work being so useful to the search for a theological framework for understanding child abuse. Miller reveals the psychology of sinfulness (though she calls it evil) and especially of how sin is created and gains hold in a person's life. She points out the specific mechanisms by which sin is transmitted from generation to generation and what is needed to halt this transmission. Her theories can therefore aid theology's attempts to understand the problem of human evil that is manifest in child abuse.

In my search for a theology that can provide a framework for understanding child abuse, I have chosen to concentrate on Piet Schoonenberg's writings on the origins of human evil, contained in his sin of the world theology, because, while he is not the sole proponent of this theology,⁴⁷ he is considered to be one of the foremost theologians

⁴⁵ David M. Harrington, "Child-Rearing Antecedents of Suboptimal Personality Development", *Studying Lives Through Time*, p. 292. For the former, Harrington points to studies by Ashley Montague, "Poisonous Pedagogy", *Psychology Today*, May 1983, pp. 80-81 and M. E. Pharis, "Review of *For Your Own Good*", *Social Work*, Vol. 29, 1984, p. 412. For the latter, he refers the reader to the following as examples of current popular books that use Miller's theories: John Bradshaw, *The Family* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1988); Gloria Steinem, *Revolution From Within* (New York: Little, Brown, 1992); and C. L. Whitfield, *Healing the Child Within* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1989).

⁴⁶ P. C. Vitz and J. Gartner, "Christianity and Psychoanalysis, Part 1: Jesus as the Anti-Oedipus", *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Vol. 12, 1984, p. 11.

⁴⁷ Other theologians who have developed situationist theologies of original sin are Dubarle, Hulsbosch, Rahner, Rondet, and Weger. See: A. M. Dubarle, *The Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964); A. Hulsbosch, *God's Creation: Creation, Sin, and Redemption in an Evolving World*, trans. Martin Versfeld

working in the field. He was one of the very first theologians to use the situationist approach. According to G. Vandervelde, "in the elaboration of a comprehensive situational interpretation of original sin, Schoonenberg has played a pioneering role. For almost a decade he has devoted himself to exploring, elaborating and refining this conception."⁴⁸ Furthermore, Vandervelde says that Schoonenberg's theology has had a major impact on the field: "due to the creativeness of his early innovations, the extensiveness of his subsequent publications, and the breadth of his mature conception, most contemporary reinterpretations of original sin come to terms, explicitly or implicitly, with his views."⁴⁹

A further value in Schoonenberg's theory lies in his effort to render it in contemporary language, thus illuminating the continuing relevancy of the doctrine of original sin. James Mackey points out that the "development of dogma occurs precisely through our attempts to embody our Christian insights in the ever-developing thought-patterns of our times. The Christian revelation was first formulated in the concepts and categories of Judaism at the time of Christ, and it has been necessary for man's retention and understanding of it ever since that he translate it into the concepts and categories of each succeeding age."⁵⁰ Schoonenberg takes this project seriously and

(London: Sheed & Ward, 1965); Karl Rahner, "Original Sin", *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. IV, ed. Karl Rahner, et al (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 328-334, and *Theological Investigations*, Volume I (1961) and II (1963) (Baltimore: Helicon Press); Henri Rondet, *Original Sin: The Patristic and Theological Background*, trans. Cajetan Finegab (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1972); and Karl-Heinz Weger, *Theologie der Erbsünde* (Freiberg: Herder, 1970).

⁴⁸ G. Vandervelde, *Original Sin: Two Major Trends in Contemporary Roman Catholic Reinterpretation* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1975), p. 58.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ James P. Mackey, "New Thinking on Original Sin", *The Mystery of Sin and Forgiveness*, ed. Michael J. Taylor (Staten Island, NY: Society of St. Paul, 1971), p. 219.

is intently interested in making the doctrine of original sin comprehensible to all people, not just to fellow theologians.⁵¹ Chukwudi Nwosah says that Schoonenberg "demonstrated right from the beginning of his academic life his sense of mission, namely: to help analyze the faith in a totally new way so that modern man may once again profess it."⁵² For Chukwudi Nwosah, the "peculiar characteristic of Schoonenberg's method resides in his focus on the contextual horizon of his audience."⁵³ He points out that Schoonenberg is typical of the Dutch Catechists who maintain that, "if one wants to transmit the message of salvation to the men of our time, not only is its demythologization and recodification through a new linguistic translation necessary, but also its deculturalization from the primitive context is required in order to assimilate it, make it alive and test it against the new world-view of the men to whom it is announced."⁵⁴ Schoonenberg is thus a useful representative of the situationist theologians for the explication of a theology that can contribute to the discussion of why child abuse exists and how it is transmitted.

⁵¹ This characteristic of Schoonenberg's thought makes it particularly appropriate to apply his theology to the theories of Alice Miller, since she also is concerned with translating psychoanalytic findings into everyday language. She believes that psychoanalysis is an elitist discipline and that therefore its theories and findings aren't widely known. It is her aim to change this attitude and to render intelligible the findings of psychoanalysis. She is convinced that "society has a right to know, to the extent that this is at all possible, what actually takes place in the analytic setting; for what comes to light there is not only the private affair of a few ill or disturbed people; it concerns us all." [Alice Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 8.]

⁵² Joseph Mary Chukwudi Nwosah, *Original Sin in Dialogue* (Rome: Academia Alfonsiana, 1990), p. 96.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 102.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this thesis is to outline the problem of child abuse as revealed by Alice Miller and then to propose Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology as a possible framework for understanding child abuse and its means of transmission. Therefore, I will concentrate on aspects of Miller's and Schoonenberg's work which contribute to this discussion. To accomplish this purpose, I will present an exposition of both theorists' work.⁵⁵ Chapter One will begin with an examination of Miller's use of the psychoanalytic

⁵⁵ Dialogue between two such dissimilar fields as theology and psychoanalysis is admittedly problematic. Clifford warns that "the primary source of psychoanalytic theory is the study of the individual human psyche in the process of psychoanalysis, and whereas clearly it is inaccurate to say that psychoanalytic theory has no validity when applied to other situations, it must be borne in mind that the rightful methodological claims of other disciplines must be respected the farther afield psychoanalytic theory goes from its source." [Clifford, "Narcissism, 'Nuclearism,' and 'Inner Infanticide'", p. 59]. Since, as Vitz and Gartner point out, "in general, psychoanalysis and Christianity relate to quite different domains of life" [Vitz and Gartner, "Christianity and Psychoanalysis", p. 5], I will follow their example of an analysis of the two disciplines, which is to "integrate and connect the two at those places where they meet, namely at the boundary of psychological and spiritual experience." [*Ibid.*]

A few studies do exist which specifically combine the doctrine of original sin with psychoanalytic theory, though none incorporate Miller's work. See: Laird P. Bridgman and John D. Carter, "Christianity and Psychoanalysis: Original Sin-Oedipal or Preoedipal?", *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1989, pp. 3-8 and "Narcissus Precedes Oedipus", *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1989, pp. 13-15; James Forsyth, "Original Sin and Psychoanalysis", *Interpreting Tradition*, ed. Jane Kopas (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983); Ashley Montagu, "The New Litany of 'Innate Depravity,' or Original Sin Revisited", *Man and Aggression* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 3-17; and P. C. Vitz and J. Gartner, "Christianity and Psychoanalysis, Part 1: Jesus as the Anti-Oedipus", *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Vol. 12, 1984, pp. 4-14.

Two theologians analyse the contribution that they feel psychoanalysis can make to the question of original sin: A. M. Dubarle, *The Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964) and Sharon MacIsaac, *Freud and Original Sin* (New York: Paulist Press, 1974). MacIsaac, in particular, contends that psychoanalysis can make a very valuable contribution. Because she sees the reality that underlies the concept of original sin as being a psychological truth, she believes that psychoanalysis "can greatly enrich the understanding of original sin and the sin of the world." [MacIsaac, *Freud and Original Sin*, p. 3.] Psychoanalysis has already had a "profound influence on the

method and her critique of the same. I will then examine her definitions for the different types of child abuse; her emphasis on its long history and the reasons why society has ignored the problem throughout history; the transmission of abuse from generation to generation through child-rearing techniques and societal and religious teachings; and her analysis of the specific mechanisms of the transmission: repression, projection, and the repetition compulsion. Finally, I will give the example of one of Miller's case-histories, the life of Hitler, to show her contention that child abuse is the cause of violent adult behaviour. We will thus gain an understanding of the nature, origin, transmission, and effects of child abuse as outlined by Miller.

Chapter Two will begin with a brief overview of the traditional doctrine of original sin and the influences leading to the recent reinterpretations of it in order to situate Schoonenberg's theology in its context and emphasize his modifications of the doctrine. After an exposition of Schoonenberg's method and definitions of terms, I will examine the various aspects of his sin of the world theology: its emphasis on the accumulated history of sin growing out of the first sin; its concept of situation as the mediator of the sin of the world to each individual and of bad example as the specific means of transmission; and the concept of 'situated' freedom that results from the influence of sin in the primary environment. Finally, I will look at the differences between the traditional

awareness of Western man, and its influence is naturally perceptible in the works of contemporary theologians." [*Ibid*, p. 4] MacIsaac wrote *Freud and Original Sin* because of her sense that there was a "concurrence between certain emerging directions in the theology of original sin and some of Freud's insights." [*Ibid*.] MacIsaac is puzzled that, to date, little attention has been paid to using psychoanalytic theory to reinterpret the doctrine of original sin, despite its general influence on pastoral theology. She believes that the time has come to integrate the two fields in this instance.

In this thesis, I have not discussed how Miller's theories could be used to enrich Schoonenberg's theology. But there is no question that Miller's analysis of the phenomenon of child abuse speaks to the same reality that the doctrine of original sin addresses: the existence of human evil.

doctrine of original sin and Schoonenberg's reinterpretation of it, as revealed through Schoonenberg's own analysis.

In Chapter Three, I will superimpose Schoonenberg's theology on to Miller's theories, in order to show how the sin of the world theology can provide a useful framework for understanding the presence and transmission of child abuse. In order to emphasize that the sin of the world theology is not an exact explanation for every facet of Miller's theories, I briefly review the differences between them. Then I begin my main project of analyzing the points in Miller's theory that Schoonenberg's theology does take account of: the long history of abuse and its corrupting influence through the situation that each infant is born into; the reasons why the bad example of the early environment acts as such a powerful influence on the individual's freedom, and finally, the need for the good example provided by a positive relationship to free one from repeating the primary experiences. As we shall see, Schoonenberg's theology can provide a theoretical framework for the real situations of child abuse that Miller speaks of.

After answering the question of whether the theology can function as a hermeneutic, I will discuss the acceptability of this theology in the Roman Catholic Church, examining both the magisterium's and other theologians' criticisms of it, as well as support for it. While this is not a thesis in Catholic theology, it is nonetheless useful to ascertain whether Schoonenberg's theology is sufficiently acceptable within the Catholic church to be useful to it in understanding the problem of child abuse. As we shall see, the widespread influence of Schoonenberg's theology, on both the theology and the practices of the church (shown in his influence on the original sin section of the new Dutch Catechism⁵⁶ which is examined in Chapter Three), reveals that his theology has

⁵⁶ Piet Schoonenberg, et al (Higher Catechetical Institute at Nijmegen), *A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults* (with *The Supplement to A New Catechism* by Edouard Dhanis and Jan Visser), trans. Kevin. Smyth (New York: Herder and Herder,

attained a sufficient degree of acceptability to be useful. Furthermore, the sin of the world theology points to ways in which the church can help victims to heal and ways in which it can help society work to prevent abuse.

This thesis, then, will expose the magnitude of the problem of child abuse, its long history, and its means of transmission, as outlined by Alice Miller. It will propose that Schoonenberg's theology of the sin of the world can help humanity to understand why child abuse is in the world, and why and how it is transmitted from generation to generation. Schoonenberg's theology can thus be seen to be useful as a framework for understanding the real horror of the abuse of children that Miller reveals.

CHAPTER ONE
ALICE MILLER AND THE PROBLEM OF CHILD ABUSE

Alice Miller practiced and taught psychoanalysis in Switzerland for over twenty years. She has published six books studying the transmission and effects of child abuse¹ plus one book of her own paintings, which details her personal journey.² The main parts of her theories are contained in her books, *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, *For Your Own Good*, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, and *Banished Knowledge*. *Breaking Down The Wall of Silence* is primarily concerned with detailing both why and what kind of therapy is needed to heal from childhood damage, while *The Untouched Key* examines the impact of early abuse on creativity.

It is important to note that Miller is a highly repetitive writer and that her seven books contain much material that is common to all. *For Your Own Good* and *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware* both contain new and important material that is an advance on the preliminary theories contained in *The Drama of the Gifted Child*. *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware* is also particularly valuable because of its critique of psychoanalysis, though much of that is also repeated with minor variations in her subsequent books.

¹ Alice Miller, *Banished Knowledge: Facing Childhood Injuries*, trans. Leila Vennewitz (New York: Doubleday, 1990); *Breaking Down the Wall of Silence: The Liberating Experience of Facing Painful Truth*, trans. Simon Worrall (New York: New American Library, 1991); *The Drama of the Gifted Child* (originally published as *Prisoners of Childhood*), trans. Ruth Ward (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1981, c1979); *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence*, trans. Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1988, c1980); *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware: Society's Betrayal of the Child*, trans. Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum (New York: New American Library, 1984); and *The Untouched Key: Tracing Childhood Trauma in Creativity and Destructiveness*, trans. Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum (New York: Doubleday, 1990).

² Alice Miller, *Pictures of a Childhood* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985).

In this chapter, I will examine Miller's theories on child abuse: her methodology, definitions of the terms evil and child abuse, her theories of why society has ignored the problem of abuse for centuries, and how and why child abuse is transmitted from generation to generation. We will look at an example from her case histories (the life of Hitler) to see the effect of child abuse on adult behaviour, and examine Miller's views on how Christianity has contributed to the problem of child abuse. Finally, we will study Miller's hypothesis of how the cycle of child abuse can be broken before we turn to critical analyses of her theories.

RATIONALE

Alice Miller has devoted her life to studying the problem of child abuse because she is "primarily concerned with the question of the origins of human destructiveness and self-destructiveness".³ After World War II, Miller says that she was haunted by the question of how such a dreadful event could have occurred, of how one person could plan the destruction of a race, and of how so many others could have assisted in his plan. She wrote *For Your Own Good* to present her "solution to this enigma".⁴ Miller does not turn to supernatural deities to explain the origin of human violence. Instead she argues that the origin is clearly obvious in history,⁵ in literature⁶ and art,⁷ and in the media.⁸ She

³ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 3.

⁴ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. vii.

⁵ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 310.

⁶ See, for example, her analyses of Sylvia Plath (*For Your Own Good*, p. 254ff), Franz Kafka (*Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 240ff), and Eugene O'Neill (*Banished Knowledge*, p. 104ff).

⁷ Miller's book, *The Untouched Key*, is an analysis of violence in art.

says that it is the abuse of children which causes human violence and she has made it her life work to uncover the magnitude of the abuse, its means of transmission, and its effects.

METHODOLOGY

Miller uses psychoanalysis as her basic methodology, though, as we shall see, she does not do so uncritically. Miller dedicates her main work devoted to her critique of psychoanalysis, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, to Freud. She says that she does so because "his discoveries of the survival of childhood experiences in the adult unconscious and of the phenomenon of repression have influenced my life and my way of thinking."⁹ But she points out that, while she is indebted to him for his methods, they have led her to different conclusions than those reached by Freud himself.

Miller believes that her methodology is consistent with Freud's own methods prior to his announcement of the Oedipus complex. Therefore, her criticisms of Freudian psychoanalysis refer specifically to all of Freud's work written after 1897, since she feels that Freud's statements in 'The Aetiology of Hysteria',¹⁰ written in 1896, confirm her own experiences as an analyst.¹¹

Miller uses the psychoanalytic method because she believes that it is scientifically valid. The case history provides her with her main tool for demonstrating her theories

⁸ See *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 307ff.

⁹ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 2.

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud. "The Aetiology of Hysteria", *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume 3, edited by James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-1974.

¹¹ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 53.

and for providing insights that can be tested and verified.¹² Thus she is convinced that her theories are based on "verifiable scientific evidence"¹³, obtained either from her own psychoanalytic practice or from the writings or experiences of others.

Miller is aware that many criticize her theories for being overly subjective and emotional but she argues that "feeling does not necessarily exclude scientific accuracy."¹⁴ She goes further, to say that "I even believe there are fields (such as psychoanalysis) whose scientific nature would be enhanced by the acknowledgement of feeling, if only to expose the profusion of false assertions that can be defended over a long period of time with the aid of incomprehensible theories."¹⁵ Natural reactions and emotions are therefore a deliberate part of Miller's theorizing.

The presentation and analysis of case histories provide the material for most of Miller's theory.¹⁶ Originally, these histories were based on her own psychoanalytic experiences, but since she gave up her practice in favour of full-time writing, she has

¹² *Ibid*, 8.

¹³ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 133.

¹⁴ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ It would be easy to dismiss Miller's theories, on the grounds that they are based only on Swiss and German pedagogical texts and case histories, and are therefore not relevant to North American society. But Miller answers this criticism. She quotes a letter from a reader who states that she thinks that Germany is the country that has the most child abuse. Miller disagrees. She says that "Sometimes it is very difficult for us to bear an overly painful truth, and therefore we ward it off with the aid of illusions. A frequent form of resistance is that of temporal and spatial displacement. Thus, for example, it is easier for us to imagine that children were mistreated in previous centuries or are so in distant countries than to recognize the truth about our own country, here and now." (*For Your Own Good*, p. 234) There is another illusion in society, according to Miller, where some are willing to acknowledge the abuse in their own society but long for and believe that conditions are better elsewhere or were better in the past. This is also a defensive illusion.

relied on colleagues who have tested her ideas in their practices and discussed the results with her.¹⁷ Miller deliberately focuses on real case histories to help people understand her theories because she is interested in both the universal and the particular and because she values the subjective perspective which they provide.¹⁸

However, subjectivity is not the only important factor for Miller. She sees a real need for empathy also: "empathy, i.e., in this case the attempt to identify with the perspective of the child himself and not to judge him through adult eyes, is my sole heuristic tool, and without it, the whole investigation would be pointless."¹⁹ Miller also wants her readers to have empathy. She includes autobiographical information in her case histories because she is "trying to bring the reader to listen to their shattering testimony with my analytic ear."²⁰

Miller anticipates critics who she thinks will demand more proof for her theories; who will, she says, demand to "be given statistical proof that a given number of cases of child abuse later produced almost the same number of murderers."²¹ This proof, however, is impossible to obtain for a number of reasons, the first of which is that child abuse is usually kept secret and is concealed even by the child. Biographers of murderers collude in this coverup, according to Miller, since the biographers were raised with the same societal commandments to honour parents as were the murderers. Furthermore, Miller points out that "so far, the connection between abuse of children and infants and later acts of murder has scarcely been noted by criminologists or even by the majority of

¹⁷ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 294.

¹⁹ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, pp. 142-143.

²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. xv-xvi.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 198.

psychologists. As a result, little statistical data on the subject have [sic] been collected."²² Relevant studies are available, however, and it is these books that Miller uses to help substantiate her theories.²³ They show "clear connections between early neglect and abuse and subsequent adult violence."²⁴ Miller quotes, as an example, one statistic that reveals that "ninety percent of inmates in American prisons had been abused as children".²⁵ However, she then proceeds to argue with it. She contends that the correct percentage should be one hundred, saying that the other ten percent were simply still unaware of what went on in their childhoods. Miller wonders why our society neglects to draw the obvious conclusions from the statistics that we have, but answers that they "are ignored to block the eruption of once repressed pain, to prevent the recognition of the truth."²⁶ She believes that her "observations are lent scientific validity by the fact that they can be made repeatedly, can proceed with a minimum of theoretical assumptions, and can be verified or refuted even by nonprofessionals."²⁷

We will now turn to a brief analysis of Miller's critique of psychoanalysis. We will examine it only insofar as it touches on the subject of the abuse of children.

²² *Ibid*, p. 198-199.

²³ Examples of such works are: Louise Armstrong, *Kiss Daddy Good-night* (New York, 1978); Christiane F., *Autobiography of a Girl of the Streets and Heroin Addict*, trans. Susanne Flatauer (New York, 1982); Paul Moor, *Das Selbstporträt des Jürgen Bartsch [The Self-Portrait of Jürgen Bartsch]* (Frankfurt, 1972); and Gitta Sereny, *The Case of Mary Bell* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972).

²⁴ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 3.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 27.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 3.

²⁷ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 199.

Critique of Psychoanalysis

Miller begins her critique of psychoanalysis with the acknowledgement that "we owe the fundamental recognition of the significance of early childhood for all of later life to Sigmund Freud—a discovery that is probably valid for every society in every period of history."²⁸ However, Miller found that her analysis of childhood development and pedagogy and her experiences in her own psychoanalytic practice led her away from Freud and his theories. While she admits, as we have seen, that his theories have had an enormous influence on her work, she says that her work brought her inexorably to different conclusions than those reached by Freud.

Miller says that the first contact with psychoanalysis is a very exciting experience, because of how it helps one to become aware of one's own defense mechanisms and of the influence of the unconscious on so much of human behaviour. The initial impression is one of liberation - but all too soon, one becomes aware that even psychoanalysis is hedged about with prohibitions and dogmas that must be obeyed. It is a real shame, according to Miller, that psychoanalysis has become so dogmatized and inflexible since by doing so, it has risked losing its creativity, its power to reveal unconscious motives, and its ability to revolutionize society. She contends that psychoanalysis has become too involved in "preserving the status quo" and "ensuring the feeling of security that comes from belonging to a group."²⁹ It took Miller a long time to "accept the fact that psychoanalysis, too, of necessity shares the taboos of the society to which it belongs".³⁰

Miller is often questioned about her relationship with psychoanalysis, since she uses its methods but criticizes it. She points to an evolution in her acceptance of the

²⁸ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 310.

psychoanalytic doctrines, beginning with her belief that her theories were compatible with the drive theory, as expressed in her first book, *The Drama of the Gifted Child*. However, she says that "the more thoroughly I consider the theoretical consequences of my own experiences, the more closely and unbiasedly I examine traditional theoretical concepts for their experiential content, and the more clearly their function in the overall context of societal repression emerges—all the more questionable do I find the validity of Freud's drive theory and all the more urgent my need to distance myself from it."³¹ For Miller, the realization that "childhood is the key to understanding a person's entire later life",³², brought about a radical departure from traditional psychoanalytic doctrine. As she became aware of the amount of suffering that is involved in childhood, she also began to realize the power that parents have over their children, a power that is no less strong for being concealed by a loving exterior. This power "has become more and more apparent in recent decades as a result of psychohistorical studies, therapy involving psychotics, children, and families, and above all psychoanalytic treatment of parents."³³

At first, Miller was hesitant to believe what she was seeing. But finally, she "came to the conclusion that not only destructiveness (i.e., the pathological form taken by healthy aggression) but also sexual and other disturbances, especially of a narcissistic nature, can be more easily understood if the reactive character of their origins is given more attention."³⁴ Thus, she began with Freud's theories, but then moved beyond them.

Miller still follows psychoanalytic theory to the extent of accepting the following positions:

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 51.

³² *Ibid*, p. 6.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

1. Everyone is shaped (this does not mean determined) by his or her childhood.
2. Neuroses are rooted in childhood.
3. The methods of free association and of the analytic setting... make it possible for the drama of childhood to be reenacted in the transference and for a maturation process that has been blocked by neurosis to begin.³⁵

But while she is willing to accept these principles, she differs in others. To begin with, Miller is convinced that neurosis is the result of repression of trauma rather than due to a drive conflict. In the second place, in her theory, a patient's parents are not seen as only objects of the patient's oedipus complex and other desires, but as real people whose behaviour has had a significant, traumatic effect on the patient. Third, the patient's rage at the parents is seen as being justified and healing rather than projection. As well, Miller acknowledges that infants do have needs, but believes that these aren't for sex with the parent of the opposite gender but for love, affection, attention, etc. She does see a complex relationship between child, mother, and father that can be labelled as being Oedipal in some respects, but she doesn't see this as being the source of neurosis in itself. Finally, Miller believes that the analysis of a patient should not lead only to intellectual insights into so-called drive conflicts but into the real source of the patient's rage and trauma.³⁶

While Miller is willing in her book, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, to admit that psychoanalysis provided her with a basic conceptual framework for her theories, by the time of writing *Banished Knowledge*, she has completely refuted this position. In this book, Miller says that she finally and totally rejects psychoanalysis, that she owes it nothing,

³⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 51-52.

³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 52-53.

and took nothing from it.³⁷ Indeed, she believes now that it held her back from the truth, saying that "Without the illusionary help of psychoanalysis, which furthers the resistance to knowledge about past events, there is no doubt that I would have found my way to the truth sooner."³⁸ Psychoanalysis, for Miller, is irremediably tainted by the stain of poisonous pedagogy, by the need to protect the parents at the expense of the child.

Originally, Miller did believe that analysis could cure people of their childhood rage and the need to reenact it.³⁹ But later, she changed her mind even about the value of psychoanalysis as a therapeutic tool, realizing that too often it serves to disguise trauma behind artificial drive conflicts. She now thinks that psychoanalytic therapy is incapable of helping a patient reach the truth of their life,⁴⁰ since it serves only to buttress defence mechanisms which keep repressed rage from coming to light. Psychoanalysis, then, serves society by helping it to repress all awareness of childhood suffering. It does this by means of a theoretical framework that absolves parents of responsibility for their actions towards their children, and for their children's reactions in adult life, and that blames the child for so-called 'innate' drives and desires.

Despite her earlier acknowledgement of the valuable contribution that Freud's

³⁷ Miller by no means acknowledges the full extent of her reliance on psychoanalytic theory. Nor does she critique it to the extent that she could. It is to be hoped that this topic will soon be studied (See Gary F. Greif, "Alice Miller's Revision of Psychoanalysis", *Psychotherapy*, Volume 29, No. 2, Summer, 1992, pp. 310-317 for a preliminary study of this issue). For example, it would be interesting to examine why Miller doesn't comment on Freud's theory of the formation of the superego, as outlined in his work, *The Ego and the Id* (SE, Vol. 19, pp. 34-37, 57-58) and why she doesn't acknowledge her debt to Freud's theory of the "fear of loss of love" as the motivation for internalizing parents' prohibitions (*Civilization and Its Discontents*, SE, Vol. 21, p. 61).

³⁸ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, pp. 181-182.

³⁹ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 267.

⁴⁰ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, pp. 185-186.

theories made to her work, Miller now believes that he is culpable, that he has done great harm to countless people. She is harsh in her condemnation of Freud. She says that "If someone describes the renunciation of reality as a great scientific advance and founds a school that supports its students in their blindness, this ceases to be a private matter. It amounts to a violation of the interests of humanity, even when performed unconsciously."⁴¹ Miller admits that this was not Freud's intent. She thinks that initially he only sought unconsciously to protect his father and himself from his own rage. Unfortunately, Freud buttressed his unconscious need with theories that he then proclaimed to be universally applicable. Since these theories dovetailed with society's own need to repress its emotions, Freud's theories eventually found widespread approval. Miller feels that, "by founding a school and dogmatizing his theses, he institutionalized the denial that endowed the lies of pedagogy with alleged scientific legitimacy."⁴² Thus, according to Miller, Freud's psychoanalysis only gained societal approval when he developed theories that supported society's belief in the "wicked child" who needs to be disciplined.

The influence went both ways. While it is true that Freud's theories influenced society in its repression of childhood suffering, Miller maintains that society influenced the formation of the theories in the first place. She says that the parenting techniques of humiliation and intimidation revealed in the pedagogical texts of his generation explain why Freud had to renounce his theory that neuroses were the result of child sexual abuse. The strength of the prohibition against remembering what parents do to their children acted on Freud in two ways, through his own introjected parents, and through the power of both society in general and the medical community, which was already up in arms

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 58.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 57.

about his theory. Miller thinks that, "in order to protect himself, [Freud] had to devise a theory that would preserve appearances by attributing all 'evil,' guilt, and wrongdoing to the child's fantasies, in which the parents served only as the objects of projections."⁴³ Miller makes an important point when she says that "this theory omitted the fact that it is the parents who not only project their sexual and aggressive fantasies onto the child but also are able to act out these fantasies because they wield the power."⁴⁴ The very fact that Freud's theory omits to mention this power reveals how strongly he was influenced by his society's need to view the child as the wicked one and the parents as innocent and good. Therefore, the reason for the wide acceptance of Freud's theory lies in its appeal to all who were also raised under poisonous pedagogy, who also feel the need to exonerate their own parents, since "with the aid of Freud's drive and structural theories, they have been able to continue obeying the commandment they internalized in early childhood: 'Thou shalt not be aware of what your parents are doing to you.'"⁴⁵

Miller concludes that "we cannot reproach Sigmund Freud for being a child of his times or for not having the opportunity, being the founder of psychoanalysis, to lie on an analyst's couch himself. This was not his fault but his inescapable predicament."⁴⁶ But

⁴³ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 60.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61. In a footnote to this passage, Miller explains how she arrived at her theory about the origin of Freud's suppression of the seduction theory, saying that it was her own experiences in her psychoanalytic practice that gave her insight. She mentions that when she discovered the book, *Freud and His Father* by Marianne Krüll (trans. Arnold J. Pomerans [New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979]), she was surprised to see how thoroughly Krüll's findings substantiated her own. For another analysis of the influences on Freud, see Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984).

⁴⁶ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 23.

she emphasizes that recognizing this fact should not prevent us from acknowledging the limitations of Freud's theories, many of which were derived from his own attempt at self-analysis, "limitations revealed in his persistent idealization of the parents and in his tracing the cause of neurotic suffering back to the child's drive conflicts."⁴⁷ Miller points out that Freud was all alone with his own problems, that he had no sympathetic, trained listener who could help him sort out his own repressed aggression. But she says that we are in a better situation today. Now there are people who are becoming willing to listen, aware of the reactive origin of aggression: "we are living with a younger generation that is much more open, honest, and critical toward its parents than was ever possible in Freud's day. We can learn a good deal from these young people...once we have liberated ourselves from our anxious dependence on dogma."⁴⁸ We therefore now have the responsibility to reject Freud's theories, to look beyond our conditioning to see his conditioning and thus reject his conclusions.

Miller is convinced that analysts must also begin to question Freudian dogma. Too often they assist in the repression of their patients' childhood pain because they are driven by their own unconscious need to protect their parents and deny their own traumas. Thus, analysts rarely notice that psychoanalysis is hedged about with dogmas and doctrines that it says must never be questioned, and they participate in the blanket of denial that it spreads. Miller says that she found during her years as a supervisor of new analysts that only those candidates who were willing to question Freudian theory were able to help their patients to speak about their childhood suffering, and thus bring about healing in a far shorter time than previously encountered. It was through these candidates that Miller found the courage to begin learning again: "Thus, I have them to thank not only for

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

empirical testing of my theory but also for the assurance that the results of my work are relevant to individual cases and can be applied in a creative individual way."⁴⁹

Therefore, Miller thinks that it is essential for analysts to move beyond intellectualization to an appreciation of their own subjectivity and experiences. Miller points out that "It is only the (limited) acquaintance with my own unconscious and the recognition of the repetition compulsion that makes it possible for me to understand the subjectivity of another person."⁵⁰ Thus she feels that this acquaintance with one's own inner motivations must be a prerequisite for helping others to understand their own suffering.

Miller turns from generalizations to analyze specific tenets of psychoanalytic theory to show how they contribute to the repression of childhood knowledge. She does so because she thinks that the valuable methods that psychoanalysis has contributed to society are rendered useless when the conclusions are pre-ordained by dogma.⁵¹ She points out, for example, that it is destructively limiting when psychoanalysis attempts to define the form of the influence of childhood on adult life through such concepts as the Oedipus

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*.

⁵¹ It is important to note that the following critique is taken mostly from the works that predate Miller's total rejection of psychoanalysis. I believe that her subsequent complete rejection does not invalidate her analysis of the weaknesses in psychoanalytic theory, or of its strengths. I think she is right in her statements, in *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, that psychoanalytic methods have much to offer, that the problem lies with the conclusions that traditionally have been drawn from the application of these methods. That Miller has rejected this belief in later books is a factor that can be attributed to emotion, to her anger at being inadvertently drawn into accepting the conclusions as "gospel" truth. Whether Miller can admit it now or not, it is nonetheless clear that her earlier acknowledgement of the influence that psychoanalytic theory had on the development of her theories is valid and is proved out by the form of the theories themselves, as we shall see when we examine her use of the theories of repression and projection in subsequent sections of this chapter.

or drive theories. Miller objects to the fact that, as she sees it, psychoanalysis has "already disposed of 'evil' by locating it in the young child and his or her drives."⁵²

Thus Miller criticizes Freud's theories. She accepts part of his seduction theory but calls the part she accepts, "trauma theory". She points out that the phrase "seduction theory" refers to Freud's belief in 1896 that "all neuroses are a consequence of sexual abuse before the age of seven".⁵³ She says that this is obviously untrue, since it is clear that there are also traumas of a non-sexual nature. Of the theory, she accepts only its "underlying premise: recognition of the significance of trauma and of its societal suppression as the source of neurosis."⁵⁴ Miller rejects the term "seduction" itself, because of its connotations of mutuality that implies that the child is a willing and mature participant, which, she says, is simply never true.

Miller rejects the drive theory because she firmly believes that it contributes to the repression of childhood pain. She is careful to point out, in a footnote, that her critique of Freud's drive theory uses the definition that he developed in the decades following his rejection of the seduction theory, and that has been adopted by his followers, namely the belief in:

infantile sexuality, divided into its oral, anal, and phallic phases and culminating in the four-year-old's desire to possess sexually the parent of the opposite sex and do away with the parent of the same sex (the Oedipus complex), which inevitably leads to conflict because the child needs and loves both parents. The way this conflict between the id and the ego—or between the ego and the superego—is resolved determines whether a person becomes neurotic or not.⁵⁵

⁵² Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 216.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 41.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 4.

This theory, according to Miller, denies the reality of children's suffering and also makes it impossible for the analyst to pay heed to the real causes of the adult patient's pain.⁵⁶ Miller says that therefore, since it "encourages the patient's tendency to deny his trauma and blame himself, it is more likely to conceal than to reveal the sexual and narcissistic abuse the patient experienced as a child."⁵⁷

Miller's criticism of the drive theory, then, rests on its enormous influence on analytic therapy, on how it teaches analysts to believe that everything that patients have to say about their childhoods is fantasy and the projection of their own desires. She points out that, "thus, in terms of the drive theory, parents do not actually abuse their children in order to fulfill their own needs but children supposedly fantasize this abuse, repressing their own aggressive and sexual desires ('instinctual drives') and experiencing these desires—through the mechanism of projection—as being directed against them from the outside."⁵⁸ This theory, of course, reinforces society's need to view parents as good and children as wicked. Since it denies what Miller sees as the true reality, she maintains that the drive theory is a dangerous tool aimed not at helping the patient, but at perpetuating the status quo.

Miller does not think that it is possible to reconcile the drive theory with her trauma theory for both practical and theoretical reasons. She says that in her analytic practice and those of her colleagues, it has proved impossible from a practical stand point to listen to a patient and respect what they're saying while attributing their words to the need to kill the father due to the Oedipus complex. Theoretically, she says, she also sees problems: "For if a child in the so-called phallic phase really had biologically determined,

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 213.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 4.

natural sexual needs directed toward the parent of the opposite sex, there would not be any traumatic consequences if these desires were satisfied; then it would not be necessary to repress the experience of these needs so deeply that years of analysis are later required to uncover it."⁵⁹

It follows logically then, that Miller would also reject Freud's theory of the Oedipus conflict. She quotes the actual Oedipus story in its entirety (including his parents' attempt to kill him when he was an infant) then examines psychoanalysis' use of it. She points out that "to this very day no one seems to have objected to the fact that Oedipus was assigned all the blame."⁶⁰ Oedipus' blinding of himself is entirely consistent with Miller's theory that children need to repress their natural rage and accept the blame for their parents' abuse. The Oedipus concept has survived so long because it allows society to blame children instead of forcing it to acknowledge what is being done *to* them. According to Miller, "it has always been the goal of parents and pedagogues to divert a child's attention from the motives for their own behavior to the supposedly bad and sinful motives behind the child's desires and to convince the child to be grateful for the way he or she has been raised."⁶¹ Miller thinks that it was exactly this principle that motivated Freud to develop the Oedipus complex, which "once again assigned all guilt to the child".⁶²

Fortunately, according to Miller, "the limitations of the concept of the Oedipus complex are being noticed increasingly, even in the psychoanalytic literature, and are being discussed with growing openness."⁶³ She is relieved by this, since it shows that

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 41.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 143.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 145.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 146.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 143.

society is finally becoming willing to face the issue of child abuse and its effects on adult behaviour.

Miller points out that it isn't only psychoanalysis that expends such energy to repress awareness of how most parents hurt their children. She says that "all the disciplines I know of that deal with the human psyche share this characteristic, including those with free access to the relevant facts, i.e., psychiatry, psychology, and various schools of psychotherapy."⁶⁴ Miller concentrates her critical attention on psychoanalysis because she thinks that, even though its theories blind people to the truth, its methods are still the most valuable for revealing childhood suffering and its impact on adult behaviour.

DEFINITIONS

Miller explicitly uses the term 'evil' to describe child abuse. For her, "evil is real. It is not innate but acquired, and it is never the reverse of good but rather its destroyer."⁶⁵ She does not believe that children are born evil, instead, she thinks that they begin life "as innocent infants, with the primary goals of growing, living in peace, and loving—never of destroying life."⁶⁶

Miller defines this innocence as a neutral state rather than the traditional positive one. She sees infants as *tabulae rasae*, saying that "whatever we put into a child's soul we naturally will find there".⁶⁷ This means that either evil or good can be put there, that the child is not actually born with an innate goodness that is then destroyed, but as a blank slate where either can be developed. Miller does not believe that children grow up

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 11.

⁶⁵ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 142.

⁶⁶ Miller, *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, p. xi.

⁶⁷ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 154.

in some "abstract 'state of nature'" but in "the concrete surroundings of care givers whose unconscious exerts a substantial influence on the child's development."⁶⁸

Evil, then, for Miller, is that which is destructive of life and good is that which allows life to grow, and both are acquired states. Evil develops in a person solely as the result of evil having been done to the person in childhood: Miller says that "every act of cruelty, no matter how brutal and shocking, has traceable antecedents in its perpetrator's past".⁶⁹ Good also has its roots in childhood, since Miller doesn't believe that even the traditional 'good' values are the result of innate goodness. She says that she is "inclined to see courage, integrity, and a capacity for love not as 'virtues,' not as moral categories, but as the consequences of a benign fate."⁷⁰ In other words, goodness is also not innate in a person but is simply the result of being raised in a non-malignant fashion.

What is child abuse according to Miller? She defines it broadly, pointing out that most types are still sanctioned by society because they are called child-rearing. Miller begins with the most obvious form of child abuse, which is physical. She emphasizes that physical abuse has been an open and acceptable part of child-rearing for centuries: "Since beatings and the tormenting, demeaning, and humiliating treatment of children have always been regarded as forms of discipline 'for their own good,' these methods have been applied quite openly. There are still many people today who are fully in favour of child-rearing principles of this nature, and therefore child-beating can be widely observed, for it need not take place behind closed doors."⁷¹ But Miller rejects the idea that physical

⁶⁸ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, pp. 96-97.

⁶⁹ Miller, *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, p. ix.

⁷⁰ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 85.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, pp. 310-311. Lloyd de Mause's study, "The Evolution of Childhood" in *The History of Childhood: The Untold Story of Child Abuse*, ed. Lloyd de Mause (New York:

violence can ever be healthy discipline, believing that all violence towards a child is bad: "even when a spanking is a gentler form of physical violence, the psychic pain and humiliation and the need to repress these feelings are the same as in the case of more severe punishment."⁷² Miller takes pains to point this out so that those readers of her books who think it doesn't apply to them can look more closely at their own behaviour.

A more severe form of child abuse, according to Miller, is the sexual misuse of children by adults.⁷³ She thinks that society still doubts the prevalence of this type of abuse and minimizes the damage that it does because of the need to repress all childhood feelings.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, the consequences of sexual abuse "are not restricted to problems in sexual life; they impair the development of the self and of an autonomous

Peter Bedrick Books, 1988) agrees with Miller's statement. On the first page of his study, de Mause says that, "The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized, and sexually abused." Why has this not been known before? DeMause says that the reason "this pattern has not previously been noticed by historians is because serious history has long been considered a record of public not private events." Pointing out that historians have traditionally been interested in wars and politics, in the violent actions of adults, he says that "they have generally ignored what is going on in the homes" of those who participated in the wars. His work is concerned with discovering "how each generation of parents and children creates those issues which are later acted out in the arena of public life." (p. 1) Subsequent chapters in the book detail the abuse of children throughout the centuries.

⁷² Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. ix.

⁷³ Miller is not alone in emphasizing the severity of this type of abuse. See: David Finkelhorn, *Child Sexual Abuse: New Theory and Research* (New York: The Free Press, 1984); Susan Forward and Craig Buck, *Betrayal of Innocence: Incest and its Devastation* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978); Florence Rush, *The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1980); Gay Search, *The Last Taboo: Sexual Abuse of Children* (London: Penguin Books, 1988); and Gail E. Wyatt and Gloria J. Powell, eds., *Lasting Effects of Child Sexual Abuse* (London: Sage Publications, 1988).

⁷⁴ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 158.

personality."⁷⁵ They can also cause the creation of further crimes, whether against oneself, one's own children or against others.⁷⁶

A third type of child abuse is what Miller calls psychic abuse. She describes this latter type as: "humiliation, combined with prohibiting a child's verbal expression".⁷⁷ This type of abuse covers a large variety of behaviours, for example, the parents' imposition of false expectations or lack of respect shown for the child's psychological needs.⁷⁸ For example, Miller contends that "looks expressing disapproval and rejection that are directed at the infant can contribute to the development of severe disturbances, including perversions and compulsion neuroses, in the adult."⁷⁹ At first glance, this seems preposterous and excessive. And yet, studies have been done that detail the effect of maternal rejection on the infant, even to the point, in extreme cases, of causing

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 160.

⁷⁶ For examples of this, see in Miller, *For Your Own Good*, the examples given of the lives of Christiane F., pp. 109-129; Jürgen Bartsch, pp. 202-229; and Mary Bell, pp. 229-231.

⁷⁷ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 196.

⁷⁸ James Garbarino and John K. Hersherberger emphasize the destructive nature of this type of abuse. They say that "Emotional abuse must be exposed as but a slow killer of children denied necessary expressions of affection. The concept of nurturance as a prerequisite for human growth stands on firm scientific as well as ethical grounds." ("The Perspective of Evil in Understanding and Treating Child Abuse", *Journal of Religion and Health*, 1981, pp. 213-214). See also James Garbarino, "The Elusive 'Crime' of Emotional Abuse", *Child Abuse and Neglect: The International Journal*, 1978, No. 2, pp. 89-100. Other authors also point to the damage done by this type of abuse. See: John Chrysavgis, "Child Abuse - The Role of the Church", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 1989, pp. 357-364; Susan Forward and Craig Buck, *Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989); and Patricia Love and Jo Robinson, *The Emotional Incest Syndrome* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990).

⁷⁹ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 6.

borderline personality disorders.⁸⁰

It is important to note that Miller doesn't see child abuse as consisting of only active behaviours; that she acknowledges that deprivation is also destructive to the child. She says that "It can appear from the outside that someone's every wish is being granted without this being the case. Thus, a child can be spoiled with food, toys, and excessive concern without ever being seen or heeded for what he or she really is."⁸¹ Another type of abuse consists in the lack of responsible protection of the child. Miller asks, "What happens to a child when he must repeatedly see the same mother who tells him of her love, who carefully prepares his meals and sings lovely songs to him, turn into a pillar of salt and look on without lifting a finger when this child is given a brutal beating by his father?"⁸² Children are profoundly affected when the mother whom they trust for protection denies it to them and instead passively looks on as they are humiliated or tortured. Miller theorizes that the mother's lack of protection makes it seem as if she agrees with the father's abuse. The bitterness that this engenders will have repercussions later in the children's lives, according to Miller. She says that they will feel betrayed and abandoned by women and will betray and abandon them in turn, scorning and possibly hurting them out of revenge.⁸³

The worst abuse, according to Miller, is the abuse that occurs within the earliest period of life. This abuse has the most profound effect because it takes place at a time

⁸⁰ For an excellent example of one such study, see Bruno Bettelheim, *Love is Not Enough: The Treatment of Emotionally Disturbed Children* (London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1970).

⁸¹ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 185.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 192.

⁸³ *Ibid*.

when infants are unable to grasp or articulate what is being done to them. Therefore, when they grow up and are consumed by the need to communicate their experiences, they will have to reenact the trauma in order to express it. Miller is thus convinced that it is vitally important to study the harm that can be done during this period. She points out that "An enormous amount can be done to a child in the first two years: he or she can be molded, dominated, taught good habits, scolded, and punished—without any repercussions for the person raising the child and without the child taking revenge."⁸⁴ It is society that will later suffer for this abuse, not the parents.

Society also contributes to the abuse of children, according to Miller. While parents and other caregivers carry the primary responsibility for the majority of abuse, Miller also recognizes that society too, by its structures and institutions, affects children negatively. She says that, "what makes us sick are those things we cannot see through, society's constraints that we have absorbed through our mother's eyes—eyes and an attitude from which no reading or learning can free us."⁸⁵ Society is destructive: it is the "absurdity, exploitation, and perversity of society [which] causes our neuroses and perversions."⁸⁶

Underlying and supporting all the abuse of children, according to Miller, is the

⁸⁴ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁵ Miller, *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, p. 100.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* There are many studies that concentrate on the analysis of the negative effects of society and its structures. See especially: Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), and *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986). James Garbarino and John K. Hershberger specifically analyze the contribution of society to child abuse in their article, "The Perspective of Evil in Understanding and Treating Child Abuse", *Journal of Religion and Health*, 1981, pp. 208-217. See also: James Garbarino, "The Price of Privacy: An Analysis of the Social Dynamics of Child Abuse", *Child Welfare*, Vol. 56, 1977, pp. 565-575.

idea that the child is born wicked and in need of correction, and the consequent belief that parents are thus justified in whatever they do to train their child. Miller says that this idea, "the idea of the pure parents who have the task of raising the inexperienced child—a creature especially susceptible to the temptations of the devil (i.e., of spontaneous feelings)—in such a way that he or she will 'turn toward the good' has a history that goes back thousands of years."⁸⁷

Miller cites several passages from Proverbs to show one basis for the idea that children are born in need of correction:

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (13:24). Or: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (19:18); "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (22:15); "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die" (23:13).⁸⁸

She points out that these proverbs are attributed to Solomon the Wise but says that this shouldn't impel us to blind acceptance of them. It is very interesting to note that, while Miller does turn to religion to show how it teaches that the child is wicked, she does not make any mention of the doctrine of original sin, though the traditional teaching validates her theory. It is odd that Miller doesn't mention the doctrine's role in either contributing to or causing this belief, that she simply studies its result.

Thus, for most of human history,⁸⁹ Miller says that society believed that, since wickedness was innate in the child, it had to be beaten out of them: "As proof of

⁸⁷ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, pp. 156-157.

⁸⁸ *The New English Bible, With the Apocrypha* (Oxford and Cambridge, 1970), quoted in Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 35.

⁸⁹ In her rather sweeping generalizations, Miller makes no mention of different beliefs and practises towards children in other cultures. She relies on de Mause, *The History of Childhood*, which deals only with the history of Western culture, as does Miller herself.

children's wickedness, it was often pointed out, for example, that they liked to torture animals; what was not mentioned, however, was where they had learned how to torture and what drove them to it."⁹⁰

THE TRANSMISSION OF CHILD ABUSE

Miller believes that child abuse is a universal phenomenon, and that "*crimes against children represent the most frequent of all types of crime*".⁹¹ She claims that, at the very least, psychic abuse is "a constant and universally encountered factor in child-rearing".⁹² This universality of child abuse is an important factor in Miller's theories. She points out that,

For millennia it has been permissible and customary for children to be used to satisfy a wide variety of adult needs. They have provided a cheap source of labor, an ideal outlet for the discharge of stored-up affect, a receptacle for unwanted feelings, an object for the projection of conflicts and fears, compensation for feelings of inferiority, and an opportunity for exercising power and obtaining pleasure.⁹³

It is thus difficult for society to examine and acknowledge the extent to which it participates in and allows the abuse of children. It is always far easier to see a myth when one is not living as part of it. The myth that children are wicked and need to be physically or emotionally corrected has dominated our society since it began, according to Miller.

Moreover, society ignores or underestimates the amount of pain suffered by children from child abuse. Miller contends that "the claim that child beating (including

⁹⁰ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 156.

⁹¹ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 65.

⁹² Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 196.

⁹³ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 310.

spanking) is common, to say nothing of the conviction that it is necessary in order to spur the child on to learn, completely ignores the dimensions of childhood tragedy."⁹⁴ By ignoring children's pain, society is able to ignore the connection between the suffering and adult rage, professing surprise when adults become violent.

But universality is no excuse for refusing to admit the extent and magnitude of the problems caused by the abuse of children, according to Miller. Instead, it is the very reason for studying it. Despite the fact that studies are now available which detail the damage done by certain parenting techniques,⁹⁵ little has changed. To understand why society hasn't acted on the available knowledge, Miller turns again to the long history of child abuse, pointing out that it is the very magnitude of the problem which makes it possible for the influence of this abuse on the adult's behaviour to be universally ignored. She believes that there is "a universal psychological phenomenon involved here that must be brought to light: namely, the way the adult exercises power over the child, a use of power that can go undetected and unpunished like no other."⁹⁶ One reason for the reluctance to heed the knowledge is that if we do, we must then relinquish our one societally accepted way of discharging our anger. It is essential, however, that we acknowledge our power to harm children because it is crucial for the sake of the survival of our species: "The easier it becomes by means of technology to destroy human life with the touch of a button, the more important it is for the public to understand how it can

⁹⁴ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 196.

⁹⁵ For examples of such books published in North America, see, among others,: Lloyd de Mause, ed., *The History of Childhood: The Untold Story of Child Abuse* (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1988); Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988); and Morton Schatzman, *Soul Murder: Persecution in the Family* (New York: Random House, 1973).

⁹⁶ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 17.

be possible for someone to want to extinguish the lives of millions of human beings."⁹⁷ It is thus crucial, according to Miller, that we integrate her theories about the effects of child abuse with both our parenting techniques and our understanding of human nature.

Because society turns a blind eye to the problem of child abuse, it aids in the transmission of abuse from generation to generation. Miller says that it is clear "that those children who are beaten will in turn give beatings, those who are intimidated will be intimidating, those who are humiliated will impose humiliation, and those whose souls are murdered will murder".⁹⁸ Until society is able to face this truth, it will continue to perpetuate the cycle.

Society's Denial of Child Abuse

It is a basic tenet of Miller's theorizing that humanity is driven by the need to deny its childhood suffering, and that it rationalizes this need through different means. She believes, for example, that "the ideology of child beating and the belief that beating is not harmful serve the function of covering up the consequences of the act and making them unrecognizable."⁹⁹ Thus, those who beat their children are able to ignore both their children's pain, and their own pain that they suffered when their parents beat them. The ideology therefore serves to mask the reality that is being played out, and to justify its perpetuation. Miller sees three main sources for this rationalization. She says that she "came upon the drive theory, the Fourth Commandment, and the traditional methods of child-rearing [to explain] the collective denial of childhood trauma."¹⁰⁰ For centuries,

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 232.

⁹⁹ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁰ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 306.

society has placed blame on the child and excused the adult, using these sources.

Miller recognizes the power of religion when she says that it is quite possible that her efforts to create awareness of the fact that human violence is a direct result of abuse may fail because of the "power of the Fourth Commandment".¹⁰¹ This commandment (which is found in almost every culture according to Miller)¹⁰² consists of the injunction to "Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."¹⁰³ Because of this commandment, we are forbidden to question our parents' actions or motivations. We are forbidden to hate them or be angry at them. Unfortunately, "we internalized this obstacle to awareness at such an early age that anything which threatens it frightens us."¹⁰⁴

At the most basic level, Miller says that adults prefer to ignore the problem of child abuse because they cannot confront the truth that they too were abused as children, that what was done to them was not right, not the right way to discipline, not the right way to bring up children. Most adults have to ward off these realizations throughout their lives and Miller is not without compassion for them. She understands the roots of their behaviour and "why they fail to confront their truth, preferring instead to plan self-destruction on a gigantic atomic scale, without even recognizing the absurdity of what they are doing."¹⁰⁵ She believes that most adults were once innocent children who were

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 298.

¹⁰² Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 32.

¹⁰³ *Holy Bible*, New Revised Standard Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), Deuteronomy 6:16.

¹⁰⁴ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 298.

¹⁰⁵ Miller, *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, pp. x-xi.

hurt badly by their parents.

Miller is convinced that it is precisely those who were most hurt as children "who as adults close their ears to the subject of child abuse (or else minimize its harmfulness)".¹⁰⁶ But she points out that it is these people's very lack of empathy for the suffering of others that reveals the extent of their own suffering. Only those who had an empathic early environment (which Miller says is very rare) or who have somehow succeeded in feeling empathy for themselves, can have empathy for the suffering that children undergo and be aware of its effect on them. Most people, however, "would rather submit to the strictest laws, go to all kinds of trouble, achieve spectacular feats, and choose the most demanding careers than be expected to bring love and understanding to the helpless unhappy child they once were, whom they have subsequently banished forever."¹⁰⁷

Unfortunately, this "unhappy child" shows itself in the parent's child and isn't welcomed there either. Instead, according to Miller, what the real child finds is "resentment, indignation, warnings or prohibitions, perhaps even hatred—above all, a whole arsenal of child-rearing weapons with which the parents try to ward off every unhappy childhood memory... that tries to come to the surface."¹⁰⁸ But it isn't only parents who attempt to ward off these memories. As we have seen, Miller thinks that the larger society has a stake in the repression of abuse too. She warns her readers that academia, for example, suffers from this need. The need to repress explains why academics very often reject her studies and reject students if they attempt to study child abuse. Because academia lends itself easily to abstractions and distancing from emotions,

¹⁰⁶ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 135.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*.

it is no surprise that academics have "armed themselves with all kinds of theories against the return of the repressed and barricaded themselves behind them."¹⁰⁹ Miller mentions that "students who have sought to treat the subject of child abuse in their final papers have, I know, generally had discouraging experiences in their discussions with professors. Those they consulted usually changed the subject as fast as they could, were evasive, mocking, or simply embarrassed. As a rule they advised their students not to pursue the subject."¹¹⁰ This example is simply more proof, for Miller, of society's deep need to repress all awareness of the suffering caused to children and perpetuated by its values and beliefs.

Miller answers critics who reject her books by saying that they do so only because they also can't face their own pasts. She says, "If I as a helpless child was abused and *am not allowed to see this*, I will abuse other helpless creatures without realizing what I am doing. I will also refuse to read books by Alice Miller, or I won't *want* to understand them because, if I did, I would have to feel the tragedy of my childhood and the pain of having been misled at such an early age."¹¹¹ She thus dismisses all critical evaluations of her work as being merely proof of the repression of the critic's own childhood suffering.

We will now turn to an analysis of the various components of Miller's theories, beginning with her theories on the role of child-rearing techniques.

Poisonous Pedagogy

Miller believes that one of the primary methods of transmitting child abuse from generation to generation has been through the child-rearing techniques that she refers

¹⁰⁹ Miller, *Breaking Down the Wall of Silence*, p. 22.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 22-23.

¹¹¹ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, pp. 170-171.

to as "poisonous pedagogy".¹¹² She examines the parenting pedagogy of the last two centuries to reveal practises that caused enormous harm to children in the name of correction. While she does, as we have seen above, acknowledge that the practices extend much further back in time, Miller restricts her study in *For Your Own Good* to this time period.

Miller found corroboration for the theories about child-rearing developed from her psychoanalytic practice in a book called *Schwarze Pädagogik* (*Black Pedagogy*) by Katharina Rutschky,¹¹³ a compilation of excerpts from various German child-rearing manuals. Miller says that the books excerpted in *Schwarze Pädagogik* were very popular in their time and were reprinted often and also translated into other languages.¹¹⁴

I have chosen the following two quotations from Miller's extensive selection as being particularly appropriate for the subject of this thesis:

The young child which lieth in the cradle is both wayward and full of affections; and though his body be but small, yet he hath a reat (wrong-doing) heart, and is altogether inclined to evil.... If this sparkle be suffered to increase, it will rage over and burn down the whole house. For we are changed and become good not by birth but by education.¹¹⁵

It is quite natural for the child's soul to want to have a will of its own, and things that are not done correctly in the first two years will be difficult to rectify thereafter. One of the advantages of these early years is that then force and compulsion can be used. Over the years children forget everything that happened to them in early childhood. If their wills can be broken at this time, they will never remember afterwards that they had a

¹¹² Miller's theories are validated by Philip Greven's study, *Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

¹¹³ Katharina Rutschky, *Schwarze Pädagogik* (Berlin, 1977).

¹¹⁴ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, pp. 4, 10.

¹¹⁵ Robert Cleaver and John Dod, *A Godly Form of Household Government* (1621), cited in Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. xviii.

will, and for this very reason the severity that is required will not have any serious consequences.¹¹⁶

For Miller, reading these texts is like having "the feeling of getting to the bottom of a mystery, of discovering something new but at the same time long familiar that until now has simultaneously clouded and determined our lives."¹¹⁷ After reading Rutschky's book, she says, "Suddenly I became more keenly aware of [poisonous pedagogy's] many traces in psychoanalytic theories, in politics, and in the countless compulsions of everyday life."¹¹⁸ Therefore, it is in pedagogy that Miller finds a major explanation of how child abuse is passed on from generation to generation. She thinks that it is self-perpetuating: that each generation reproduces the pedagogy of its parents with only minor variations, as we shall see.

Before beginning a brief analysis of Miller's concept of pedagogy, I want to emphasize what Miller herself acknowledges: that the "poisonous pedagogy" she describes in such detail in *For Your Own Good* is mostly Germanic and not entirely applicable to other countries, though certain elements of it are present elsewhere (such as the idea that the child is born in need of correction) as were translations of these works. But this limitation does not negate her theories. It merely means that others must analyze the pedagogy of their own countries to see how they contribute to the perpetuation of the abuse of children.

Miller defines "poisonous pedagogy" as "that tradition of child-rearing which attempts to suppress all vitality, creativity, and feeling in the child and maintain the

¹¹⁶ J. Sulzer, "Versuch von der Erziehung und Unterweisung der Kinder" ["An Essay on the Education and Instruction of Children"] (1748), cited in Miller, *For Your Own Good*, pp. xviii-xix.

¹¹⁷ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 10.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

autocratic godlike position of the parents at all costs."¹¹⁹ Using passages from child-rearing texts of the last two centuries, Miller outlines what she sees as the basic points of this pedagogy:

1. Adults are the masters (not the servants!) of the dependent child.
2. They determine in godlike fashion what is right and what is wrong.
3. The child is held responsible for [adults'] anger.
4. The parents must always be shielded.
5. The child's life-affirming feelings pose a threat to the autocratic adult.
6. The child's will must be "broken" as soon as possible.
7. All this must happen at a very early age, so the child "won't notice" and will therefore not be able to expose the adults.¹²⁰

This is a rather pessimistic view of adults and parenting, but Miller believes that it is valid and expresses the principles that underlie child-rearing practices.

A further aspect of poisonous pedagogy, according to Miller, is that it imparts to the child various false beliefs that have been handed on throughout the generations. She gives examples, as follows:

1. A feeling of duty produces love.
2. Hatred can be done away with by forbidding it.
3. Parents deserve respect simply because they are parents.
4. Children are undeserving of respect simply because they are children.
5. Obedience makes a child strong.
6. A high degree of self-esteem is harmful.
7. A low degree of self-esteem makes a person altruistic.
9. Tenderness (doting) is harmful.
10. Severity and coldness are a good preparation for life.
11. A pretense of gratitude is better than honest ingratitude.
12. The way you behave is more important than the way you really are.
13. Neither parents nor God would survive being offended.
14. The body is something dirty and disgusting.
15. Strong feelings are harmful.
16. Parents are creatures free of drives and guilt.

¹¹⁹ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 18.

¹²⁰ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 59.

17. Parents are always right.¹²¹

Children who grow up convinced of these principles will then feel impelled to teach them to their children, and thus the cycle of abuse and repression of anger is perpetuated.

Miller says that the pedagogical texts recommended the very early disciplining of children in order to break the will before it is set.¹²² Furthermore, the child should never be allowed to find out that adults err or are wrong, so that they never come to question the authority of the parent. Physical punishment of the child is the method most often recommended in these pedagogical works.¹²³

We give in to dangerous blindness, according to Miller, if we don't acknowledge that these pedagogical principles still inform our own society. She points out that "The attitudes of 'poisonous pedagogy' are not restricted to outdated child-rearing manuals of the past. There they were expressed consciously and unabashedly, whereas today they are disseminated more quietly and more subtly; nevertheless, they still permeate most major areas of our lives."¹²⁴ They are hard to recognize in our society for the simple reason that they permeate so much of it.

Miller thus rejects all pedagogy because she thinks that all of it is irremediably pervaded by the poisonous principles that she outlines above. She says, "I cannot attribute any positive significance to the word *pedagogy*. I see it as self-defense on the part of adults, as manipulation deriving from their own lack of freedom and their insecurity, which I can certainly understand, although I cannot overlook the inherent dangers."¹²⁵

¹²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 59-60.

¹²² Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 216.

¹²³ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 154.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 271.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 100.

She does admit that times have changed, that the poisonous pedagogy that she outlines in her books no longer exists in its pure form. She acknowledges that "the conscious ideals of young parents of the present generation have changed. Obedience, coercion, severity, and lack of feeling are no longer recognized as absolute values."¹²⁶ But she says that the old ideals linger on, that they remain present in the new parents' need to idealize their own parents, which means that they must continue to repress their own childhood suffering. This repression thus blocks the new parents from empathizing with their own children and from protecting them.

When we become aware of the damage created in children, "our realization will force us to revise the pedagogical ideology handed down to us, even though it has been venerated for thousands of years."¹²⁷ It is only by becoming aware of the principles that underlie the parenting techniques we use that we can eradicate them and avoid damaging more children.

The Role of Religion

While Miller is not a theorist of religion, she does incorporate religious teachings into her work, mostly from a critical perspective. We will now turn to an examination of her theories on the role of religion in child abuse. By religion, Miller usually means Judaism and Christianity, emphasizing the latter. She at no point reveals her own religious background, though perhaps it could be concluded from her writings that it was Protestant. I am assuming the latter from her lack of mention of any of the Catholic teachings that deal with original sin. Furthermore, Miller seems to be tolerably well-acquainted with the contents of the Christian Bible, though admittedly hostile to it.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 62.

¹²⁷ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 35.

Miller believes that religions arise out of the need to repress the truth of childhood abuse. She says that, "they promise people redemption from their sufferings and help them to deny their experience."¹²⁸ The more abuse there is, the greater the need to repress, and so, "the greater the panic-stricken fear of the repressed facts, of the return of the repressed, the more destructively and dangerously fanaticism rages."¹²⁹ It frustrates Miller that, "because of a long tradition, which makes it seem almost self-evident, [the] absurd coupling of redemption and destruction goes unnoticed by the majority of people."¹³⁰

Miller dislikes the previously quoted passages from the Book of Proverbs (on beating the child to drive out wickedness)¹³¹ because they reveal the theory that one must destroy something in order to save it and because they detail the belief in the wicked child that informs so many child-rearing principles. In these passages, "the connection between supposed love and 'redemption' through destruction and cruelty is already established in the Old Testament as god-given."¹³²

In her work on creativity, *The Untouched Key: Tracing Childhood Trauma in Creativity and Destructiveness*, Miller examines various paintings depicting the story of

¹²⁸ Miller, *Breaking Down The Wall of Silence*, p. 124.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 106. Other works also criticize this association between suffering and redemption. See for example: Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?", *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse*, Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds. (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1989), pp. 1-30; Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of God* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982); Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978).

¹³¹ Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13.

¹³² Miller, *Breaking Down the Wall of Silence*, p. 106.

Abraham and Isaac.¹³³ She says that "as I sat in the archive looking at the pictures, I suddenly saw in them the symbolic representation of our present situation."¹³⁴ In the story, Abraham does not question God's command to sacrifice Isaac. Instead, "he submits to the divine command as a matter of course, the same way his son submits to him. He must - and wants to - prove that his obedience is stronger than what he calls his love for his child".¹³⁵ Miller points out that Abraham doesn't beg God for mercy or try to bargain with Him to save his son's life. It is only the angel's intervention that saves Isaac. Miller dislikes the story intensely but points out that it reveals the depths of society's need to repress all awareness of childhood suffering and to exonerate parents. Christianity accepts the story without question because "the situation involves a fundamental fact of our existence, with which many of us become familiar during the first years of life and which is so painful that knowledge of it can survive only in the depths of the unconscious."¹³⁶ Miller holds out hope that we can become aware of the brutality of the story and of our own early experiences: "More and more people are refusing to go on playing Isaac's sacrificial role with all its consequences for the future. And perhaps there are also people who reject Abraham's role, who refuse to obey orders that strike them as absurd because they are directed against life."¹³⁷ Miller believes that these people hold the only hope for society's real redemption from suffering.

For Miller, "human history begins with the temptation to want to know, with punishment for being curious, with Abel being favored over Cain, Cain's jealousy, and a

¹³³ Genesis 22: 1-19.

¹³⁴ Miller, *The Untouched Key*, p. 139.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 140.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 141.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 145.

series of bloody deeds."¹³⁸ She questions the character of the Christian God. Pointing out that human fathers who are tyrannically authoritarian are usually very insecure people, Miller asks whether this must also be true of God, who, in the Old Testament at least, is portrayed as being very authoritarian. She offers her view of how God should be:

If there really should be a loving God, he would not burden us with prohibitions. He would love us as we are, would not demand obedience from us, not feel threatened by criticism, not threaten us with hell, not fill us with fear, not put our loyalty to the test, not mistrust us, would let us experience and express our feelings and needs—confident that this is what we need if we are to learn the meaning of a strong and genuine love, a love that is the opposite of fulfilling one's duty and being obedient and that grows only out of the experience of being loved.¹³⁹

According to Miller, it is impossible to train children to be loving - beatings or sermons, threats or rewards will never have any effect. While it is possible to raise a child to be "a good citizen, a brave soldier, a devout Jew, Catholic, Protestant, or atheist, even to be a devout psychoanalyst",¹⁴⁰ full and vital humanity requires a loving and respectful upbringing.

Miller thus believes that Jesus' life shows that he had a better father than God somewhere in his immediate environment. Saying that God could never have raised a son who lived love, since His character was too authoritarian and distant, demanding perfect obedience, Miller turns to the figure of Joseph, Mary's husband. Miller says that Joseph, "who never called attention to himself, who protected and loved Mary and the child, encouraged the child, assigned him central importance, and *served* him", was the real father to Jesus, the one who "made it possible for the child to distinguish what was true

¹³⁸ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 232.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 96.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

and to experience the meaning of love."¹⁴¹ If Jesus had only had God as a father, Miller believes he would never have been able to see through the hypocrisy of the Pharisees or to live a life of such love.

Miller does not cite texts to substantiate her thesis that Joseph provided Jesus with the unconditional love he needed to become so loving, except to point to the fact that Joseph and Mary were willing to flee to Egypt after Jesus' birth in order to save his life. Yet she concludes that "the fact that Jesus grew up with parents whose only goal was to love and respect Him can hardly be denied, not even by believing Christians".¹⁴² She wonders why it is has never occurred to the Church to use Joseph and Mary as role models for parenting: "There would without any doubt be more people capable of love if the Church, instead of urging its members to obey authority and expecting allegiance to Christ on these grounds, would understand the crucial significance of Joseph's attitude. He served his child because he regarded Him as the child of God."¹⁴³ She asks, "what would it be like if all of us regarded our children as children of God"?¹⁴⁴

Instead, Miller sees the Church as continually rejecting the loving nurture of children and holding up the authoritarian God as the model for parents. She says that "The Church's struggle (supposedly an expression of God's will) against children's vitality is renewed daily by training them to be blindly obedient to those in authority and to think of themselves as wicked".¹⁴⁵ Thus, "The hatred rooted in the small child's reaction to this training swells to immense proportions, and the Church (in part unconsciously) abets

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid*, p. 98.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 97.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 99.

the proliferation of evil, which, on a conscious level, it professes to oppose."¹⁴⁶

Miller seriously dislikes the influence that religion has had on society. She asks, "Can it be that the coercive measures of 'poisonous pedagogy' would have less power over us and our culture if the Judeo-Christian tradition had not lent them strong support?"¹⁴⁷ She points out that it is "always the Isaacs whose sacrifice God demands from the Abrahams, never the other way around. It is daughter Eve who is punished for not resisting temptation and not suppressing her curiosity out of obedience to God's will."¹⁴⁸ It is always the children who suffer. Miller cites Job, whom she calls "the faithful son", who is tortured to prove the depth of his loyalty to God, and "Jesus who dies on the cross to fulfill the words of the Father."¹⁴⁹

According to Miller, the bible overemphasizes obedience. She says that "we have all grown up with this cultural heritage, but it could not have survived as long as it has if we had not been taught to accept without question the fact that a loving father has the need to torment his son, that the father cannot sense his son's love and therefore, as in the story of Job, requires proof of it."¹⁵⁰ Miller again points out that almost all religions order their children to honour and respect parents. But she believes that this would be unnecessary if children were raised with proper love and respect; that it is only necessary to try and coerce them into honouring their parents if there is a reason why they shouldn't. Unfortunately, the command to honour means that criticizing one's parents is seen as sinful and thus results in the child feeling guilty. This, for Miller, makes the

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 94.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 94-95.

abuse worse.

Miller also examines how psychoanalysis has been influenced by religion, and specifically, by the authoritarian concept of God. She describes God as follows:

God the Father is easily offended, jealous, and basically insecure; He therefore demands obedience and conformity in the expression of ideas, tolerates no graven images and—since 'graven images' included works of art for the Hebrew God—no creativity either. He dictates beliefs and imposes punishment on apostates, persecutes the guilty with a vengeance, permits His sons to live only according to His principles and to find happiness only on His terms.¹⁵¹

This concept had a profound influence on Freud's theories, according to Miller, and was responsible for his repudiation of his seduction theory. Moreover, "It is fear of this God/father figure that made the drive theory into dogma and causes so many new discoveries to be rejected the way God rejected the graven images of His people."¹⁵² Because Freud was forced to view his father in the image of God the father, Miller theorizes that he had to obey his father's dictates and thus repress all knowledge of his own childhood suffering.

Miller believes that she has freed herself from the "emotional imprisonment" which religion entails, but she acknowledges that "we today are still part of that same religious and cultural tradition".¹⁵³ Intellectually we may reject this image of God as petty tyrant but emotionally, we are still moved by fear of Him and of his representative on earth, our human fathers. However, in one of her few direct references to original sin, Miller says that, through therapy, we can become the "kind of people who no longer desire a Paradise whose autocratic ruler demands perfect obedience and renunciation of the search for

¹⁵¹ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 219.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 220.

knowledge."¹⁵⁴ For Miller, "the truth that individuals discover through their pain can be crushed over and over again by the tomes of pedagogical, psychiatric, and theological wisdom, but it cannot be destroyed".¹⁵⁵

There is far more wrong with religion, according to Miller, than just the call for blind obedience that she finds in the Scriptures. In a section that begins with an inarguable condemnation of female genital mutilation, Miller gives an example of how religion has caused the mutilation of millions of children through circumcision. She announces that "society must be shaken out of its sleep and be made to see that until now it has been sanctioning humanity's greatest crime... cases of actual physical mutilation of small children."¹⁵⁶ There can be no question that the large majority of people now believe that clitorectomies are abusive, but few will yet acknowledge that it is equally a crime to mutilate infant boys' genitals. Miller points out that "the common practice of circumcision shows how in many cultures the cruel mutilation of children's sexual organs is taken for granted."¹⁵⁷ She is very critical of religion's role in circumcision, saying that it shows its brutality by its demand that infant boys be circumcised. While the explicit reasons for circumcision vary between different cultures, all claim that circumcision is done for the child's benefit. Miller contends that, "that this procedure constitutes a cruelty that will later encourage the adult to indulge in similar, also denied, cruelties and will invest his deeds with the legitimacy of a clear conscience is constantly overlooked and ignored, although some scientists have been able to refute all such 'reasons' for

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 304.

¹⁵⁶ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 135.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

circumcision."¹⁵⁸

While many people still find it difficult to believe that religion could be cruel, Miller has no difficulty. She doesn't expect that the religious institutions will immediately embrace the truth of her theories. Indeed, she points to the Catholic Church's rejection of Galileo's theories as an example of just how blindly stupid religion can be. But Miller feels strongly that the truth about circumcision is far more important to humanity than the thesis that the world is round. It is desperately important that religion be shown that it is wrong, because this is "an insight that could save humanity from self-destruction, *because it has already been proven that all destructive behavior has its roots in the repressed traumas of childhood.*"¹⁵⁹ Miller firmly believes that when society becomes serious about protecting the rights of children, "the fact will have to be acknowledged that ritual circumcisions... inflict a trauma on the child leading to an injury of his whole being, with the consequences of these injuries affecting not only the individual and his descendants but other human beings as well."¹⁶⁰

Miller doesn't neglect the story of the creation of humanity in her various writings on religion. Questioning directly the story that underlies the doctrine of original sin, Miller asks,

What kind of Paradise is it in which it is forbidden—under threat of loss of love and of abandonment, of feeling guilty and ashamed—to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, i.e., to ask questions and seek answers to them? Why should it be wicked to want to know what is happening, to want to orient oneself in the world? Who was this contradictory God/Father who had the need to create a curious Eve and at the same time forbid her to live

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

according to her true nature?"¹⁶¹

Miller doesn't underestimate the power of this story. She says that "It is conceivable that the alienated, perverse, and destructive side of present-day scientific investigation is a delayed consequence of this prohibition."¹⁶² She believes that

If Adam is not allowed to be aware of what is before his very eyes, he will direct his curiosity to goals as far removed from himself as possible. He will conduct experiments in outer space, will play with machines, computers, monkeys' brains, or human lives in order to satisfy his curiosity but will always take anxious care not to let his gaze rest on the "Tree of Knowledge" planted right in front of him.¹⁶³

Miller concludes from her analysis of the Genesis story that the commandment "Thou shalt not be aware", has its origin not in the Ten Commandments, but in the placing of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. She asks, "Is it surprising, then, that we prefer to take upon ourselves the hell of blindness, alienation, abuse, deception, subordination, and loss of self rather than lose that place called Paradise, which offers us security, but at such a high price?"¹⁶⁴

Miller doesn't accept that the history of suffering began with the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. She thinks that it began before that, when Adam and Eve were first created and then told to obey God blindly. She asks, "Can we, today, long for a Paradise whose inhabitants are ordered to accept contradictions obediently and without questioning—in other words, to remain forever in the stage of infancy?"¹⁶⁵ It's time we left Eden: the state of the world demands that we awaken from our passivity before we

¹⁶¹ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 95.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

destroy ourselves completely. And so, Miller explicitly rejects the Christian concept of paradise, believing instead that, through therapy, we can become the "kind of people who no longer desire a Paradise whose autocratic ruler demands perfect obedience and renunciation of the search for knowledge."¹⁶⁶

Despite the fact that Miller quotes at length the story in Genesis that is used for the doctrine of original sin,¹⁶⁷ again it is important to note that she never speaks of the doctrine itself, which says that all children are born stained by sin. She does speak, as we have seen, of how the bible says that the child is wicked and in need of discipline but she seems unaware of the doctrine. This is a shame, since it would be very interesting to have her interpretation of how the doctrine of original sin has contributed to the poisonous pedagogy of the past and still contributes today to child-rearing techniques and to society's belief systems.

The Role of Love

Miller contends that a child's love for its parents plays a large role in the transmission of child abuse. She discusses this role as part of her answer to readers' queries about why so many criminals say they had good, loving childhoods. While this seems at first sight to refute Miller's theory that they must all have come from abusive homes, she is able to explain the phenomenon, pointing to the well-known fact that children who are rescued from abusive situations most often express love towards their parents rather than hate, which would be the expected response. Miller is convinced that the reason children don't feel hate is because they *need* to love their parents.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 220.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 101-103.

¹⁶⁸ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, pp. 4-5.

During childhood, children are totally dependent on their parents for everything: food, shelter, warmth, protection. They are forced therefore to trust their parents and to rely on them. Unless a child is given unconditional love, it soon learns that certain behaviours are required of it in order to ensure the continuation of its needs being met. Therefore, a child cannot afford to doubt parents or to question their actions. Nor can the child be angry with them, since it places the child in grave danger of being rejected by the needed parents. It is for this reason that the vast majority of children who are abused by their parents cannot express their natural anger. If they do so, they risk losing the love they are dependent on.¹⁶⁹

But it isn't just the desperate need for the parents that causes the child to love them despite abuse. Miller points again to the power of the Fourth Commandment, the commandment that says that you must honour your parents or else your life will be cut short. She stresses "how important it is that we all be aware of the effect of the commandment to refrain from placing blame on our parents. This commandment, deeply imprinted in us by our upbringing, skillfully performs the function of hiding essential truths from us, or even making them appear as their exact opposites. The price many of us must pay for this is severe neurosis."¹⁷⁰ Being told to honour abusive parents confuses children. They are threatened with death instead of being allowed to acknowledge their rage; they are told to respect the very ones who hurt them. Miller says that neurosis is the

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 117-118.

¹⁷⁰ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 61. Mary Potter Engel also points out that this commandment coerces children into remaining silent about parental abuse. She says that because of it, children "find it hard to understand let alone resist, the violent and violating actions of their parents or other elders toward them." [Mary Potter Engel, "Evil, Sin, and Violation of the Vulnerable", *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, eds. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1990), p. 157.

result of this confusion. Another commandment that has a major impact on children, according to Miller, is an unwritten one. Miller named her third book *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, because she says that this title "spells out a commandment, nowhere explicitly stated, whose strict observance is assured as a result of its internalization at an extremely early date in our individual and collective histories."¹⁷¹ According to Miller, society demands silence from its children: silence about their pain, their anger, and the truth of their lives.

The utter dependence of children on their parents, then, interacts with these commandments to ensure that children do not express their rage at the rightful targets. Whereas "adults are free to hurl reproaches at God, at fate, at the authorities, or at society if they are deceived, ignored, punished unjustly, confronted with excessive demands, or lied to",¹⁷² children are not. They are forbidden to even question the gods in their lives, those who parent or teach them. Instead, Miller says, they are forced to repress their suffering and rage until they too become adults and can find substitute targets for it: either legitimate targets (such as their own children or accepted societal scapegoats) or illegal ones (such as other people's children or other adults).

The Lack of an Enlightened Witness

Miller believes that all that is required to save a child from committing acts of violence later in life is one person who can acknowledge their suffering, one person who can free them from the commandment to keep silent. All that is needed, according to Miller, is for the child to have their hurt recognized and their right to anger validated. It is the lack of this figure in a child's life, which Miller calls an "enlightened witness", that

¹⁷¹ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 1.

¹⁷² Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 254.

results in the repression of their emotions. She says that children can "experience hunger, air raids, and the loss of their home... in such a way that they feel they are being taken seriously and respected as individuals by their parents" and that they will therefore "not become ill as a result of these actual traumata."¹⁷³ More to the point, they will not experience the need to relive the situations when they reach adulthood. Miller maintains that "If mistreated children are not to become criminals or mentally ill, it is essential that at least once in their life they come in contact with a person who knows without any doubt that the environment, not the helpless, battered child, is at fault."¹⁷⁴ Miller sees society as having a role in this, since through either its acknowledgement or denial, it has the potential to save or destroy children. For example, the "enlightened witness" could be a doctor, nurse, social worker, teacher, etc.

Miller doesn't limit the usefulness of an enlightened witness to childhood. These witnesses can intervene in even an adult criminal's life. Since she considers that every crime is a cry for attention, Miller castigates the prison system for not offering proper therapeutic help to all criminals.

Miller isn't too naïve, however. She acknowledges that too often even the presence of an enlightened witness is not enough. Ideally, "a child beaten by his father could afterwards cry his heart out in the arms of a kind aunt¹⁷⁵ and tell her what happened; she would not try to minimize the child's pain or justify the father's actions but would give

¹⁷³ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 14.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 284.

¹⁷⁵ Miller gives the example of an aunt because she says that the child's mother would most likely be incapable of taking the child's part since she is either abusive like the father or else also his victim. Otherwise, Miller says, the mother wouldn't stay with him. (*For Your Own Good*, p. 116)

the whole experience its due weight."¹⁷⁶ But this rarely happens. Miller admits that it is highly unlikely that even if an enlightened witness were available, the child would be able to speak to them: "A child is more likely to opt for a terrible inner isolation and splitting off of his feelings than he is to 'tattle' to outsiders about his father or mother."¹⁷⁷ Therapists also find this to be true in their practices, where patients often remain unable to express criticism of their parents for years due to the enormous compulsion to repress all awareness of their anger at them.

Repression, Projection, and the Repetition Compulsion

It is in this part of Miller's theory, her contention that repression results from lack of a witness to validate abuse, that we most clearly see her use of psychoanalytic theory. Miller accepts Freud's concept of repression. She has found from her own analytic experiences that, "a person who from the beginning was forced, whether subjected to corporal punishment or not, to stifle, i.e., to condemn, split off, and persecute, the vital child within himself will spend his whole life preventing this inner danger that he associates with spontaneous feelings from recurring."¹⁷⁸ However, the resulting forces are so powerful that they will inevitably demand an outlet - one that is potentially harmful to society.

The thesis that repressed emotion must find an outlet is a major part of Miller's theory. It is here that she finds the explanation for violent behaviour. Violence results only when emotion cannot be directed at its rightful targets, when it must be turned

¹⁷⁶ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 116.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 117.

elsewhere towards substitute objects, whether internal or external.¹⁷⁹ Repression is thus a primary cause of violence.¹⁸⁰ The validity of Miller's theory, she contends, can be seen through the experiences of those few who are allowed to express their rage in the right place and who do not therefore need to project it. Miller emphasizes that "those who were permitted to react appropriately throughout their childhood—i.e., with anger—to the pain, wrongs, and denial inflicted upon them either consciously or unconsciously will retain this ability to react appropriately in later life too."¹⁸¹ Thus, as adults, they will feel no need to act violently.

Miller acknowledges that repression serves a function for the child since it helps the child to survive by removing emotions that are either painful or, if expressed, dangerous. But she feels that it is a "perfidious fairy who will supply help at the moment but will eventually exact a price for this help. The impotent fury comes to life again" after the child has become an adult, and is vented either on the adult themselves, or on their children, or on other innocent victims.¹⁸² Miller points out that the first is not considered criminal, the second is sanctioned by society, and only the third is actually seen as a crime. But she emphasizes that "The life-saving function of repression in childhood

¹⁷⁹ We can see the origin of Miller's theory that repressed anger is often displaced from its legitimate target (the abusive parent) on to any handy victim in Freud's comment that "it is easy to observe a certain indifference as to the path along which the discharge takes place, so long as it takes place somehow. ...Punishment must be exacted even if it does not fall upon the guilty." (Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, SE, Vol. 19, p. 45.)

¹⁸⁰ Clifford agrees with Miller that if the child's legitimate anger is denied expression, it will fester and erupt as violent behaviour when the child grows up, since "the feelings forbidden by the [parent] have remained in the unconscious in their archaic, infantile form". (Michael Clifford, "Narcissism, 'Nuclearism,' and 'Inner Infanticide'", *Union Seminary Quarterly*, p. 50.)

¹⁸¹ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 65.

¹⁸² Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 40.

is transformed in adulthood into a life-destroying force."¹⁸³ According to Miller, "The consequences of a trauma are not eliminated by repressing it but are actually reinforced. The inability to remember the trauma, to articulate it... creates the need to articulate it in *the repetition compulsion*."¹⁸⁴ This "repetition compulsion" is a primary means by which child abuse is transmitted throughout the generations.

The repetition compulsion consists of the need to reenact the original abuse. Miller says that

In the earliest stage of life, it is possible for a child to forget about the extreme acts of cruelty he or she has endured and to idealize their perpetrator. But the nature of the subsequent enactment reveals that the whole history of early persecution was stored up somewhere; the drama now unfolds in front of the spectators with an amazing resemblance to the original situation but under another guise: in the reenactment, the child who was once persecuted now becomes the persecutor.¹⁸⁵

When a person is unable to express their rage at how they were abused, they will relive it as adults. They do this by either turning inwards to self-destructiveness, such as substance abuse, self-mutilation, or anorexia, or they turn outwards to choose other victims to stand in for themselves, to be as helpless as they once were. Of the first type, Miller says that "The way we were treated as small children is the way we treat ourselves the rest of our life. And we often impose our most agonizing suffering upon ourselves. We can never escape the tormentor within ourselves, who is often disguised as a pedagogue, someone who takes full control in illness; for example, in anorexia. Cruel enslavement of the body and exploitation of the will are the result."¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 41.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 133.

¹⁸⁵ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 145.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 133.

Most people however turn to their children in order to relive their own childhood rage: "Child-rearing is used in a great many cases to prevent those qualitties that were once scorned and eradicated in oneself from coming to life in one's children."¹⁸⁷ According to Miller, "The pedagogical conviction that one must bring a child into line from the outset has its origin in the need to split off the disquieting parts of the inner self and project them onto an available object."¹⁸⁸ Unfortunately, the child's helplessness and availability makes it a perfect target, one which is unable to either retaliate or resist the parent's abuse. However, when the child grows up, they too will turn their anger on to others, as we have seen. And thus there is a vicious circle: parents abuse their children because they were abused as children by parents who abused them because they were abused as children, etc.

Despite the great evil that results from it, Miller actually sees some value in the repetition compulsion. She is glad that most parents can't kill their children's souls completely, that some vestige remains alive and repeats its cry for understanding over and over until it is heard. She believes that "When a terrorist commits violent actions against helpless people in the name of his ideals... he is unconsciously telling the story, in the form of his repetition compulsion, of what once happened to him".¹⁸⁹ Miller says that it is very important to pay attention to this: "The story he tells can be understood by the public as a warning signal or it can be completely misunderstood".¹⁹⁰ Miller thinks that if we could only heed the warning signals, we could save these damaged, damaging lives.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 90.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 91.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 66.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

Free Will

Miller seems to reveal a belief in absolute determinism when she tells her readers that "it would be a highly instructive and rewarding task to make Hitler's entire political career comprehensible from the perspective of the history of his persecution in early childhood."¹⁹¹ Miller seems to contend, in this and similar passages, that adult behaviour is solely the result of childhood, that abuse in childhood without witness equals abuser in adulthood, that specific childhood incident A will produce specific adult behaviour B and only B. Thus, there seems to be no place in her theory for the individual's free choice that could change this pattern.

However, though most of Miller's writings do express this determinism, by the time of writing her most recent book, *Banished Knowledge*, Miller had moved to some sense that adults do have a choice in how they will react to what they experience or have experienced. She writes that, "Every human being is at liberty to do away with his own repression and to absorb information: information on the needs of the small child, his emotional life, and the dangers inherent in the deadening of the child's feelings."¹⁹² She is aware of how deterministic her theories sound when she says that parents abuse because they were abused and points out that however true this is, we must still assume personal responsibility for what we do and for stopping our evil actions. Originally, she says, she too was a victim of the taboo against blaming parents: "For a long time this taboo against condemning parents for their actions toward their children prevented me from clearly seeing and formulating the parents' guilt."¹⁹³ But while she "cannot imagine that any murderers or criminals do *not* act out of an inner compulsion" to repeat

¹⁹¹ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 146.

¹⁹² Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 25.

¹⁹³ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 22.

what was done to them in their own childhoods, she nonetheless believes that "they are guilty when they destroy or mutilate human life."¹⁹⁴ Similarly, Miller feels that "parents are guilty of crimes against their children, *even though* they act out of an inner compulsion and as an outcome of their tragic past."¹⁹⁵ Miller therefore gradually came to believe that, while freedom is seriously constrained by the early environment, each person is nonetheless free to choose to escape from their pasts and is responsible when they do not choose to do so.

HITLER'S LIFE AS EXAMPLE OF THE EFFECTS OF CHILD ABUSE

My pedagogy is hard. What is weak must be hammered away. In my fortress of the Teutonic Order a young generation will grow up before which the world will tremble. I want the young to be violent, domineering, undismayed, cruel. The young must be all these things. They must be able to bear pain. There must be nothing weak or gentle about them.... That way I can create something new.¹⁹⁶

Miller, as we have seen earlier, considers the case history to represent her main method. She gives many examples in her books of case histories that substantiate her theories. We will examine only her main one, the life of Adolf Hitler. Miller uses the example of Hitler's childhood to document her theory about the transmission of child abuse and its effects, in part because he is such a dramatic example of it and in part because his life "was observed and recorded so exactly by so many witnesses up to the very last day that this material can easily be used to demonstrate the enactment of the early

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 26.

¹⁹⁵ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 26.

¹⁹⁶ Adolf Hitler, cited in Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 142.

childhood situation."¹⁹⁷ Miller points out that we also have access to Hitler's inner life, in that "his thoughts and feelings were expressed, albeit in coded form, in his many speeches and in his book *Mein Kampf*."¹⁹⁸

Miller says that it was when she first became aware of the abuse that children are too often subjected to that she realized that there might be a real origin for Hitler's violence: "I asked myself what the childhood of this person had been like, a person who was possessed by hatred all his life and for whom it became so easy to involve other people in his hatred."¹⁹⁹ Miller regrets that she doesn't have the space to do a full analysis of every facet of Hitler's life. Instead, she restricts herself to a few of the major influences in his childhood with which she hopes to demonstrate why he became so evil. She says that "in so doing, I shall attribute particular significance to certain childhood experiences that until now have received little attention from his biographers."²⁰⁰ These factors have received so little attention, according to Miller, "Because historians by profession concern themselves with external facts, and psychoanalysts with the Oedipus complex, [and so] few seem to have seriously raised the question: What did this child *feel*, what did he *store up* inside when he was beaten and demeaned by his father every day from an early age?"²⁰¹

Miller acknowledges that those who are unaware of the powerful impact of stored memories may find it preposterous to assume that politics is rooted in childhood, absurd to believe that adult ideas and behaviour spring from any other roots than adult decisions: "These people think connections between childhood and later life farfetched or ridiculous,

¹⁹⁷ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 146.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 143-144.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 146.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

since they would like, for good reason, to forget completely the reality of those early years."²⁰² For this reason, "a life such as Hitler's is especially instructive here because in it the continuity between earlier and later can be traced so clearly."²⁰³ This analysis of Hitler's life is vitally important, in Miller's opinion. She points out that in the decades since Hitler's reign, we have perfected the techniques needed to carry out his plan of mass genocide. We now have the ability to destroy large parts of the world, and indeed, the world itself: "Thus it is all the more crucial for us to keep pace with this development by increasing our understanding of the sources of such intense and insatiable hatred as Hitler's."²⁰⁴

The records and biographies of Hitler's childhood give a clear impression of what life was like for him as a child according to Miller. She describes Hitler's early environment: "The family structure could well be characterized as the prototype of a totalitarian regime. Its sole, undisputed, often brutal ruler is the father. The wife and children are totally subservient to his will, his moods, and his whims; they must accept humiliation and injustice unquestioningly and gratefully."²⁰⁵ Obedience was extremely important in Hitler's childhood home and Miller believes that it wasn't just his father who was to blame for this: "The mother, to be sure, has her own sphere of authority in the household, where she rules over the children when the father is not at home; this means that she can to some extent take out on those weaker than herself the humiliation she has suffered."²⁰⁶

²⁰² *Ibid*, p. 175.

²⁰³ *Ibid*.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 242.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 146.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*.

Miller sees an exact parallel between Hitler's mother's role and the state that he created as an adult: "In the totalitarian state, a similar function is assigned to the security police. They are the overseers of the slaves, although they are slaves themselves, carrying out the dictator's wishes, serving as his deputies in his absence, instilling fear in his name, meting out punishment, assuming the guise of the rulers of the oppressed."²⁰⁷ The Hitler family hierarchy was also visible "in the way concentration camps were organized (with their ranking of guards, etc.)".²⁰⁸

Another parallel between Hitler's childhood experiences and his adult behaviour can be seen, according to Miller, from the role that his aunt, his mother's physically handicapped and schizophrenic sister, played in the household. Miller says that this woman's behaviour must have been frightening to the young Adolf, citing as her proof for this statement the information that a former servant of the family reportedly left the position because "she refused to be around 'that crazy hunchback' any longer."²⁰⁹ Miller makes a direct connection between this aunt and Hitler's euthanasia laws. She says that the fact that he could not express his fear and confusion as a child made it impossible for him to deal adequately with all the emotions his aunt must have aroused in him. And so, "when Hitler was grown and came to power, he was finally able to avenge himself a thousandfold on this unfortunate aunt for his own misfortune. He had all the mentally ill in Germany put to death, because he felt they were 'useless' for a 'healthy' society".²¹⁰ Miller explains that "As an adult, Hitler no longer had to put up with anything; he was even able to 'liberate' all of Germany from the 'plague' of the mentally ill and retarded

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 146-147.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 147.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 196.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*.

and was not at a loss to find ideological embellishments for this thoroughly personal act of revenge."²¹¹

Hitler was the subject of cruel beatings by his father when he was a child. Miller says that the "Little Adolf could be certain of receiving constant beatings [from his father]; he knew that nothing he did would have any effect on the daily thrashings he was given. All he could do was deny the pain, in other words, deny himself and identify with the aggressor. No one could help him, not even his mother, for this would spell danger for her too, because she was also battered."²¹² There is a parallel here with the perilous position of the Jews in Nazi Germany. Miller gives the example of a Jew out walking who is suddenly accosted by an SS officer. Because of Hitler, "this man has the right to do anything to the Jew he wants, anything his fantasy happens to dictate and that his unconscious craves at the moment. The Jew can do nothing to alter this; he is in the same position as little Adolf once was."²¹³ Pointing out that Hitler was almost beaten to death by his father for attempting to run away from home, Miller says that it was "just as impossible for the Jew to escape; all roads are cut off and lead [sic] to death, like the railroad tracks that simply came to an end at Treblinka and Auschwitz—signifying the end of life itself."²¹⁴ Miller believes that this treatment of the Jews exactly replicated how Hitler felt as a child: "This is the way any child feels who is beaten day in and day out and who is very nearly killed for daring to think of escape."²¹⁵

By destroying the Jews, Hitler "was mistreating the helpless child he once was in the

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid*, p. 163.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 163-164.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 164.

same way his father had mistreated him. And just as the father was never satisfied and whipped him every day, nearly beating him to death when he was eleven, Hitler also was never satisfied; he wrote in his will, after he had already had six million Jews put to death, that it was still necessary to exterminate the last remnants of Jewry."²¹⁶ Miller theorizes that this need to continue beating and killing results from the "fear of a possible resurrection and return of the split-off parts of the self... behind it hovers fear of the emergence of one's own repressed weakness, humiliation, and helplessness, which one has tried to escape all one's life".²¹⁷ Hitler's need to be a dictator in order to have the power to repress these parts of himself shows the truth of this.

Therefore, Miller says, by persecuting the Jews, Hitler was able to "correct" his own past. Among other things, the persecution gave Hitler the ability to:

take *revenge* on his father, who was suspected of being half Jewish... To *reverse roles*—he has now become the dictator, *he* must now be obeyed and submitted to as his father once was; *he* organizes concentration camps in which people are treated the way he was as a child.... Moreover, the persecution of the Jews permitted him to *persecute* the weak child in his own self that was now projected onto the victims. In this way he would not have to experience grief over his past pain.²¹⁸

Unfortunately, many Germans had an upbringing similar to Hitler's and thus were driven by unconscious needs that meshed only too well with his.

It is no surprise to Miller that the Jews were the scapegoat for the Nazi society. They were not a group of people remarkably different from the gentile Germans, it's simply that "people harbor a forbidden hatred and are eager to legitimate it."²¹⁹ The

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 188.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 190-191.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 166.

Jews were scapegoated for the simple reason that they have been persecuted for so many generations already: "Because they have been persecuted for two thousand years by the highest authorities of church and state, no one ever needs to feel ashamed for hating the Jews, not even if one has been raised to feel ashamed of the most natural emotions of the soul in other regards".²²⁰ Miller does not agree with the persecution, but she acknowledges that "A child who has been required to don the armor of 'virtue' at too early an age will seize upon the only permissible discharge; he will seize upon anti-Semitism (i.e., his right to hate), retaining it for the rest of his life."²²¹ It was therefore easy for Hitler to claim anti-Semitism as "the highest Aryan virtue".²²²

In her "Preface to the American Edition" of *For Your Own Good*, Miller says that she received many letters from readers of former editions of the book, asking why, since they had had childhoods like Hitler's, they hadn't turned out to be monsters. In her answer, Miller reveals very clearly her contention that it is not abuse alone that turns a child into a monster, but the need to repress it caused by the absence of any witness who could validate the child's emotions. She is convinced that Hitler became so evil because he "never had a single other human being in whom he could confide his true feelings; he was not only mistreated but also prevented from experiencing and expressing his pain; he didn't have any children who could have served as objects for abreacting his hatred; and, finally, his lack of education did not allow him to ward off his hatred by intellectualizing it."²²³ If Hitler had had an outlet of some type, it is likely that he would never have become the murderer of over six million people.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid*, p. viii.

Miller uses what she has learned from Hitler's life to conclude that "Through the agency of his unconscious repetition compulsion, Hitler actually succeeded in transferring the trauma of his family life onto the entire German nation."²²⁴ She says that she uses the example of Hitler's life to show the following:

1. Even the worst criminal of all time was not born a criminal.
2. Empathizing with a child's unhappy beginnings does not imply exoneration of the cruel acts he later commits....
3. Those who persecute others are warding off knowledge of their own fate as victims.
4. Consciously experiencing one's own victimization instead of trying to ward it off provides a protection against sadism; i.e., the compulsion to torment and humiliate others.
5. The admonition to spare one's parents inherent in the Fourth Commandment and in "poisonous pedagogy" encourages us to overlook crucial factors in a person's early childhood and later development....²²⁵

It is important that we heed this knowledge. Miller reminds us that "with all due respect for historical, sociological, and economic explanations, the official who turns on the gas to asphyxiate children and the person who conceived this are human beings and were once children themselves."²²⁶ She warns that "until the general public becomes aware that countless children are subjected to soul murder every day and that society as a whole must suffer as a result, we are groping in a dark labyrinth—in spite of all our well-meaning efforts to bring about disarmament among nations."²²⁷

Miller had no idea when she was beginning work on *For Your Own Good*, that it would lead her to consider the origins of war. Her original intention was simply to inform

²²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 161.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 197.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 242.

²²⁷ *Ibid*.

society about what she had learned of the impact of pedagogy on children who then grow up to be angry adults. Instead, she says that she discovered that child abuse is responsible for all the wars and violence in the world and she became aware of the desperate need for society to cease its abuse of children.²²⁸

ENDING THE TRANSMISSION OF CHILD ABUSE

Miller views herself as a prophet and those who read her books as her disciples, saying that "If I succeed with my books in reaching a few people who were fortunate enough to have had a helpful witness in their childhood, even if only for a short time, then, after reading my books, they will become enlightened, *conscious* witnesses and advocates of children."²²⁹ She expects that these people will then go out into the world and help victims of child abuse to heal instead of repeating what was done to them.

Miller thus explicitly locates redemption in human activity. The end to the transmission of child abuse will come only through our efforts: "Our sensitization to the cruelty with which children are treated,... and to the consequences of such treatment will as a matter of course bring to an end the perpetuation of violence from generation to generation."²³⁰ In her later book, *Banished Knowledge*, Miller repeats this belief, emphasizing this time that it is an end to *evil* that she is speaking of: "When one day the ignorance arising from childhood repression is eliminated and humanity has awakened, an end can be put to [the] production of evil."²³¹ Miller therefore sees the healing of the world as coming about in two different ways: through the work of the "enlightened

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 172.

²³⁰ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 284.

²³¹ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 143.

witness" and through the the slow movement towards societal awareness of the damage done by child abuse that she says is reflected in the number of books, articles, television and newspaper interviews, etc., that are being published on the subject.²³²

But, in a surprising passage, Miller also acknowledges that religion can play a role in healing the world. Turning in her conclusion to *For Your Own Good* to religious language to find another answer to how to stop the transmission of evil, she points out that "Religion says we must forgive the injustice we suffered, only then will we be free to love and be purged of hatred."²³³ Accepting that religion is right in this instance, she asks "how do we find the path to true forgiveness?"²³⁴ Since it is impossible to forgive without knowing what crime was done, the repression that most children are forced to adopt makes forgiveness very difficult. Thus the commandment to honour one's parents makes it hard to forgive them.²³⁵ Genuine religious forgiveness then can open the way to healing for the world but only if it is based on full knowledge of what occurred: "Only if the history of abuse in earliest childhood can be uncovered will the repressed anger, rage, and hatred cease to be perpetuated."²³⁶ Miller again turns to religious language. She says that it is important to remember that "such forgiveness cannot be coerced by rules and commandments; it is experienced as a *form of grace* and appears spontaneously when a repressed (because forbidden) hatred no longer poisons the soul."²³⁷ But Miller

²³² Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, pp. 307-316.

²³³ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 247.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 247-248.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 248.

²³⁷ *Ibid.* Emphases added.

does not link this "grace" explicitly to the gift of a God.

Miller reveals another interesting aspect of her theory, one that makes a theological explanation of her theories seem very appropriate, when she says that "It is only from a child who was never injured that we can learn entirely new, honest, and truly humane behavior."²³⁸ Thus, she believes that we need a child who is born without the stain of the corruption of the world to lead the world to healing.

CRITIQUES OF MILLER'S THEORIES

We have seen that Miller believes that evil is solely the result of child abuse. She also believes that mental illnesses have their root in the same phenomena, but more specifically, in the repression caused by the abuse: "Neuroses and psychoses are not direct consequences of actual frustrations but the expression of repressed traumata".²³⁹ Mental illness is either the rage of the child turned inwards against the self or an expression of the need to re-enact, in symbolic form, what has been done to the child.²⁴⁰ For example, Miller says that, "a child's autism is a response to his environment, sometimes the last possible response open to a child."²⁴¹ While some psychiatrists would agree with her,²⁴² there are many who believe that mental illness is purely biological in origin.²⁴³

²³⁸ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 176.

²³⁹ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 14.

²⁴⁰ See Miller, *For Your Own Good*, pp. 109-129 and especially, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, in which she develops her thesis that all mental illness is expression of childhood suffering.

²⁴¹ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 53.

²⁴² See for example, Peter R. Breggin, *Toxic Psychiatry: Why Therapy, Empathy, and Love Must Replace the Drugs, Electroshock, and Biochemical Theories of the "New Psychiatry"* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); and Thomas S. Szasz, *The Manufacture of Madness: A Comparative Study of the Inquisition and the Mental Health Movement*

This point about the genesis of mental illness is a critical one for Miller's theory, since it raises a serious contention that can also be levelled at her belief that evil is purely reactive too. It must be remembered that the brain is an organ like any other and therefore equally subject to deformity, disease, and destruction, whether genetic in origin or environmental. It is possible to develop ulcers in one's stomach or to be born with a congenitally deformed spine, and, in the same way, there are equivalent brain dysfunctions of varying origins that will sometimes result in abnormal behaviour.²⁴⁴ Miller seems either to believe that each infant is born with a perfect brain, completely free of genetic abnormalities, or else to believe that behaviour has no root in either the brain or the biochemistry of the body.

This is an example of a serious weakness in Miller's work. Her theories can be criticized for being simplistic and extreme and for not dealing sufficiently with the complex reality of evil. This, however, is a criticism that can be levelled at many new theorists, and reflects what is perhaps a necessary stage in theoretical development. Erich Fromm points out that "The attempt to understand Freud's theoretical system, or that of any creative systemic thinker, cannot be successful unless we realize that, and why, every system as it is developed and presented by its author is *necessarily* erroneous."²⁴⁵ He

(New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977) and *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct*, Revised Edition (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974).

²⁴³ As an example of the many books written about the biological bases of mental illness, see Nancy Andreasen, *The Broken Brain: The Biological Revolution in Psychiatry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984).

²⁴⁴ See Howard Gardner, *The Shattered Mind: The Person After Brain Damage* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976) for one example of a study of brain damage and its effects on behaviour.

²⁴⁵ Erich Fromm, *Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980), p. 1.

contends that this is so because of the fundamental contradiction between the newness of the ideas and the language that they must be expressed in: "In the process of the critical elimination of previous theories we find an approximation to truth but we do not find the truth, and we cannot find the truth as long as social contradictions and force require ideological falsification, as long as man's reason is damaged by irrational passions which have their root in the disharmony and irrationality of social life."²⁴⁶ Miller's theory is thus conditioned by the very society that she criticizes.

Barry Magid is one of the few theorists using Miller's work who actually analyzes her theories.²⁴⁷ After his analysis, Magid criticizes Miller for reducing all evil to child abuse. He says that Miller "attempts to substitute a nearly universal legacy of parental abuse for Freud's drive-based models of innate aggression and destructiveness."²⁴⁸ He does not feel that her theory is an improvement on Freud's. Instead, he thinks that her theories are "dangerously prone to circular reasoning" since she says that all violence in adults is the result of childhood abuse whether or not the person can remember any. In this manner, according to Magid, "Miller approaches self-parody in the circularity of her logic and demonstrates the problem of presuming a priori that all evil behavior is identical with a given psychopathology, which in turn is the result of a specific pattern of childhood trauma. No counter evidence is conceivable and the conclusion is preordained by the hypothesis."²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 4.

²⁴⁷ Barry Magid, "The Evil Self" in *Dynamic Psychotherapy*, Vol 6, No. 2, Fall/Winter 1988, pp. 99-113.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 105.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 106.

Another theorist who analyzes Miller's theories is Michael Clifford;²⁵⁰ however, he offers unmitigated support for Miller's theories. He agrees with her assessment of the widespread nature of child abuse, pointing out that, "today, aggression against children is a problem of staggering dimension".²⁵¹ As does Miller, Clifford acknowledges the different types of abuse that children suffer and says that "In our rationally oriented culture, it is easier for the effects of physical abuse to be recognized and understood as abuse than it is for psychological abuse to be recognized as such, because the latter seems far less tangible, and less real—that is, visible—damage seems to have been done."²⁵² Nonetheless, Clifford goes beyond Miller's theories to posit the existence of an aggression towards children that is innate to humanity,²⁵³ a conclusion that Miller could not agree with.

David Harrington is a research psychologist who decided to test one of Miller's theories from *For Your Own Good*, which he describes approvingly as an "ambitious, polemical, and passionately argued book."²⁵⁴ He chose to assess the validity of her theory that the child-rearing practises that she refers to as "poisonous pedagogy" are passed on from parent to child in a continuous cycle, or, as Harrington himself phrases it, how "the psychological pain and psychological ill-health of one generation is transmitted to the

²⁵⁰ Michael Clifford, "Narcissism, 'Nuclearism,' and 'Inner Infanticide': Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Idea of the Child in the Nuclear Age", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 1983, pp. 35-73.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 35.

²⁵² *Ibid*.

²⁵³ *Ibid*.

²⁵⁴ David Harrington, "Child-rearing antecedents of suboptimal personality development: Exploring aspects of Alice Miller's concept of the poisonous pedagogy" in *Studying lives through time: Personality and development*, David C. Funder, et al, eds. (Santa Cruz, CA: American Psychological Association, 1993), p. 290.

next."²⁵⁵ To do this, he used data drawn from an ongoing study, "the J.H.Block and Block longitudinal study of personality and cognitive development." He used this data to develop "indexes of the degree to which parents in the Block & Block study displayed aspects of the [poisonous pedagogy] when dealing with their preschool children and have correlated those indexes of pre-school [poisonous pedagogy] with personality descriptions of the children obtained 15-20 years later when the children were approximately 18 and 23 years old."²⁵⁶

Harrington points out that in her theory, Miller does not accuse parents of being malicious to their children: "In Miller's view, parents who use [poisonous pedagogy] do so out of a *conscious* and understandable desire to accelerate their children's development and to help their children move as quickly as possible from vulnerable states of childhood helplessness, incompetence, and dependence to safer states of adult competence, independence, self-sufficiency, and power."²⁵⁷ Unfortunately, he says, there is also an unconscious component to the parenting, one that attempts to replicate the parents' own childhood experiences.

It is important to note Harrington's conclusions from his experiments. He says that the data from the subjects at ages 18 and 23 revealed results that were "consistent with the theoretical expectation that [poisonous pedagogy] in childhood tends to be followed by

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Harrington acknowledges a major limitation of his study. He states that "The most provocative psychodynamic aspects of Miller's theory involving the allegedly unconscious motives underlying [poisonous pedagogy], for example, were not and cannot be addressed with these data." (p. 310) Instead, his research is focussed solely on Miller's theory of the transmission of poisonous pedagogy.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 291.

substantially suboptimal personality development."²⁵⁸ He found that,

The subjects raised by mothers who exhibited relatively high degrees of [poisonous pedagogy] in the preschool teaching situation were seen as being significantly more brittle and easily disorganized by stress, more fearful, anxious, thin-skinned, self-defensive, concerned with their own adequacy, negativistic, unincisive in their analyses of problems, and apt to give up and withdraw in the face of adversity compared with young adults raised by mothers who used relatively little [poisonous pedagogy]. These children of comparatively high [poisonous pedagogy] mothers were also described as experiencing an unusual lack of personal meaning in their lives, appeared to feel cheated and victimized, and were comparatively cheerless.²⁵⁹

Harrington continues with yet more negative adjectives to describe the interpersonal relationships of these children and concludes that, "comparatively speaking, then, children raised by mothers who exhibited considerable [poisonous pedagogy] in the preschool teaching situation appeared to be significantly less psychologically healthy in young adulthood than did their peers who were raised by mothers who exhibited lower levels of [poisonous pedagogy] 15-20 years earlier."²⁶⁰

But Harrington does not want to say that this conclusion means that Miller's theory about the transmission of poisonous pedagogy is unquestionably right. He points out that although this may be true, there are other possible causes for the results of his study: "it is also possible that child-rearing practices themselves are partly shaped by children's characteristics or by genetically influenced parental characteristics, either or both of which may influence children's later personality development."²⁶¹ Therefore, he warns, we must be careful about assuming causal relationships solely on the basis of this data. He

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 305.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 305, 307.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 307.

²⁶¹ *Ibid*.

also points out that his analysis of the data was based on new profiles and he wants to wait until they have been tested independently by others before he accepts their validity completely. Furthermore, the test also needs to be applied to a wider sample, to different populations and cultures, in order to see if it is universally applicable.²⁶²

Nonetheless, despite these "standard methodological limitations", Harrington says that "it seems fair to say that the data involving the mothers' observed [poisonous pedagogy] in the parent-child interactions were significantly consistent with and supportive of Miller's belief that [poisonous pedagogy] is psychologically harmful."²⁶³ He thinks that the results justify further testing of Miller's theories.

Another reason that Harrington believes Miller's theories deserve further study is because they point to an important connection between child-rearing practices and culture. Harrington points out that "child-rearing practices are also functionally related to the physical and social realities dealt with by those cultural systems in the past or currently."²⁶⁴ Therefore, "ways in which elements of Miller's [poisonous pedagogy] may be related to such social and physical realities deserve careful and culturally respectful study."²⁶⁵ It is to be hoped that other researchers will undertake this work. Harrington's results, however, do point to the validity of at least one of Miller's theories.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Miller believes that evil has its origin in "the discharge of long-pent-up

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 308.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 309.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

[sic] childhood hatred and its displacement onto other objects or onto the self."²⁶⁶ She thinks that "The healthy, normal reaction" to being abused as a child, should be "narcissistic rage of extreme intensity."²⁶⁷ But unfortunately, society does not allow the legitimate expression of this rage, and so it is repressed and then later projected. It is important to remember that, according to Miller, criminality is the result of the lack of sufficient witness to the child's suffering. Pointing out yet again that "The many and varied enactments of such people are essentially a crying out for understanding, but in a way that assures them of anything but society's sympathy", Miller says that "It is part of the tragic nature of the repetition compulsion that someone who hopes eventually to find a better world than the one he or she experienced as a child in fact keeps creating the same undesired state of affairs."²⁶⁸

Miller emphasizes that "we are still barely conscious of how harmful it is to treat children in a degrading manner."²⁶⁹ But mere intellectual knowledge is not enough to effect change, since otherwise we would have been forced to acknowledge this fact long ago. Instead, we must learn to empathize with the child we once were and the suffering we underwent before we can learn to acknowledge the suffering of today's children and its harmful effect on them. According to Miller, "once we realize, on the basis of psychoanalytic findings, how many pent-up feelings and aggressions people who function *well* and who behave unobtrusively must live with and the toll this takes on their health, we might well regard it as fortunate—and by no means a matter of course—that everyone

²⁶⁶ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 240.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

does not become a sex offender."²⁷⁰

Miller is convinced that facing the pain of our childhoods will lead to great healing for us and for society: "Paradoxical as it may sound, if the impotent hatred of early childhood can be experienced, destructive and self-destructive behavior will come to an end."²⁷¹ There is an enormous difference between experiencing the pain and working through it, and the "addictive, destructive acting out associated with the repetition compulsion."²⁷²

Miller summarizes her theory as follows:

1. The child is always innocent.
2. Each child needs among other things: care, protection, security, warmth, skin contact, touching, caressing, and tenderness.
3. These needs are seldom sufficiently fulfilled; in fact they are often exploited by adults for their own ends (trauma of child abuse).
4. Child abuse has lifelong effects.
5. Society takes the side of the adult and blames the child for what has been done to him or her.
6. The victimization of the child has historically been denied and is still being denied, even today.
7. This denial has made it possible for society to ignore the devastating effects of the victimization of the child for such a long time.
8. The child, when betrayed by society, has no choice but to repress the trauma and to idealize the abuser.
9. Repression leads to neuroses, psychoses, psychosomatic disorders, and delinquency.
10. In neuroses, the child's needs are repressed and/or denied; instead, feelings of guilt are experienced.
11. In psychoses, the mistreatment is transformed into a disguised illusory version (madness).
12. In psychosomatic disorders, the pain of mistreatment is felt but the actual origins are concealed.
13. In delinquency, the confusion, seduction, and mistreatment of childhood are acted out again and again....

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 267.

²⁷¹ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 175.

²⁷² *Ibid*.

20. New crimes... can be prevented, if the victims begin to see and be aware of what has been done to them.
21. Therefore, the reports of victims will be able to bring about more awareness, consciousness, and sense of responsibility in society at large.²⁷³

Miller acknowledges that children cannot be raised totally without restraints, that they do need to be raised with limits. Primarily, children need the respect of their parents, they need to be listened to and loved unconditionally. Miller sounds optimistic when she says that "There is evidence among the younger generation that this kind of willingness is possible even for people who were themselves victims of child-rearing."²⁷⁴

Despite this hopeful tone, Miller is inclined to think that almost all people were abused to some extent or another as children and that therefore they will inevitably pass this legacy on to their own children: "even if we, as survivors of severe childhood humiliations we all too readily make light of, don't kill ourselves or others, are not drug addicts or criminals, and are fortunate enough not to pass on the absurdities of our own childhood to our children so that they become psychotic, *we can still function as dangerous carriers of infections.*"²⁷⁵ It is in this "infection" that I see a parallel with Schoonenberg's "sin of the world" theology and that therefore makes his theory an appropriate explanation for the problem of child abuse as outlined by Miller.

Miller has utopian ideas. She wants to create a new Eden. She believes that "if we are courageous enough to face the truth" about the effects of child abuse, "the world will change".²⁷⁶

²⁷³ *Ibid*, pp. 314-315.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. x. Emphasis added.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. xii.

CHAPTER TWO:
PIET SCHOONENBERG AND THE SIN OF THE WORLD

In this chapter, we will examine the sin of the world theology as outlined by Piet Schoonenberg so that we may apply it in the next chapter to Miller's theories about the problem of child abuse and its transmission. Before beginning this exposition of his theology, however, it will be useful to first briefly outline the classical formulation of the Roman Catholic doctrine of original sin¹ in order to appreciate the new approach to the doctrine taken by Schoonenberg. This is necessary, since, as we have seen, the doctrine has been Christianity's traditional answer to the question of the origins of human evil. It will also be helpful to review the various influences on the doctrine that led to the proliferation of new interpretations of it and to look briefly at the Symposium on Original Sin, called by Pope Paul VI, in which Schoonenberg participated. After, this, we will turn to our examination of Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology: his rationale and methodology; his definitions of the terms 'sin' and 'evil'; his analysis of the traditional doctrine and its weaknesses; and finally, the components of his own theory: the history of sin in the world, its means of transmission, and redemption. We will conclude with Schoonenberg's analysis of the similarities between his theology and the doctrine of original sin. This chapter, therefore, will contribute to the objective of this thesis by

¹ There are many excellent works available on the subject of the origins, history, and development of the doctrine of original sin. See, for example: A. M. Dubarle, *The Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964); G. M. Lukken, *Original Sin in the Roman Liturgy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973); Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988); Henri Rondet, *Original Sin: The Patristic and Theological Background*, trans. Cajetan Finnegab (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1972); F. R. Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968); and N. P. Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin: A Historical and Critical Study* (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929).

contextualizing and outlining the relevant theories of Schoonenberg's theology so that, in the next chapter, we can see how they work as a theological explanation for the presence of child abuse in the world and its continuous transmission.

PART ONE: THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

It is not a simple task to state the doctrine of original sin, since there is not a single, official definition of the doctrine. Indeed, as C. J. Peter points out, "There can be no question that the nexus between a personal sin of a remote ancestor and a condition of guilt in a descendant has received different nuances of understanding in the history of Christian thought."² There are however various sources for the usual conceptions of the doctrine. We shall follow the formulations given by the Council of Trent and through the teachings of a former pope, Paul VI.³

Classical formulations of the doctrine of original sin have traditionally emphasized the perfection of Adam prior to the fall and the superabundance of gifts with which he was originally endowed. They also emphasized the freedom of Adam's decision to reject God's gift of grace and the consequences of this decision for all of humanity.⁴ They were

² C. J. Peter, "Original Sin", *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p. 780.

³ Support for this choice is found in the fact that *The Supplement to a New Catechism* cites both the Council of Trent and Paul VI's outline of the doctrine in "The Credo of the People of God", *Solemni hac liturgia*, 30 June 1968, *Vatican Council II: More Postconciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, ed. (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982) as the authoritative sources for the doctrine. [Edouard Dhanis and Jan Visser, *The Supplement to A New Catechism, A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults*, Piet Schoonenberg et al (Higher Catechetical Institute at Nijmegen), trans. Kevin. Smyth (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 522.]

⁴ C. J. Peter, "Original Sin", pp. 776-781; Karl Rahner, "Original Sin", *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. IV, ed. Karl Rahner, et al (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 328-334.

primarily based on the writings of Augustine, who pioneered the doctrine of original sin.⁵

The Council of Trent, in the year 1546, gave the basic outline of the doctrine - one that is adhered to by the magisterium of the church to this day. The Council of Trent declared that:

whereas that old serpent, the perpetual enemy of mankind, amongst the very many evils with which the Church of God is in these our times troubled, has also stirred up not only new but even old dissensions touching original sin and the remedy thereof; the sacred and holy, ecumenical and general synod of Trent,--lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, ... wishing now to come to the reclaiming of the erring and the confirming of the wavering,--following the testimonies of the sacred Scriptures, of the holy Fathers, of the most approved councils and the judgment and consent of the Church itself, ordains, confesses and declares these things touching the said original sin:

1. If anyone does not confess that the first man, Adam, when he had transgressed the commandment of God in Paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice wherein he had been constituted; and that he incurred, through the offence of that prevarication, the wrath and indignation of God, and consequently death, with which God had previously threatened him, and together with death captivity under his power who thenceforth had the empire of death, that is to say the devil, and that the entire Adam, through that offence of prevarication, was changed in body and soul for the worse; let him be anathema.

2. If anyone asserts that the prevarication of Adam injured himself alone, and not his posterity, and that the holiness and justice, received of God, which he lost, he lost for himself alone, and not for us also; or that he, being defiled by the sin of disobedience, has only transfused death and pains of the body into the whole human race, but not sin also, which is the death of the soul; let him be anathema: whereas he contradicts the Apostle, who says: "By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.[Rom. 5:12]

3. If anyone asserts that this sin of Adam--which in its origin is one, and being transfused into all by propagation, not by imitation, is in each one as his own--is taken away either by the powers of human nature, or by any other remedy than the merit of the one mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, ... let him be anathema...

⁵ There is a large literature on Augustine's influence on the doctrine of original sin. For two examples of contemporary work on the subject, see Paul Rigby, *Original Sin in Augustine's Confessions* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1987); and Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988).

4. If anyone denies that infants, newly born from their mothers' wombs, even though they be sprung from baptized parents, are to be baptized; or says that they are baptized indeed for the remission of sins, but that they derive nothing of original sin from Adam which has need of being expiated by the laver of regeneration for the obtaining life everlasting, whence it follows as a consequence that in them the form of baptism, the remission of sins, is understood to be not true, but false, let him be anathema. For that which the Apostle has said, "By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned["], is not to be understood otherwise than as the Catholic Church spread everywhere hath always understood it. For, by reason of this rule of faith, from a tradition of the Apostles, even infants, who could not as yet commit any sin of themselves, are for this cause truly baptized for the remission of sins, that in them that may be cleansed away by regeneration which they have contracted by generation....

5. If anyone denies that, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is conferred in baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted; or even asserts that the whole of that which has the true and proper nature of sin is not taken away; but says that it is only raised, or not imputed; let him be anathema. For, in those who are born again, there is nothing that God hates, because there is no condemnation to those who are truly buried together with Christ by baptism into death; who walk not according to the flesh, but putting off the old man, and putting on the new who is created according to God, are made innocent, immaculate, pure, harmless, and beloved of God...so that there is nothing whatever to retard their entrance into Heaven. But this holy synod confesses and is sensible that in the baptized there remains concupiscence, or an incentive (to sin); which, whereas it is left for our exercise, cannot injure those who consent not, but resist manfully by the grace of Jesus Christ; yea, he who shall have striven lawfully shall be crowned. This concupiscence, which the Apostle sometimes calls sin [Rom. 6:12ff], the holy synod declares that the Catholic Church has never understood it to be called sin as being truly and properly sin in those born again, but because it is of sin, and inclines to sin. And if anyone is of a contrary sentiment, let him be anathema.⁶

This formulation of the doctrine of original sin has stood as the official church teaching since the 16th century. However, in order to hear how the church has expressed

⁶ *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees: Authorized Translations of the Dogmatic Decrees of the Council of Trent, the Decree on the Immaculate Conception, the Syllabus of Pope Pius IX, and the Decrees of the Vatican Council*, various trans. (Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1977), pp. 15-20.

this formulation in contemporary language, we shall look briefly at the teachings of a former pope, Paul VI.

I have chosen Pope Paul VI's writings over the writings of the present pope, John Paul II, for several reasons. The first is that it was Pope Paul VI who convened, in 1966, a symposium on original sin (which I shall examine later) in which Piet Schoonenberg participated. Furthermore, Paul VI was profoundly concerned with the doctrine of original sin and made repeated reference to it throughout his writings. Whereas Paul VI uses the doctrine to express the radical brokenness of humanity, Pope John Paul II speaks of it only incidentally as part of his larger theology, with his main emphasis seeming to be on original sin as disobedience to God. John Paul II says that, "according to the witness concerning the beginning, sin in its original reality takes place in man's will - and conscience - first of all as "disobedience," that is, as opposition of the will of man to the will of God. This original disobedience presupposes a rejection or at least a turning away from the truth contained in the word of God, who creates the world."⁷ Unlike Paul VI who sees the doctrine as expressing an urgent, practical truth, John Paul II is primarily interested in it as a theological explanation. For him, human sin has its origin in the rebellion against God, which was first expressed through Adam's disobedience. Paul VI's main concern is with the dreadful consequences that he sees resulting from original sin. Because this emphasis reflects that of Piet Schoonenberg, Paul VI's writings will be examined as an example of modern church teaching on original sin.

Paul VI, in "The Credo of the People of God", outlines the traditional theology:

We believe that in Adam all have sinned. From this it follows that on account of the original offence committed by him human nature, which is common to all men, is reduced to that condition in which it must suffer the consequences of that fall. This condition is not the same as that of our first

⁷ John Paul II, "Encyclical: Dominum et Vivificantem", *Origins*, Vol.16, No. 4, June 12, 1986, p. 87.

parents, for they were constituted in holiness and justice, and man had no experience of either evil or death. Consequently, fallen human nature is deprived of the economy of grace which it formerly enjoyed. It is wounded in its natural powers and subjected to the dominion of death which is transmitted to all men. It is in this sense that every man is born in sin.⁸

He says further that, "We hold, therefore, in accordance with the Council of Trent, that original sin is transmitted along with human nature, not by imitation but by propagation, and is, therefore, incurred by each individually."⁹ The Council of Vatican II strayed little from this conservative theology.

Pope Paul VI was fascinated by the problems of original sin and evil. He spoke of them often in his talks to the public and to various groups and wrote extensively on the subjects. He contends that, "we moderns are losing the sense of sin",¹⁰ and points out that his predecessor, Pius XII, believed that this loss was perhaps the greatest sin of his time. According to Paul VI, we need to recall the doctrine of original sin in order to again understand its consequences in our lives. The original sin, he writes eloquently, "upset every element of human life, leaving behind boundless nostalgia and unsatisfied aspirations; disorder and imbalance in the psychological and moral workings of human activity; sad, humiliating experiences due to this inherited dysfunction; and a greatness and a wretchedness which subject man to an exulting, tormented need in himself."¹¹ Paul VI frequently repeats that original sin is not personal sin but is found in each person;

⁸ Paul VI, "The Credo of the People of God", *Solemni hac liturgia*, 30 June 1968, in *Vatican Council II: More Postconciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, general editor (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982), p. 391.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Paul VI, "The Christian Response to Evil and Suffering" in *The Pope Speaks*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1970, p. 23.

¹¹ Paul VI, "The Feast of Christian Humanism" in *The Pope Speaks*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1974, p. 312.

it is "a state which is interior and personal in every son and daughter of Adam so that they are powerless to liberate themselves from the fateful consequences of the first man's sin."¹² This state binds each person to every other in an inescapable relationship: "Adam gave proof of this interrelationship, since his sin has spread by propagation to all men."¹³

Paul VI outlines the consequences resulting from the original sin: the first is "God's enmity", the second is "the disorder in our human balance", the third is "the loss of immortality".¹⁴ This thesis will concentrate primarily on the second consequence.

THE BACKGROUND TO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF THE DOCTRINE

The difficulties surrounding... the doctrine of original sin are so many and at times so intractable that they certainly demand the radical rethinking of the doctrine that is going on in contemporary theology.¹⁵

The doctrine of original sin has always raised more questions than it resolved but, despite its problematic character, the concept of original sin remains important. However, as we saw in the introduction to this thesis, the doctrine itself has lost its relevancy for contemporary society.

Pope Paul VI, in his address to the original sin symposium, recognized that there is a need to reformulate all doctrines into "ideas and words that are more understandable

¹² Paul VI, "The Paschal Mystery", *The Pope Speaks*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 1977, p. 205.

¹³ Paul VI, "A Revision of the Rules on Indulgence" (Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*) in *The Pope Speaks*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1967, p. 126.

¹⁴ Paul VI, "The Experience of Christian Freedom", *The Pope Speaks*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1971, p. 6.

¹⁵ James P. Mackey, "New Thinking on Original Sin", *The Mystery of Sin and Forgiveness*, ed. Michael J. Taylor (Staten Island, NY: Society of St. Paul, 1971), p. 218.

to minds trained in present-day philosophical and scientific learning."¹⁶ In particular, he told the Symposium that it must work, using the new scientific theories, towards a "more modern definition and presentation of original sin, in the sense of better satisfying the demands of faith and reason as manifested and felt by men today."¹⁷ Problems with the classical formulations of the doctrine and its unsuitability for today's needs are therefore part of the reason why theologians began to reexamine the concept of original sin.

There were many other influences which helped to create the need for fresh evaluations of the doctrine. James L. Connor, in his article "Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches"¹⁸ outlines the major influences: the recent developments in the sciences, especially evolutionary theories but also developments in sociology, anthropology, and psychology; the new movements in philosophy; developments within theology itself, including the questioning of the concept of infallibility; and finally, the development of new historical-critical methods in biblical scholarship and the application of these methods to magisterial documents.¹⁹ G. Vandervelde points out that the questions posed by the doctrine of original sin become "especially urgent when a divergence is discerned between the modern view of man and the teaching of the Church".²⁰ The divergence may be seen to be merely a difference in "non-essential presuppositions, formulations or

¹⁶ Paul VI, "Original Sin and Modern Science", *The Pope Speaks*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1966, p. 232.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Connor, James L. "Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, June 1968, pp. 215-240.

¹⁹ Connor, "Contemporary Approaches", p. 215ff.

²⁰ G. Vandervelde, *Original Sin: Two Major Trends in Contemporary Roman Catholic Reinterpretation* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1975), p. 51.

thought-forms, but it may also concern a confrontation of inimical central views of man."²¹ And so, for all these reasons, the doctrine of original sin was subjected to intense scrutiny for a brief period during the 1960's. We shall briefly examine the relevant influences, in order to be aware of their impact on Schoonenberg's reinterpretation of the doctrine.

Scientific discoveries and developments in the various scientific disciplines have been amongst the primary causes of developments in the doctrine of original sin. According to James Mackey, "the most serious difficulties for the usual doctrine of original sin, the most insistent stimulus for re-thinking, come from the realm of secular science and thought."²² Evolutionary theory has, of course, had the most visible effect on the doctrine. As Connor points out, "despite the variety of conflicting explanations on the precise how of the evolutionary process, stubborn resistance on the part of the theologian to the fact of evolution now seems fruitless."²³ Evolution challenged the traditional perspective of human nature and raised important questions for the theologian: was Adam, endowed as the doctrine traditionally states with certain supernatural gifts, an exception to the rules? Is Adam and Eve's stature as the first people not denied by the theories of polygenism and polyphyletism (the simultaneous appearance of people in disparate groups)? If either is the true explanation for the origins of humanity, then how does one explain the unity of inheritance from Adam and the universality of any kind of original sin?²⁴ These questions present a serious difficulty for the doctrine of original sin, calling into doubt its traditional, literal interpretation of Genesis 3 and demanding, if the

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Mackey, "New Thinking on Original Sin", p. 219.

²³ Connor, "Contemporary Approaches", p. 216-217.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 217.

doctrine is to become scientifically reasonable and rational, radical new interpretations.

However, while science has of course challenged the doctrine on the basis of its belief in monogenism, "the challenge is at once more diffuse and more radical."²⁵ Mackey points out that science is interested in far more than just physical evolution; that scientific evidence "affects one's outlook on the evolution of the whole man, physically, mentally, culturally and, therefore, religiously."²⁶ Along with the concept of physical evolution, science made theology aware of the the evolution of societies and cultures, of ideas and beliefs.

Catholic theologians working on the reinterpretations of the doctrine of original sin were also motivated by far more than just "the date, number and location of our primeval progenitors",²⁷ according to Vandervelde. While the discoveries in science concerning the origins of humanity were the catalyst for the reinterpretations, they weren't the only influences on the theologians' work. Nor were the theologians simply concerned with adapting the doctrine to the new scientific theories. Vandervelde points out that "Schoonenberg, for example, is driven by the constant concern to *counteract* the tendency of reducing original sin to a necessary phase in the process of evolution."²⁸

New movements in philosophy also influenced the doctrine. Philosophy has always had a close relationship with theology and thus the modern developments of existentialism and personalism have brought a new approach to the problem of original sin quite different from the older scholastic approach. Whereas the scholastics worked out of their Aristotelian, cosmological tradition, modern philosophy began to emphasize the human,

²⁵ Mackey, "New Thinking on Original Sin", p. 220.

²⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 220-221.

²⁷ Vandervelde, *Original Sin*, p. 49.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 50.

to make the specifically human the centre of its approach. Schoonenberg in particular was influenced by the existential movement. Vandervelde says that "although Schoonenberg may be regarded as the pioneer of the situation theory of original sin, for the situation theory itself he is dependent on existentialistic thought-forms."²⁹ Connor also points to this influence on Schoonenberg. He says that it is important to understand Schoonenberg's definition of situation as "'being-situated' in the personalist philosophical sense."³⁰ For Schoonenberg, the situation is not merely exterior to a person but is actually part of what constitutes the person - their "existential".

Psychoanalytic theory also affected the church's understanding of human nature and therefore of the doctrine of original sin. The theologian Stephen Duffy says that "theology has employed the insights of Freudian psychoanalytic theory of the structure and development of the personality to better comprehend the phenomenon"³¹ that is expressed in the doctrine. This influence isn't very well known yet,³² however, since the other scientific influences have been more visible.

All of these influences have had a profound impact on the doctrine of original sin.

²⁹ Vandervelde, *Original Sin*, p. 58.

³⁰ Connor, "Contemporary Approaches", p. 229.

³¹ Stephen J. Duffy, "Our Hearts of Darkness: Original Sin Revisited", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 49, 1988, p. 611.

³² Vitz and Gartner acknowledge that the influence of psychoanalysis on theology has not always been welcome. They point out that there have been few notable exceptions to this, one example of such being Oskar Pfister, who "saw no necessary conflict between these two different ways of understanding the human condition" and who even saw the two "as being in fundamental harmony." But for the most part, Vitz and Gartner say that the "typical relationship between the two world views has been one of acknowledged suspicion and antagonism." [P. C. Vitz and J. Gartner, "Christianity and Psychoanalysis, Part I: Jesus as the Anti-Oedipus", *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Vol. 12, 1984, p. 4] They contend that psychoanalysis can make a valuable contribution to the contemporary understanding of original sin.

Mackey warns, however, that the "challenge from secular science and philosophy, of course, is never an unambiguous one for theology. It certainly can make theology see that the price it has to pay for saving the consistency of a past synthesis is too high in terms of realism. It could also tempt theology to reject some of the true insights of the past just because they were expressed in an idiom that is no longer current."³³

Reinterpretations of the doctrine of original sin were also influenced by developments in the theologies of other doctrines. Connor points out that, "since there is but one Word of God to man, incarnate in Jesus, theological reflection on any given facet of revelation is necessarily influenced by developments in other areas."³⁴ In the 1960's, emphasis on Christ's importance began a resurgence in theology and it is this Christocentric emphasis that has had a great influence on many of the new theologies of original sin, resulting often in a questioning of Adam's importance. The human relationship to Christ instead of to Adam now provides the meaning of sin and death for many theologians. This relationship is particularly important for Schoonenberg as we shall see.

There was another major influence on the evolution of the doctrine of original sin, according to Vandervelde. He argues that the belief in the infallibility of church teachings created a pressure situation that was exacerbated by the discoveries in science, the influence of contemporary society, and the new techniques used to examine the sources of the Church's teachings. He says that the "initially negative and defensive stance with respect to these issues by the magisterium" contributed to the pressure.³⁵ When the

³³ Mackey, "New Thinking on Original Sin", pp. 219-220.

³⁴ Connor, "Contemporary Approaches", p. 216.

³⁵ Vandervelde, *Original Sin*, p. 45.

magisterium finally began to accept some of the new discoveries,³⁶ "the question as to what remains of the infallible dogma after its mainstays collapse could not but burst into the open."³⁷

Vandervelde contends that the Second Vatican Council released some of the restraints on the doctrine, more by what it didn't say than by what it did, since the Council chose not to release a document that would have once again have narrowly defined the doctrine of original sin.³⁸ Also, Pope John XXIII, in his opening statement to the Council, told the assembly that he felt it was important that the doctrines of the church be restated in contemporary language, using contemporary methods, not to question the content of the doctrines, but so as to feel free to examine the ways in which the content has been communicated throughout the centuries.³⁹ Vandervelde says that, "although it has as its context a strong emphasis upon the certainty and the immutability of ecclesiastical doctrine, this official sanction of the distinction between the substance and the formulation of dogma, coming at so critical a point in the history of the Catholic Church, helped to clear away the insitutional obstacles that hampered the theological currents of reinterpretation."⁴⁰ This therefore opened the way for theologians to reexamine the doctrine in light of the new ways of understanding human nature given by

³⁶ Vandervelde cites the encyclicals, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943) and *Humani Generis* (1950) as two that opened or at least unlocked the door to the new influences. See Vandervelde, *Original Sin*, p. 45.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 46.

³⁹ "Pope John's Opening Speech to the Council", *The Documents of Vatican II, Introduction and Commentaries by Catholic Bishops and Experts: Responses by Protestant and Orthodox Scholars*, Walter M. Abbott, general editor, Joseph Gallagher, translator (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p.715.

⁴⁰ Vandervelde, *Original Sin*, p. 46.

other disciplines.

One of the strongest influences on the reinterpretations of the doctrine, however, came from the use of methods adapted from biblical scholarship. The relevancy of the historical-critical method first became obvious when it was applied to the traditional biblical passages used for the classical formulations of the doctrine: Genesis 3 and Romans 5: 12-21. This method shed new light on these passages. Scholars who used them were led to question the symbolic intent of the author and editors of Genesis and recognize that they were not interested in writing a scientific history but in attempting to explain a phenomenon that they all experienced: the inherent sinfulness of humanity. The new translations of Paul's writings revealed what many contemporary theologians agree was Paul's original emphasis: that the presence of sin in the world reveals humanity's great need for Christ's redemption.⁴¹

The consequent application of the historical-critical method to magisterial documents had a very liberating effect on many theologians. The main question when studying these documents became: "Within *his* intellectual, cultural, and historical context, what does the author mean to say and what is he *not* saying."⁴² Instead of viewing every statement in a magisterial document as a necessarily true pronouncement, theologians were now able to separate intent from presupposition and therefore to rationalize disregarding the statements that reflect a presupposition rather than an intent. For example, Connor says that scholars began to ask the following types of questions about the Council of Trent: "Did the Council of Trent define that Adam was a single, concrete historical person, who is the physical father of us all? Does Trent, therefore, define strict monogenism, to the exclusion of any kind of polygenism? Does 'progenatione, non

⁴¹ Connor, "Contemporary Approaches", pp. 219-221.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 222.

imitatione transfusam' confirm this monogenistic position?"⁴³ Schoonenberg is one of the theologians who answer these questions with a resounding no.

Schoonenberg proposes certain hermeneutical principles that can be applied to magisterial documents:⁴⁴ 1. for questions which were not being asked when the document was formulated, the text can give no direct answer; 2. interpretations of a text should rest on the answers it gives to the questions it does deal with; and 3. when statements are made against a certain position it should be recognized that these statements represent a defense and are therefore not the only definitions possible for the doctrine.⁴⁵ This last point is especially important because many of the documents, including the writings of Pope Paul VI and specifically his speech to the Symposium, seem to strictly prohibit theologies that attempt to incorporate polygenism, for example. By using these principles, theologians were able to circumvent the restrictions with a clear conscience.

Most theologians, to some degree at least, accept the results of these critical evaluations of the documents. Alszeghy and Flick state their belief that, "This approach to magisterial documents, following principles by and large borrowed from scriptural studies, is still far from being accepted unanimously and without reservation. But it has a respectable degree of probability, enough to allow the theologian to probe new

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁴⁴ We shall examine his application of these principles to the traditional doctrine of original sin later in this chapter.

⁴⁵ Piet Schoonenberg, "Some Remarks on the Present Discussion of Original Sin", *Information Documentation on the Conciliar Church*. January 28, 1967, pp. 8-10; *Man and Sin*, trans. Joseph Donceel (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), pp. 168-177.

directions."⁴⁶ Without this new method of interpreting the documents, speculation about the doctrine of original sin would be extremely limited. There is now, therefore, a degree of consensus that Trent and the other documents left many questions open about Adam's actual historicity, monogenism versus polygenism, the transmission of original sin, and other such questions.

All of these influences from both within and without theology make it clear why Roman Catholic theologians began to re-examine the doctrine during the decade following Vatican II. But Vandervelde says that it is still difficult to understand why the re-examination is an "almost exclusively *Roman Catholic*"⁴⁷ phenomenon. He argues that it can be traced to a basic difference in Catholic and Protestant doctrine. According to Vandervelde, the Protestants, following Augustine's example, see humanity as being deeply separated from God due to original sin, a separation that cannot simply be erased by baptism but that remains as the essential feature of humanity. Since Protestants don't see original sin as a separate doctrine but as an expression of human relatedness to God, Vandervelde says that is "less amenable to separate treatment and appears to be sheltered from the storm unleashed by the shifting view of human origins."⁴⁸ The Catholic doctrine of original sin, however, can be treated as a separate doctrine, "for it is a reality that as *sin* is taken away by baptism and that remains absent even in the presence of personal sins."⁴⁹ More to the point, the doctrine in Catholic theology, remains firmly tied to the Genesis account, dependent on the framework of the Adam and Eve story.

⁴⁶ Zoltan Alszegehy and Maurizio Flick. "An Evolutionary View of Original Sin", *Theology Digest*, Vol. XV, No. 3, Autumn 1967, p. 199.

⁴⁷ Vandervelde, *Original Sin*, p. 44.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Vandervelde maintains that it is therefore not surprising that advances in knowledge about the origin of humanity influenced and gave rise primarily to new Catholic theologies of the doctrine.⁵⁰

According to Vandervelde, "the shaking of the foundations of the doctrine of original sin has led to a deeper reflection on the problems and possible perspectives that inhere in the doctrine itself."⁵¹ Any analysis of the doctrine, therefore, brings one face to face with the root questions concerning humanity's relationship to God and to each other. Despite the problems with the traditional doctrine and its consequent decline in importance in the life of the church and of society, it nonetheless remains a vital statement about a continuing problem in human nature: the proclivity for violence and destruction.

THE SYMPOSIUM ON ORIGINAL SIN

The explosion of reinterpretations of the doctrine of original sin began in earnest after Pope Paul VI called the Symposium on Original Sin in 1966. The Symposium lasted for four days and was comprised of twelve of the Church's foremost theologians and scholars. Father Dhanis, the former rector of the Gregorian University, was the director of the Symposium, which had as its mandate, to report on the state of the question of original sin.⁵² Paul VI's purpose in calling the Symposium was primarily pastoral: he wanted the theologians to render the doctrine, through reference to contemporary science, more intelligible to the modern mind and faith. No public report from the

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 45.

⁵¹ *Ibid*.

⁵² James Reese gives a summary of the Symposium in his article, "Current Thinking on Original Sin", *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, Vol. CLVII, August 1967, pp. 92-100.

Symposium was ever issued but Paul VI's opening address to the participants was published⁵³ and several of the participants published articles on original sin within the following year.⁵⁴

In his speech, Paul VI recounts to the gathering the relevant passages on original sin from the Vatican II documents and then concludes that, "as these texts...make clear, the Second Vatican Council did not aim at any deepening or any rounding out of the Catholic doctrine on original sin, which had already been sufficiently declared and defined...at the Councils of Carthage (418), Orange (529) and Trent (1546). It simply wanted to confirm this doctrine and to apply it as required by its own aims which were mainly pastoral."⁵⁵ Paul VI acknowledges and praises the Symposium for having a different aim, that of bringing the doctrine up to date with the findings of the various sciences. He warns the participants, however, that they "should take the greatest possible care, in delving into the meaning of the biblical texts and spelling it out more clearly, to stick to the indispensable norms which come from the *analogia fidei*, from the

⁵³ Paul VI, "Original Sin and Modern Science" (Address to Symposium on Original Sin), *The Pope Speaks: The Church Documents Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1966, pp. 229-235.

⁵⁴ Zoltan Alszeghy and Maurizio Flick, "Il peccato originale in prospettiva evoluzionistica", *Gregorianum* 47, 1966 [published in English in synopsis as: "An Evolutionary View of Original Sin", *Theology Digest*, Vol. XV, No. 3, Autumn 1967, 197-202]; James P. Mackey, "Original Sin and Polygenism: The State of the Question", *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2, April 1967, pp. 99-114; E. F. O'Doherty, "Original Sin as Seen by a Catholic Psychologist", *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2, April 1967, pp. 115-125; Piet Schoonenberg, "Mysterium Iniquitatis", *Wort und Wahrheit*, 21, 1966, pp. 577-591 [published in English as: "Original Sin and Man's Situation", *The Mystery of Sin and Forgiveness*, ed. Michael J. Taylor (Staten Island, NY: Society of St. Paul, 1971), pp. 243-252]; and Alfred Vanneste, "De Theologie van de Eefzonde", *Collationes Brugenses et Gandavenses*, 12, 1966, pp. 289-312.

⁵⁵ Paul VI, "Original Sin and Modern Science", p. 232.

declarations and definitions of the above-mentioned Councils, and from the documents issued by the Apostolic See."⁵⁶ Only in this way, he maintains, could the theologians be true to the Church as it has always understood itself and to the rules of faith.

While Paul VI warns the theologians that they must be careful with the theory of evolution, he does not prohibit them from using it, stating instead that, "the theory of evolution will not seem acceptable to you whenever it is not decisively in accord with the immediate creation of each and every human soul by God, and whenever it does not regard as decisively important for the fate of mankind the disobedience of Adam, the universal first parent."⁵⁷ The theories of polygenism and polyphyletism do not meet with even limited acceptance however. Paul VI seems to strictly reject these theories when he tells the Symposium participants that they must "regard the explanations of original sin given by some modern authors as irreconcilable with genuine Catholic doctrine."⁵⁸ He is referring here specifically to theories that use "the undemonstrated hypothesis of polygenism"⁵⁹ to deny, however obscurely, that the universal sinfulness of humanity is a result of the disobedience of Adam, a real Adam who was the "first man". Some commentators deny that the Pope meant to discourage theological discussions on the subject, basing their belief on his use of the phrase "undemonstrated hypothesis". They take this phrase to mean that if the hypothesis can be demonstrated to be true then it is available for speculation.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Editorial comments, Maurice Flick, "Adam's Fall: The Task of Reinterpretation", *The Catholic World*, Vol. 205, No. 1,255, April 1967, p. 42.

Despite whatever restrictions the various magisterial documents were meant to impose on new formulations of the doctrine of original sin, new theologies proliferated, amongst them the situationist theology of Piet Schoonenberg. It is now time to examine his reinterpretation of the doctrine as the sin of the world.

PART TWO: SCHOONENBERG'S SIN OF THE WORLD THEOLOGY

Piet Schoonenberg, a Jesuit, is a former professor of dogmatic theology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen, in the Netherlands. He was trained in both philosophy and theology during his studies in Nijmegen and Maastricht.⁶¹ He is a prolific author who has published many articles and books on a wide variety of theological subjects⁶² in

⁶¹ Chukwudi Nwosah provides an excellent analysis of Schoonenberg's education and subsequent influences on his work. He says that it is of "vital importance for a just appreciation of his scholarly contribution to know his background: how he comprehends his theological profession, what path the evolution of his thought has followed, which influences are instrumental for this evolution". [Joseph Mary Chukwudi Nwosah, *Original Sin in Dialogue* (Rome: Academia Alfonsiana, 1990), p. 96.] For his analysis, see pp. 95-101 in the same work.

In Vandervelde's book on two major reinterpretations of original sin, however, Vandervelde contents himself with analyzing the philosophical influences on Schoonenberg's theology of the sin of the world. See G. Vandervelde, *Original Sin: Two Major Trends in Contemporary Roman Catholic Reinterpretation* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1975), pp. 58-84.

For Schoonenberg's own thoughts on his theological enterprise, see: Piet Schoonenberg, "The Theologian's Calling, Freedom, and Constraint", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 19, Spring 1982, pp. 92-118.

⁶² For a sample of his variety, see the following: "Baptism with the Holy Spirit" (trans. H. Hoskins), *Experience of the Spirit*, ed. P. Huizing (1976), pp. 20-37; "God as Person(al)", *A Personal God?*, ed. E. Schillebeeckx and Bas van Iersel (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), pp. 80-93; "Notes of a Systematic Theologian", *Theology, Exegesis, and Proclamation*, Concilium, Vol. 70 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), pp. 90-97; "The Transcendence of God: Part I", *Transcendence and Immanence*, Vol. 1, ed. Joseph Armenti (St. Meinrad, IND: Abbey Press, 1972), pp. 157-165 and "From Transcendence to Immanence: Part II", *The Papin Festschrift*, Vol. 2, ed. Joseph Armenti (Villanova, PA: Villanova University Press, 1976), pp. 273-282; "Trinity - The Consummated Covenant: Theses on the Doctrine of the Trinitarian God", *Sciences Religieuses/Studies in Religion*,

several languages⁶³.

Schoonenberg explored the doctrine of original sin primarily during the early 1960's. Prior to this time, he had concentrated on the task and methods of theology and on applying them to the fundamentals of the faith.⁶⁴ His study during the sixties of

Vol. 5, No. 2, Autumn 1975/76, pp. 111-116; and "Western Scholasticism and a Theology of Prayer", *Geist und Erkenntnis*, ed. K. Mácha (1985), pp. 175-196.

⁶³ Most of Schoonenberg's writings have been translated into English, as well as German, French, and Italian. His primary works in English translation on the subject of original sin are: *Man and Sin: A Theological View*, trans. Joseph Donceel (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965); "Original Sin and Man's Situation", *The Mystery of Sin and Forgiveness*, ed. Michael J. Taylor (Staten Island, NY: Society of St. Paul, 1971), pp. 243-252; "Sin: I. Sin and Guilt", *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. VI, ed. Karl Rahner, et al (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 87-92; and "Some Remarks on the Present Discussion of Original Sin", *Information Documentation on the Counciliar Church*, Jan. 28, 1967, pp. 8-10.

Schoonenberg was also one of the authors of the new Dutch Catechism [Piet Schoonenberg et al (Higher Catechetical Institute at Nijmegen), *A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults* (with *The Supplement to A New Catechism* by Edouard Dhanis and Jan Visser), trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970)]. This catechism's section on original sin shows signs of having been influenced by Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology, and it was this aspect of the catechism which prompted the lengthiest corrections by the Commission of Cardinals appointed to review it. I shall examine this controversy in Chapter Three.

Since Schoonenberg's theories on the sin of the world have been adequately translated, we shall use only the English translations for this thesis. Justification for this choice is found in Edward P. Callens' comment that the ideas expressed in *Man and Sin*, the English version of *Het Geloof van ons doopsel, Part IV: De macht der zonde* "are substantially identical with the original Dutch volume." [Callens in Vanneste, *The Dogma of Original Sin*, trans. Edward P. Callens (Brussels: Vander, 1975), p. 175.] Moreover, Schoonenberg himself says, in the Preface to his book, *Covenant and Creation*, that *Man and Sin* contains "a more precise account concerning the relation between the 'sin of the world' and original sin" than does the Dutch original. [*Covenant and Creation* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. viii.]

Since *Man and Sin* contains the "fundamental exposition" of Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology [Chukwudi Nwosah, *Original Sin in Dialogue*, p. 225], this work will be the primary source for this exposition of Schoonenberg's theology.

⁶⁴ According to Chukwudi Nwosah, the first three volumes in *Het geloof van ons doopsel* (The faith of our baptism) grew out of this period in Schoonenberg's thought.

evolutionary theory gave rise to two books, *Man and Sin*,⁶⁵ and *God's World in the Making*.⁶⁶ Partially as a response to the Christological emphasis in his sin of the world theology,⁶⁷ Schoonenberg subsequently focused on detailing his Christology.⁶⁸

[Chukwudi Nwosah, *Original Sin in Dialogue*, p. 98.] Schoonenberg's book, *Covenant and Creation* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968) is a selection from the first two volumes of *Het geloof van ons doopsel*.

⁶⁵ In his Introduction to the Italian translation of *De macht der Zonde*, Zoltan Alszegehy points out that the number of languages into which the book has been translated highlights the respect Schoonenberg's theology has earned. ["Introduction" to Piet Schoonenberg, *La potenza del peccato*, *Giornale di Theologia*, 40, trans. Mario Sassatelli (Brescia: Editrice Queriniana, 1970), p. 9.] Chukwudi Nwosah makes a similar assessment, adding that the work's inclusion in the prestigious *Mysterium salutis* series "is equally demonstrative of the notable renown it acquired." [Chukwudi Nwosah, *Original Sin in Dialogue*, p. 225.]

Schoonenberg's *De macht der Zonde*, Part IV of *Het geloof van ons doopsel* (Malmberg: 's-Hertogenbosch, 1962) has been translated into four languages: English [2 editions: *Man and Sin: A Theological Investigation*, trans. Joseph Donceel (London: Sheed and Ward, 1965 and Notre Dame, IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965 and 1966)]; French [also 2 editions: *L'homme et le péché*, trans. Michel Martron (Tours: Mame 1967) and *L'homme pécheur appelé au salut* in *Mysterium salutis: Dogmatique de l'histoire du salut* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1970)]; German [*Theologie der Sünde*, trans. Hugo Zulauf (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1966)]; and the Italian quoted above.

⁶⁶ Schoonenberg makes a brief reference to original sin in this book, when he is analyzing the Genesis passages from the viewpoint that Adam stands for "Everyman" and reviews the teachings of the church about original sin. [Piet Schoonenberg, *God's World in the Making* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1964), pp. 83-85.] In this book, he makes no advances in his sin of the world theology but simply repeats what is said at greater length in his main work on the subject, *Man and Sin*.

God's World in the Making is a valuable book, however, since it reviews evolutionary theology as well as practical theology. For example, Schoonenberg proposes a theology of work, the traditional interpretation of which, as he points out, was influenced by the doctrine of original sin which saw work as a punishment for sin. [pp. 169-174]

⁶⁷ In *Man and Sin*, Schoonenberg argues that the presence of Christ in the world is the proof we need that there is sin in the world. [Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 124.] Schoonenberg ends the book with the same Christological focus: "Whatever has been said about sin is intended as a message about the perdition which stands in the way of our bond of love with God in Christ and which is overcome by God's love in the same Christ."

RATIONALE

Schoonenberg studied the doctrine of original sin and developed his own interpretation of it because he is convinced that it still has relevance for our society. Besides revealing humanity's need for Christ, the doctrine is also a profound expression of the depths of evil in humanity. Schoonenberg finds the truest meaning of the doctrine in how this evil is mediated through society, in the fact that "it comes to us from others, thus besetting our existence from the very start."⁶⁹ Therefore, he uses the phrase "original sin" to refer to the "sinful state which affects man from his origin."⁷⁰

Schoonenberg's difficulty with the traditional doctrine lies partially in that he thinks that any concept of innate evil forces us to conclude that sin is a part of creation thus raising insurmountable questions about the goodness of God's creation. Because he rejects the idea that God would create us with an innate predilection for evil, Schoonenberg locates sin "in a historic decision and interpret[s] original sin as the fact of being-in-situation as a result of such a decision."⁷¹

Schoonenberg acknowledges that "Both Scripture and the statements of the magisterium of the church have emphasized human solidarity with respect to sin";⁷² the latter having done so in the doctrine of original sin. But he sees a major weakness in their

[*Ibid*, p. 199.]

⁶⁸ Schoonenberg's work, *His is een God van Mensen* (Malmberg: 's-Hertogenbosch, 1969), translated as *The Christ: A Study of the God-man Relationship in the Whole of Creation and in Jesus Christ*, trans. Della Couling (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), grew out of this focus.

⁶⁹ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 198.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 124.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 198.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 98.

teaching of the doctrine, since, "as that dogma is generally presented, solidarity does not come much to the fore in it. It affirms a mysterious bond between each individual child and the first father of the race, while the sins of his own parents and of his environment and the great sinful decisions of the past generations have no share in it."⁷³ It is precisely this lack that Schoonenberg intends to fill with his reinterpretation of the doctrine. He thinks that it is important that the doctrine reflect more than just the limited definition given by the magisterium, since otherwise, "modern man is inclined to relegate it to the realm of mythology."⁷⁴

Schoonenberg decided against merely elaborating the traditional doctrine of original sin for his theology because "it looks as if for centuries the classic doctrine of original sin has been at a dead point".⁷⁵ He thinks that it is a worthwhile project to integrate the discoveries of science into the doctrine. For example, to question whether "our whole conception of the world urgently inquires whether the extraordinary importance which the classic doctrine attributes to the chronologically first man is really deserved, nay, whether we may speak of one first ancestor of the human race at all."⁷⁶

Another major element in the need for the reinterpretation of the doctrine of original sin can be found in our understanding of the world. Schoonenberg reminds us

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* It is important to note that Schoonenberg doesn't accept the Adamic story as literal truth. He contends that the story of Adam was written to help people understand their sinfulness and says that it is only in the writings of Paul that we see Adam spoken of as an actual historical person and thus as having had a determining influence on the rest of humanity. [*Man and Sin*, p. viii.] Schoonenberg reminds us that "God's revelation does not give us a doctrine replete with factual information, but a message telling us what God wishes to be for us, how we stand before him, and what he allows us to be for him." [*Ibid*, p. 199.]

⁷⁵ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 177.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 177.

that "Roughly speaking, the difference between our present view of the world and of man and that which prevailed until quite recently is the difference between an evolutionary or historical picture and a static picture."⁷⁷ He gives a broad outline of the implications of both views for the doctrine of original sin, concluding that the static view gives a too simplistic interpretation of the world, ignoring all the developments for good and especially those for evil since the first sin. For all these reasons, Schoonenberg decided to work out a new theology that could better account for the effects of sin in the world.

METHODOLOGY

Theology, Schoonenberg says in his article, "The Theologian's Calling, Freedom, and Constraint",⁷⁸ has "developed into an institution which criticizes doctrinal formulations".⁷⁹ He acknowledges that for many, the contemporary theologians "are assailants or destructive critics of doctrine."⁸⁰ Nonetheless, he highly values this critical function of theology because he is convinced that theologians must be able "to discuss the history of an established formulation in such a way that perhaps the great value contained in it can once again become a reality for modern men and women."⁸¹

Schoonenberg contends that theology is a historically situated enterprise. According to Schoonenberg, "theologians who thought that they wrote for all times show, through that very fact, that they were historically conditioned. They belong to that stage

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 192.

⁷⁸ Piet Schoonenberg, "The Theologian's Calling, Freedom, and Constraint" (trans. Lance Nadeau), *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Spring 1982, pp. 92-118.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 101.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 116.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, pp. 116-117.

of history in which man was not at all or not sufficiently aware of his own historicity."⁸² Now, however, theologians have become aware that they write theology within the context of their own times. Therefore, they "try to remain faithful to the message of salvation addressed to all times precisely by translating it for this, our own time."⁸³

Schoonenberg makes it very clear that he uses this concept of the theological enterprise himself, particularly with regard to the doctrine of original sin.⁸⁴ It has led him to propose a new interpretation of the traditional doctrine, but he is convinced that his reason for doing so justifies the method he had to use: that it is important to find the relevance of the doctrine of original sin using our knowledge of our world and ourselves. Schoonenberg emphasizes that he has "endeavoured to express the divine message of salvation and perdition in closer connection with our modern picture of the world and of man."⁸⁵

Schoonenberg uses the historical-critical methods developed by biblical scholars to analyze the teachings of the church about original sin and he takes his authority for his reinterpretation from these methods. Schoonenberg takes this approach because he wants to show that all pronouncements need to be measured in light of the times in which they were made. He points out that, "when [man] acts, he acts in a certain situation, when he

⁸² Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 192.

⁸³ *Ibid.* Schoonenberg is aware that this position is not without its critics. In his article, "The Theologian's Calling, Freedom, and Constraint", Schoonenberg admits that for many, "'modern theologians' are assailants or destructive critics of doctrine." Despite this criticism, Schoonenberg says that it is important that they continue with their enterprise since there is a great need "to discuss the history of an established formulation in such a way that perhaps the great value contained in it can once again become a reality for modern men and women." ["The Theologian's Calling, Freedom, and Constraint", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Spring 1982, pp. 116-117.]

⁸⁴ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 192.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

speaks, he speaks in a certain situation. Human speaking is situated speaking."⁸⁶ Schoonenberg emphasizes that "This is true also when Scripture speaks or the magisterium, or Christ himself, since he has decided that he and his church should be fully human, barring only sin."⁸⁷

Since all human speech grows out of its situation, "it is tied to the language possibilities, the imagery, and the conceptual framework available in certain circumstances, to the problems raised and the presuppositions accepted as a matter of course in a certain situation."⁸⁸ Schoonenberg says that the last two are particularly important. He concludes by saying that "Hence no utterance may be *directly* presented as a reply to questions which it did not intend to answer, for it is possible that for questions which interest us now a statement given earlier may have to be widened or restricted."⁸⁹

Schoonenberg acknowledges that some presuppositions are integral to a statement. But he says we need to discover what presuppositions are operating and then judge where they come from and how important they are to the statement before accepting them. Sometimes even an integral presupposition can be discovered to be false, which then shows the statement itself to be false. However, if only non-integral presuppositions are proved to be not true, "the statement itself is not invalidated, but we realize that it can be formulated more exactly."⁹⁰

The logical result of this kind of thinking is that, "the predication and even the official doctrinal teaching of the church are no exceptions to this rule; they, too, imply

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 169.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

non-essential presuppositions."⁹¹ For example, "what Paul says about the relation between masters and slaves, and even about the relation between husband and wife, presupposes a sociological structure which is no longer ours."⁹² Therefore we may adapt his sayings to our own situations. Needless to say, Schoonenberg concludes that "we may apply these remarks to some points of the doctrinal statements about original sin" and proceeds to do so.⁹³

Schoonenberg reveals his image of the church and of its authority to teach when he says that "the church as a whole, including her leaders, stands like somebody who listens and learns before God's revelation, which ended with Christ and the apostles, but continues to speak to us through Scripture. On the other hand, that learning and

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁹³ *Ibid.* Validation for Schoonenberg's approach is found in a speech by Cardinal Döpfner, that Schoonenberg quotes in his article, "The Theologian's Calling, Freedom, and Constraint". Cardinal Döpfner states that "all the dogmas in the strict sense of the word... call for interpretation. Although they also contain, with the help of the Holy Spirit a 'timeless' truth, i.e., an objectively valid truth for all times, they still present this truth in a time-bound language. Dogmas are always statements which are historically determined in a conceptual system; they are tied to a particular time and a particular way of thinking. Dogmas come to be in a concrete situation because of a specific set of causes. Doctrinal statements, therefore, always express the truth which is their object in an inadequate and fragmentary way which, nonetheless, is valid from a specific perspective, namely the perspective of a certain group of hearers. In order to understand a doctrinal truth, one must be familiar with these circumstances. Insofar as these circumstances have changed, the context of a certain dogma no longer exists for us. The relativity of such magisterial statements in a certain situation of course does not mean that they are true only in this situation. Their meaning always exceeds the limitations of the present and gives us an insight into an enduring, irrefutable truth of thought. Perhaps only a later time will discover that such an everlasting truth in fact describes only one narrow view of the truth. Although this view may later be called into question, it will not lose its validity; it should be included in a broader and larger coherence of faith's truths." [Cardinal Döpfner, "Das Bleibende und Sichwandelnde im Priestertum", *Herder Korrespondenz*, Vol. 23, 1969, pp. 369-370 in Schoonenberg, "The Theologian's Calling, Freedom, and Constraint", pp. 104-105.]

listening attitude is an active attitude, even among the faithful, as in its contact with the contemporary world, it discovers in a new way the richness of revelation."⁹⁴ Schoonenberg does not deny the need for the teaching authority of the church and the need for theologians to respect it. He says that "the shepherds of the church, the bishops around the pope, provide an irreplaceable guidance, so that their *teaching authority* is the clearest realization of the assistance of the Holy Spirit promised to the whole church."⁹⁵ He acknowledges that "hence, in the matter under investigation, as for every point of revelation, theology must needs listen to the voice of that teaching authority. Like all the faithful the theologians must read Scripture within the compass of the church, and hence, under the guidance of her teaching authority."⁹⁶

Schoonenberg continues, detailing how the teaching authority of the church is manifested and concluding that "The *fullness* of what the teaching authority proposes undoubtedly lies in what is proposed by the *magisterium ordinarius*. On the other hand, it is difficult to determine that fullness as long as there are no statements of the *magisterium extraordinarius*."⁹⁷ He defines the latter as the work of the church Councils or the special pronouncements of the popes. These "especially help us to *clarify* our views, to distinguish that which is contained in God's revealing word from that which is not."⁹⁸

Schoonenberg speaks also of the intermediary pronouncements which issue from local Synods or through the popes' letters. He says that the church's magisterium has

⁹⁴ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, pp. 157-158.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 158.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

used all these types of teachings to expand its doctrine of original sin, and he proceeds to an analysis of them, in order to ascertain "to what extent its authority bids us to believe it."⁹⁹ This endeavour is important for Schoonenberg's project, since it is necessary for him to find the magisterium's teaching to be not authoritative in detail in order for him to be free to develop his alternative interpretation of how the original sin was transmitted in humanity.

Schoonenberg says that before he begins to discuss what in the magisterium's teaching is authoritative and what is left open for theologians to work with, it is first very important for both the magisterium itself and those who are under it to remember that "what matters is not to cling to a formula, but to be faithful to a message."¹⁰⁰ He says that "We do not need a formula which may be repeated mechanically, but a message of salvation, with everything it includes (in the present case a message of doom), which must be announced amidst the changing circumstances of human history."¹⁰¹ This is the reason why it is so important to analyze Scripture and ecclesiastical texts from the perspective of their original community: "In that way we shall understand what the magisterium has intended to say as distinct from its manner of saying it, which may have been determined by the situation and may need correction if we want to be faithful to the message."¹⁰²

DEFINITIONS

Schoonenberg defines sin through an analysis of the roots of the biblical use of the

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 168.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, pp. 168-169.

term. He points out that the original meaning of the Hebrew and Greek verbs used most commonly for sin in the Old Testament meant to "miss", as in "we can miss our goal or the right path."¹⁰³ This is a meaning that is prior to morality. Another word used for sin, the Hebrew for iniquity, refers to a troubled situation, one where something is amiss. Yet another word, "pesa", meaning transgression, refers more specifically to rebelliousness and hostility towards God and one's neighbour.

The concept of sin evolved until, in the New Testament, the use of the singular for sin took on a new meaning: "'The sin' is seen as belonging more to the inner man than 'the sins' or 'the transgressions'; it becomes also a power which rules over the whole of mankind. ...Thus, sin has won a ruling position, as further elaborated in Romans. It 'has entered the world' (Rom.v.12); we might say that sin has appeared upon the stage of the world."¹⁰⁴ Sin is therefore both interior to humanity and exterior to it, since sin is in both the individual and the world.

Sin, according to Schoonenberg, has gone out of fashion in our secular century, "it has no... place in modern thought. No doubt the optimism of the 19th century, which saw industrial and social progress mainly as an enchanting future, has given way to an experience of the 'human condition' and human failure which has become a sort of obsession in philosophy and above all in the novel, the theatre and the cinema."¹⁰⁵ He points out that even the word 'sin' itself is rarely used and its use seems to be deliberately avoided by our culture. One of the reasons for this "is a reaction against a rationalistic, moralistic and legalistic notion of sin in a seemingly recent past."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 87.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*.

Another reason lies in the equation of sin with the relationship with God. Schoonenberg points out that, as a result of this, the concept of sin is dependent on the idea of God currently popular. He acknowledges that "men today react with some justification against the notion of sin in earlier generations, which defined it as 'a deliberate transgression of the law of God'."¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the concepts of both sin and God must be modified if sin is to have any relevant meaning for our time. If God is seen as "a civil or ecclesiastical lawgiver" whose law is externally imposed, then the definition of sin as disobedience will necessarily result.¹⁰⁸ But since for Schoonenberg, God's law is love, love and respect for all of God's creation, sin consists in offenses against one's neighbour as well as God. God is then far more than just a "lawgiver", for Schoonenberg, and sin is more than disobedience against this lawgiver; it is an offence against creation, against humanity itself. Schoonenberg therefore praises the Bible for pointing out that sin is more than idolatry, "but also injustice, harshness, exploitation of [one's] fellows."¹⁰⁹ He is glad that we are sensitized to these sins now, since he feels that it is vitally important to acknowledge that sin is never only against God, but always against the self or others. Schoonenberg emphasizes that "the offence to God must be situated where it really is: God himself is offended in man when we disregard God's summons to love. Just as love of God and man is a unity, so too sin is against both."¹¹⁰ Thus, Schoonenberg's definition of sin takes full account of the sinfulness of child abuse.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 88. It is interesting to note that, as we have seen, Pope John Paul II defines it in precisely this manner. See his encyclical, "Dominum et Vivificantum" in *Origins*, Vol. 16, No. 4, June 12, 1986, p. 87.

¹⁰⁸ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 88.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*.

Schoonenberg explicitly equates sin with evil. In his chapter, "Analogy of Sin and Physical Evil" in *Man and Sin*, he says that "Sin is evil, but there is other evil beside sin."¹¹¹ He makes a clear distinction between physical evil and human evil: "Physical evil may be called infrahuman. Deformity, pain, illness are some of its most obvious forms. It occurs also in man, but it may be distinguished from the evil which proceeds from him as a person and determines him as a person, evil in the moral order. That moral evil is the real 'malum humanum' (human evil) deriving from an 'actus humanus' (human act)."¹¹² Speaking of the "the widespread presence in [nature] of disorder, failure, deformation and deformity, illness, decay, death and violence", Schoonenberg says that "we are developing an ever-sharper eye for all that which is really wrong in all this, for the disorders which should not be present, and also for the degrees in that evil."¹¹³

Schoonenberg contends that some destructiveness is to be expected as a natural part of living in an evolving world where the earth's crust is still settling and causing normal havoc. It is natural for some creatures to die that others may live and have room to live, and for animals, including humans, to eat plants and other animals in order to live. Schoonenberg argues, however, that this type of destructiveness is radically different from that which originates from human beings themselves. Whereas, "physical evil is the absence of some perfection required by the nature of a being or of an activity, etc.",¹¹⁴ moral evil represents a choice, whether it be to rebel against God, or to harm one's neighbour: "Hence, in their very evilness physical evil and sin differ from each other not only through their origin but also through their depth, duration and destructive

¹¹¹ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 40.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 41.

¹¹³ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 42.

tendencies."¹¹⁵

Schoonenberg sees the world as being "thoroughly drenched in evil."¹¹⁶ He focuses on the negative environment that is created for us by others' sins¹¹⁷ because he is convinced that, "as in the life of one person, so in that of the whole of humanity, the choice of good or of evil assumes an increasingly manifest shape."¹¹⁸ Human evil, then, is identical with sin, according to Schoonenberg.

SCHOONENBERG'S ANALYSIS OF THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

In his main work on the subject of original sin, *Man and Sin*, Schoonenberg analyzes the doctrine of original sin as revealed through Scripture, tradition, and the teaching of the magisterium. We shall examine Schoonenberg's analysis insofar as it is relevant to the parts of his theology that are particularly applicable to the problem of child abuse.

Schoonenberg begins with the Scripture passages that are commonly used for the doctrine of original sin, examining the use of the word "Adam". He acknowledges that ancient translations have always translated the Hebrew term as a personal name, but says that exegetes now agree that the word refers to "man in general" and that a better translation is therefore not of Adam as a name for a specific person, but as "the man".¹¹⁹ For Schoonenberg, "this is another instance of the literary figure known as 'corporate personality'. The main character represents the whole human race, and he is also

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 43.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 112.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 108.

¹¹⁹ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 125.

described as the common ancestor of humanity, since before him 'there were no men yet' (Gen.ii.5) and his wife is 'the mother of all that lives' (Gen.iii.20)."¹²⁰ Schoonenberg does acknowledge that, while the witness of Genesis is for Adam as "everyman", the Scriptures taken as a whole, see him as a single person who, because of his sin, has lost something for the rest of humanity.

When Schoonenberg analyzes the New Testament passages, especially those in Romans, that speak of Adam and of sin beginning with him, he questions whether it was actually Paul's intent to speak of an originating sin. Schoonenberg applies a detailed analysis of the language used by Paul to conclude that Paul did not see Adam's sin as being the only one that influenced humanity towards sinfulness, but simply as the first and decisive influence, which created a lasting bond with all of humanity. Moreover, Schoonenberg contends that "If we wish to put it in modern terminology, the Apostle takes original sin into account only in so far as it expresses itself in personal sins; the situation of mere original sin has not yet come to life for him."¹²¹ Schoonenberg says, therefore, that for Paul, sin is something present in humanity, an attitude or situation that exists prior to any action.¹²²

Schoonenberg sees a rather slow evolution in the early church's thinking about original sin. For a long period, only adults were thought to be in need of baptism. Gradually, however, baptism began to be given to children, a practise that Schoonenberg attributed to "the introduction of a distinction between personal sin and original sin."¹²³ He cites texts from the early Church Fathers which point to a belief that something

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 126.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p. 139.

¹²² *Ibid*, p. 13.

¹²³ *Ibid*, p. 140.

existed even in infants which needed to be redeemed through baptism.

Schoonenberg analyzes Augustine's enormous contribution to the doctrine of original sin, stating that "Augustine is the only one who fully opens a perspective upon original sin in itself."¹²⁴ He acknowledges Augustine's influence on the Church's traditional doctrine, pointing out that Augustine's conception of original sin remained substantially unchanged throughout the later theologizing on the doctrine.

Schoonenberg analyzes various parts of the canons of the Council of Trent to see what is essential in the pronouncements and what is conditional and therefore permissible to modify. One example of his analysis that is important for Schoonenberg's own theory, deals with Trent's statement in Canon 3 about how "original sin is *of* the subject and exists *in* the subject as a state which belongs *properly* to him".¹²⁵ Schoonenberg says that Trent does not condemn those who see original sin coming from the environment, because it wasn't dealing with that question at all. He acknowledges that some might feel that environmental transmission is too extrinsic an explanation of original sin and one which is, moreover, incapable of explaining how original sin's effect could reach into the afterlife. But Schoonenberg is convinced that "when theologians conceive the fact of being 'situated' as an inner determination and describe original sin in that way, they say only what Trent itself teaches, at least concerning the relation between original sin and its bearer."¹²⁶

Another example of a pronouncement that Schoonenberg argues is open to reinterpretation is that of the universality of original sin. He questions whether Trent's statement that original sin is universal is an absolute statement, especially in light of its

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 151.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 173.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 173.

stated belief that the Virgin Mary was exempt from it. He admits that both Trent and the teachings of the magisterium believe that original sin is universal because of the fall. But Schoonenberg argues that since no one can deny that Eve was also created without sin, "should somebody conceive the fall differently—for instance, as a gradual development—his opinion cannot be rejected because of the universality of original sin as taught by Trent (or because of its sources in Romans v)."¹²⁷ He does acknowledge that the theory could be rejected for clashing with other parts of the statements about original sin, but he emphasizes that a theory of the gradual development of original sin "is *not* opposed, at least not directly opposed, to the universality of original sin, since that universality is always conceived as a *universality following upon the fall*."¹²⁸

Schoonenberg tackles the issue of how Trent and the church see original sin as being inherited. He agrees that Trent did stress that the stain is transmitted through propagation and not imitation but says that, in the canon, while, "some words have a rather physical connotation, Trent does not pronounce itself for a physical influence, hence for a direct causality of the act of procreation."¹²⁹ Procreation is only mentioned, according to Schoonenberg, "in order to establish the presence of original sin previous to any influence of bad examples or to any personal decision", to emphasize that "man starts his existence with it."¹³⁰ Schoonenberg thus concludes that, while several Scholastic authors do offer differing opinions, the Council of Trent itself does not explicitly reject the idea that original sin might be historically mediated since it does speak

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 174.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*.

directly about the "causal connection" between original sin and procreation.¹³¹

Schoonenberg takes exception to the belief that Adam was the sole source for original sin. He explains that Trent at no point makes any statement to the effect that it was Adam's and only his, not Eve's, first sin, which caused original sin. He admits that Trent only mentions Adam and no others, but he says that Trent did not address the question of how many human beings were alive at the time. Therefore, Schoonenberg contends that, "it remains possible that the influence of the one first ancestor is only a way of speaking or a presupposition, which may be dissociated from the doctrine that the children come into the world under sin and in need of redemption."¹³²

Schoonenberg deals with Trent's use of the words "origine unum" in the third canon by saying that these words were primarily used to reject a heresy that believed that Adam's sin was the only sin with reality and isn't real in anyone after him. He says that other theologians agree that "one in origin" is not necessarily in conflict with the idea that other ancestors contributed to the development of original sin.¹³³ He admits that "an influence of more than one first ancestor—that is, polygenism—is not envisaged by the Fathers of Trent."¹³⁴ However, because they weren't addressing the question of polygenism, their answer cannot be considered to be definitive. Schoonenberg points out that Pius XII's encyclical, *Humani Generis*, makes no mention of the "origine unum", and says only that, at this time, it is not clear in what way polygenism and the doctrine of original sin can be reconciled, not that they can never be reconciled. Schoonenberg concludes that "we do not find in Trent any direct reason for making monogenism a

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 174-175.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 175.

doctrine of faith"¹³⁵ and that no further statements of the church make it a doctrine either. While acknowledging that it is possible that polygenism will one day be found to be irreconcilable with the doctrine of original sin, Schoonenberg says that "it is also possible that monogenism will turn out not to be an essential element of the doctrine of original sin."¹³⁶ However, since monogenism is so closely linked with the church's traditional teaching on original sin, the onus is on theologians to prove that monogenism is not essential, not the other way around.

Schoonenberg's emphasis on the historically-conditioned nature of Scripture, the teachings of the church, and theology itself is not surprisingly repeated in his sin of the world theology. We will now begin our examination of Schoonenberg's theory.

THE HISTORY OF SIN IN THE WORLD

Schoonenberg's primary focus is on the historical nature of humanity.¹³⁷ He contends that "it is the nature of man to be a person who programmes and constructs himself in history."¹³⁸ For Schoonenberg, the question of good and evil in human

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 177.

¹³⁷ Schoonenberg gives an excellent analysis of the historical character of humanity in his book, *God's World in the Making*, pp. 61-105. He repeats his concept of the situatedness of humanity without expressly linking it to original sin when he says that, "every man begins and continues his life within the frame of a definite situation created by the decisions of his ancestors and his contemporaries." [p. 63] Schoonenberg argues, in this book, that this situatedness of humanity makes it "possible to establish certain laws that operate in human history, at least when we consider it on a large scale" and that "we can observe progress in *being-human* within history, although the ascending line... is interrupted now and then by retrogressions and there are many developments in dead-end directions." [*Ibid.*]

¹³⁸ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 88. Schoonenberg does not exempt Jesus from this. In *The Christ*, he points out that "Jesus is in history, he is inserted in it, he is

nature cannot be studied in isolation, but must remain within the context of this history. He points to the presence of evil in the world since the beginning of history, saying that:

When the human race starts to organize its existence and to express it in culture—that is, at that important threshold of human history which is the start of the Neolithic era—the sins against fellow man and against God come to the fore. The great agricultural cultures especially show us war, plunder, exploitation of the vanquished, slavery, and oppression of the lower classes connected with their political and social organization.¹³⁹

Schoonenberg says that "in this history of the actions which constitute the sin of the world sin continuously manifests its deepest nature."¹⁴⁰

Schoonenberg follows an evolutionary model. The first sin, therefore, would have occurred as part of the evolution of human beings. Schoonenberg wonders whether, "God may have started bestowing his grace upon man when the latter was still standing upon an incredibly low level of consciousness and of responsibility."¹⁴¹ In this view, sin occurs at first on a basically unconscious level: "But acceptance and refusal, faith and sin, become more explicit; moreover they turn more and more explicitly against God and grace, until they finally reject Christ himself."¹⁴² Schoonenberg questions, therefore, whether the "chronologically first sin of mankind was of decisive importance in this

'historical.' This means that he is defined by our history, but also himself has his history, makes his own history and thus defines ours. [p. 105] Furthermore, "Jesus' existence is carried out in a situation which is defined by history. Historical decisions formed his people with their own language, culture, and religion. His family itself has its pre-history, which is recalled by the names in his genealogical tree. For Jesus this situation makes some things possible and others impossible during his life and even ever since his origin; for his history changes and thus Jesus' possibilities also change during his life. [p. 106]

¹³⁹ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 108.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 102.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 195.

¹⁴² *Ibid*.

development" and his response is that perhaps its only importance lies in it being the "anonymous start of a series."¹⁴³

Therefore, for Schoonenberg, sin evolved throughout history. This is a more difficult concept than the one which underlies the traditional doctrine of original sin where, "it was easier and simpler to point out moral *guilt* in a conception of the world and of man which practically ignored all growth and development. For in such a conception sin is the rejection of existing norms by a free human being who could equally well have accepted them."¹⁴⁴ Schoonenberg, however, cannot accept that the world is a "ready-made reality", since "man, even adult man, remains unfinished during his life on earth."¹⁴⁵ According to Schoonenberg, God did not finish the creation of the world with the making of Adam and Eve. Instead, "God is at all times the Creator of a world in the making. His creative activity does not stop with the first foundations; it continues to complete the world."¹⁴⁶ Paradise is therefore not to be found at the beginning of

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* In *Man and Sin*, Schoonenberg states a theory that he later moderated in subsequent articles: that the rejection of Christ was the real fall in human history. Before Christ's crucifixion, there was still a possibility of being born without encountering the historical effects of Adam's sin (Schoonenberg points out that this explains how Mary was born without sin). But after the crucifixion, the world was fixed in sin, a situation that none can escape. Schoonenberg says that "those who have crucified the Lord have brought about a situation of doom for the whole world, not because some guilt of theirs passes on to others, nor because they are more guilty than others who later rejected Christ spiritually, but on account of an objective fact which stays real even in the absence of all guilt, the fact that they have literally removed the Maker of life out of this world." [Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 196.] Schoonenberg acknowledges the hypothetical nature of this theory.

¹⁴⁴ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 42.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 194. Schoonenberg repeats this theory in his work, *The Christ*: "The world is a becoming world, a world ever surpassing itself, where the new proceeds from the old and yet, *at the same time*, is new and more. And precisely as such, as becoming and self-surpassing, the world is realized by God. [p. 22] Schoonenberg's theology of God's

creation but at the end, as the culmination of it.

Schoonenberg is convinced that his evolutionary theory escapes many of the pitfalls that he ascribes to the static model used in the traditional doctrine. He describes his theory in the following way: "The whole evolution of creation is crowned by a historical ascent of mankind, crowned in its turn by Christ's presence, which keeps growing too towards his manifestation in the parousia, the beginning of 'God all in all'. That ascent is crossed by a similar ascent of sin, but God brings about the triumph of the ascent in Christ."¹⁴⁷ Schoonenberg's theology of the sin of the world is primarily, though not exclusively, concerned with the ascent of sin rather than the ascent of good.

This ascent of sin takes place within a communal setting. Schoonenberg uses the expression, the "sin of the world" from John 1:29, to describe his theology because he wants "to sum up the social nature of sin".¹⁴⁸ He defines "sin of the world" by saying that "there exists a community of sin, just as men share together in Christ's redemption. This 'original sin' affects man's origin and whole existence precisely because it is common to the individual and all his fellows."¹⁴⁹ Saying that previous theologies have contributed little to this type of discussion, Schoonenberg says that he wants to examine "the problems which follow from [the] coexistence with respect to sin, with all the mutual activity and passivity it implies".¹⁵⁰

creation of the world is contained in *Covenant and Creation*, Chapter 2, pp. 51-111.

¹⁴⁷ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 194.

¹⁴⁸ Piet Schoonenberg, "Sin", *Sacramentum Mundi*, p. 90.

¹⁴⁹ Schoonenberg, "Original Sin and Man's Situation", p. 243.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 98.

THE TRANSMISSION OF THE SIN OF THE WORLD

Schoonenberg uses the passage in Exodus "about the fathers' guilt haunting four generations and their goodness extending to the thousandth generation (cf. Ex 20:5)"¹⁵¹ to show how the sin of the world is transmitted. For Schoonenberg, "the specific nature of original sin...[is] that it comes to us from others, thus besetting our existence from the very start."¹⁵² He says that "this fits in with our experience of the 'contamination' of evil and [of] the 'infectiousness' of moral action."¹⁵³

Schoonenberg contends that original sin infects each infant through the situation into which it is born. He defines situation as: "the totality of the circumstances in which somebody or something stands at a certain moment, the totality of circumstances prevailing in a certain domain".¹⁵⁴ He points out that the word circumstances appears twice in his definition deliberately since: "The situation stands or lies 'around' (circum) a certain person; it belongs to his 'Umwelt'. He stands in its midst; he is surrounded by it."¹⁵⁵

Schoonenberg insists that "originally the situation stands outside the person, comes to him from without", though he sees the child as being "interiorly affected by the situation".¹⁵⁶ He emphasizes that he is not speaking of a purely external effect on the person: "our inquiry concerns the *inner* determination of the situated person, his

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 243-244.

¹⁵² Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 198.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 90.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 104-105.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 105.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

subjection to the situation, his being handed-over to it. This feature is the constitutive element of the sin of a community, the sin of the world."¹⁵⁷ Schoonenberg is less interested in the actual situation itself, since that necessarily varies from person to person, than "*in the fact that the person is situated*, in what scholastic philosophy might call 'situation passive sumpta'."¹⁵⁸ We will now examine the way in which Schoonenberg uses example to explain the transmission of the sin of the world.

The Power of the Bad Example

Schoonenberg points out that it is through our relationship with God that each person becomes, to some extent, a mediator for others. He says that "classical theology must admit this for Adam when it explains his influence upon us for better or for worse not through a merely extrinsic divine decree (which would be no explanation at all)."¹⁵⁹ He reminds us that the church accepts that Christ is mediator for us all, that priests function also as mediators, and that the church's prayers have a mediating role. He thinks that the church must therefore accept that Adam was our mediator, and that we are each others'. This then describes how the sin of the world began and is perpetuated, since "it follows that the refusal of [God's] grace by a man, which is sin, also exerts an influence upon one's fellow man, depriving him of grace and bringing him in some way into a situation of a lack of grace."¹⁶⁰

Schoonenberg says that there are different degrees of sinful influence resulting

¹⁵⁷ Schoonenberg, "Original Sin and Man's Situation", p. 245.

¹⁵⁸ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 105.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 119.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

from the sin of the world. He begins his analysis of these degrees with the bad example,¹⁶¹ which, he says leave one at a disadvantage for several reasons: "First of all, such behavior does not provide the appeal of real values. Then it stands as an invitation to evil. By his action, the other person equivalently says, 'This is the way it goes; I feel fine doing it; it makes sense in my life; is this not the way for you, too?'"¹⁶² This concept of example, according to Schoonenberg, "is what the Bible means by temptation or scandal, which is literally the cord or stone placed in someone's path to make him stumble. Such a temptation, when reinforced by social pressure, may be too strong for my moral forces."¹⁶³ Children are not the only ones affected by a bad example. Adults also can be negatively influenced and therefore need positive examples to guide them. Children are, however, the most vulnerable since they are still totally dependent on their environment.

Schoonenberg divides the bad example into two sub-categories: bad example on its own and bad example with pressure. Of the first, simple bad example, he points out that the influence is more powerful when it is subliminal, when it cannot be consciously chosen or rejected. It is "not a demonstration or a proof or an instance of concrete instruction; it goes much deeper than all this, because in his activity the other does not simply apprise me of some objective information, but utters something concerning his own existence."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ See Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) for an excellent analysis of the profound effect of bad examples on people's behaviour.

¹⁶² Schoonenberg, "Original Sin and Man's Situation", p. 245.

¹⁶³ Schoonenberg, "Sin", *Sacramentum Mundi*, p. 90.

¹⁶⁴ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 112.

For the category of bad example with pressure, Schoonenberg examines the effect of peer pressure. Since children have a strong need for community, those who don't have a supportive community in their home situation are most vulnerable to the pressures of a peer group. Negative peer pressure is a particularly difficult situation for these children. When one's peers are influencing one to do bad, to steal or do drugs, Schoonenberg says that it becomes very difficult to resist and to choose the good, since that would exclude one from the group. Very often, the performance of an evil act may even be the requirement for joining the group in the first place. Schoonenberg describes the isolation that results from going against the group and how difficult it is to do so. He says that, "The duty which I believe must be performed does not belong to the current style of life. It is agreeable to neglect that duty; that makes life easier, more glamorous, fuller. It makes you belong; it is a status symbol. Thus, the attraction of evil may assume the form of a challenge: let's see whether you really belong, whether you are up to this."¹⁶⁵ A further and frequent group challenge "consists in arousing the spontaneous desire to strike back. Murder calls for murder, but also hatred for hatred, harshness for harshness, insult for rancour, arrogance and coolness for bitterness."¹⁶⁶ Both of these examples are clearly evident in today's teen gang culture.

Schoonenberg points out that choosing good when all around you are immersed in the bad can result in deliberate, as well as unconscious, exclusion: for example, a person could be kept from receiving promotions at work, be refused housing, or be ostracized. This exclusion makes life much more difficult for people, since to choose good is to risk great loss. Schoonenberg equates this with martyrdom, but says that while the call to be a martyr is fairly rare, a situation that "entails a decrease in life's

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 113.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

opportunities and amenities occurs frequently, although in various degrees."¹⁶⁷ It therefore is difficult for these people to choose to do good.

Sometimes it becomes more than just difficult to choose the good, it becomes, practically speaking, impossible. However, Schoonenberg emphasizes that this seeming impossibility is only temporary and conditional, since "a total impossibility to avoid evil is excluded by the value of the human person and by God's salvific will. Hence, the practical impossibility can only be temporary; it may be overcome by means of prayer; that is, by opening one's soul to God's everlasting offer of grace."¹⁶⁸

Besides the obscuring of values and norms that is implicit in the bad example, Schoonenberg says that there are certain situations which totally obscure them. He gives the example of "a child born in a family living from theft or prostitution, in which the norms of honesty and chastity are not observed, wherein these values are not alive."¹⁶⁹ Pointing out that such situations do actually exist, Schoonenberg nonetheless believes (unlike Miller, as we have seen) that they are rare. He emphasizes that these families are not totally isolated in their negativity, that there are factors which mitigate their influence.

However, with respect to his example of the child born into a family of thieves, Schoonenberg acknowledges that, in such a situation, it is absolutely impossible for the child to develop honesty: "For a person can only esteem and pursue a value which he has somehow come to recognize as such. If values are not presented in this way, a person cannot choose to realize it for himself. This impossibility is absolute, unlike the situation

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Examples of this abound in society: people who protest against sexual or racial harassment, people who work with AIDS patients, people who protest against their nation's involvement in a war, etc.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

where one is subject to bad example and social pressure."¹⁷⁰ Schoonenberg immediately pulls back from the obvious implication of this statement, which is that the child's freedom is therefore destroyed. He states emphatically that this does not negate free will. Instead, "only a certain domain is withdrawn from its influence and closed for it."¹⁷¹ Freedom therefore remains, though severely curtailed.

The power of the bad example in people's lives convinces Schoonenberg that "there is a possibility of a situation deprived of grace which may precede all our free decisions and which encompasses them."¹⁷² He sees this situation as a linkage between his theology of the sin of the world and the traditional doctrine of original sin.

Free Will

Schoonenberg, like most theologians, struggles with the difficult concept of an original sin which predisposes us towards sin but does not cause us to sin. He finds his explanation of the inherent contradiction in his concept of a situated freedom.

Schoonenberg is careful to stress that his theory of the environmental transmission of original sin in no way compromises the freedom of the individual. He reminds us that if original sin robbed us totally of our freedom to choose, we would lose our individual accountability. Schoonenberg emphasizes that "nobody can simply cause another person to sin, that even fathers cannot make their children sin."¹⁷³ While it is possible to cause accidents to happen to a person, it is not possible to cause a person to act. However, it is possible to influence another. Schoonenberg points out that "there is an influence of

¹⁷⁰ Schoonenberg, "Original Sin and Man's Situation", p. 246.

¹⁷¹ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 116.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, p. 120.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 104.

one freedom upon another. From a free action there proceeds an appeal to which the free action of another person may respond."¹⁷⁴ The phrase "may respond" is particularly important here since it implies that the person may choose not to respond to the influence. Furthermore, the influence may be felt and acted upon immediately or else it may be delayed in effect: "Today's sin may not only draw others along through seduction but it may also in the same way influence posterity, which has lost its bearings on account of the sins of the fathers."¹⁷⁵

Our freedom is thus situated by the influence of others. Schoonenberg points out that, "My free act puts the other in a situation which presents him with good or evil, provides support or withdraws it, and communicates values and norms."¹⁷⁶ Thus, "I do not influence his actual reacting but rather the determinate context in which he freely takes a stand.... Men possess a *situated* freedom; every human choice is conditioned by past decisions and restricts future possibilities."¹⁷⁷

It is an essential element of Schoonenberg's theory that everyone begins life with just such a situated freedom. In the abstract, each individual is capable of choosing what ever they will. But in reality, these choices are limited by the situation into which they are born. Moreover, each decision made, no matter how positive, further restricts a person's freedom, "for each decision puts him in a new situation, without and within. Thus, in the domain of our natural activities concrete freedom is always a bound and limited freedom, and the fact of being bound and limited results not from a decrease or impairment of free

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Schoonenberg, "Original Sin and Man's Situation", p. 245.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

will itself, but from the situation in which we stand or which we ourselves bring about."¹⁷⁸

Schoonenberg emphasizes repeatedly that the concept of a situated freedom is not an oxymoron. He says that "we do not mean here that our freedom is determined by the situation so that it is forced from without to perform certain actions."¹⁷⁹ This would be contradictory since freedom means the ability to determine one's own choices. By situated freedom, Schoonenberg means that "our liberty is affected in its *field of action*, that the objects about which our liberty must decide are affected as are also the insights and the motives from which such decisions proceed."¹⁸⁰ While we have limited choices when young, our gradual development extends our range of possibilities and thus we can partially choose our lives. This then in turn begins to affect our situation itself, since we are now able to respond with greater freedom to what lies around us.

In his efforts to show that freedom is real, Schoonenberg doesn't minimize the restriction of freedom caused by the environment. He posits instead that the degree of restriction will depend on the type of situation into which a child is born. For example, Schoonenberg sees the restriction resulting from a totally negative situation as being a type of death: "This is a partial 'death of the soul', with which a human being starts his existence as a human being. And throughout his whole life he remains burdened by that handicap, at least in so far as he remains imprisoned in the environment which has inflicted this death upon him."¹⁸¹ A person thus affected "remains in that way as long as another person does not break through the infernal circle, enter it or rather snatch him out of it—and take him up into communion with him by giving him a living example" of

¹⁷⁸ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 76.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 105.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 105-106.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 117-118.

good.¹⁸² The example for evil or good is therefore very powerful, despite the fact that it cannot totally determine a person's freedom.

REDEMPTION

The deepest meaning, for Schoonenberg, of the doctrine of original sin, and therefore also of his sin of the world theology, lies in its fundamental expression of humanity's need for Christ. Schoonenberg says that, "the whole history of salvation is directed towards Christ, not only towards Christ's life on earth, not only towards his death on the cross and his resurrection, but also towards the growing presence of the Lord in his Spirit, which will find its completion in the renewed and divinized universe of the final fulfillment."¹⁸³

It is therefore Christ who brings redemption to the world which is stained by sin. It is Christ who redeems the sinful humans who inhabit it. But Schoonenberg points out that we too play a role in this redemption, that "salvation does not grow in the manner of infra-human life; it has to be freely accepted and may therefore also be rejected."¹⁸⁴ As we have seen, Schoonenberg does not hypothesize that the situation we are born into determines our decisions for life, but that it creates a situated freedom that is continually modified by our decisions. While we are all corrupted by the sins of the world that have grown throughout history since the first sin, we all have the possibility to rise beyond our situation. Schoonenberg points out that, "natural growth is assumed into personal self-determination, the merely given becomes the freely conquered".¹⁸⁵ Through the choice

¹⁸² *Ibid*, p. 118.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 194.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 195.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 194.

to follow Christ, we are saved.

We also have the opportunity to assist others, and thus to work towards the world's redemption from sin. In a strong call to awaken us to our responsibility towards each other and to remind us of the powerful example that we can be for others, Schoonenberg points out that "it is not sin alone which affects the others. We are mediators for each other not only for worse but also (and mainly) for better."¹⁸⁶ He reminds us that while "we do not determine the free decision of the other" we do "open or close the way in which the freedom of the other may decide about a value, by shedding light for him upon that value or by keeping it in the dark or wholly obliterating it in his eyes."¹⁸⁷ We therefore have the opportunity to open others to love, or to slam the door shut for them; "we mediate or obstruct the offer of grace."¹⁸⁸

Just as the bad example can lead us into more evil, so too can the good example draw us towards redemption. Through the medium of a good example, we can be led out of bad decisions and influences, we can be led out of the negative situations we find ourselves in. Schoonenberg points to the influence that a person's innate honesty can have on another by effectively inviting them to imitate it. In this way, he says, "I am situated by the good example, and my freedom has responded to it."¹⁸⁹ Good examples can teach us of Christ's salvation and lead us to his love. Without them in our lives, evil is difficult to overcome. Schoonenberg emphasizes that, "both salvation and doom grow apace, and only God knows to what extent they are at work, realized in each man. At any rate, they grow towards the final outcome, in which an eternal fixation in sin is a

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 196.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 112.

frightening possibility, and a universe of love is our beckoning hope."¹⁹⁰ We all therefore have a responsibility to be good examples to each other, to draw others to Christ, to follow him ourselves.

Redemption for Schoonenberg, therefore, comes from Christ. But we too play a part in it, through our acceptance or rejection of him and through our responsibility towards each other. The good example can be as powerful as the bad one, and therefore we must work to act as good examples for the redemption of the world.

THE SIN OF THE WORLD AND THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

Now that we have completed our exposition of the various elements in Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology, it is useful to consider whether this theology works as a reinterpretation of the doctrine of original sin. Schoonenberg himself is very careful in his book, *Man and Sin*, to avoid saying that his theology is identical with the traditional doctrine. Instead, he analyzes the similarities and differences between the two, drawing many parallels, and finally leaving his readers to make the equation themselves. He is convinced that "there is a strong connection between the two topics",¹⁹¹ but that is the only conclusion that he draws.

Schoonenberg's hesitation to explicitly identify his theology as an acceptable interpretation of the traditional doctrine grows out of his position as a theologian in the

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 196.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 124. Schoonenberg also shows hesitation over saying outright that the sin of the world is identical with original sin in his book, *God's World in the Making*. He asks, "Is it perhaps permissible to connect the situation induced by original sin, not with the sin of one single individual, not with the first man in the chronological sense, but with the sin of the whole world? In such a case it might perhaps be of no importance exactly when and where sin entered the picture". [Schoonenberg, *God's World in the Making*, p. 83.]

Roman Catholic Church. While he defends the theologian's freedom in his article, "The Theologian's Calling, Freedom, and Constraint", Schoonenberg is aware that it is a situated freedom that involves certain obligations: "the theologian is under an obligation to the truth; he or she must produce arguments for his or her views and not merely subjective assertions. The theologian, furthermore, is under an obligation to the faith's truth; he or she must draw out the implications of his or her theological opinions for the life of faith."¹⁹² Since "service to the faith simultaneously entails that the freedom and difference of opinion move within a well-defined space",¹⁹³ this space acts as a constraint upon the theologian. Schoonenberg thinks that, to some extent, the constraint is justified and he himself abides by it. And so, he merely proposes his sin of the world theology as a possible interpretation of original sin, as opposed to stating that it is the only valid one.

Others who study the doctrine, however, have not hesitated to equate the sin of the world with original sin. Chukwudi Nwosah, Connor, Mackey, McDermott, and Vandervelde are just a few of the commentators who assume that the situationist theologies are a reinterpretation of the doctrine of original sin.¹⁹⁴

In *Man and Sin*, Schoonenberg confronts the traditional doctrine with his sin of the world theology because he thinks that, while the situationist theology might not replace the traditional teachings, at the very least, the doctrine "may be completed and

¹⁹² Schoonenberg, "The Theologian's Calling, Freedom, and Constraint", p. 96.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ See, for example, Joseph Mary Chukwudi Nwosah, *Original Sin in Dialogue* (Rome: Academia Alfonsiana, 1990); James L. Connor, "Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, June 1968, pp. 215-240; James P. Mackey, "New Thinking on Original Sin", *The Mystery of Sin and Forgiveness*, ed. Michael J. Taylor (Staten Island, NY: Society of St. Paul, 1971), pp. 215-232; Brian O. McDermott, "The Theology of Original Sin: Recent Developments", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3, September 1977, pp. 478-512; and G. Vandervelde, *Original Sin: Two Contemporary Roman Catholic Approaches* (Amsterdam: Robdopi, 1975).

made more real through a consideration of the sin of the world."¹⁹⁵ He sees many advantages to incorporating the sin of the world theology into that of original sin. For instance, "attention is no longer focused exclusively upon the first beginning of every life or upon that of the whole of mankind."¹⁹⁶ This is very important for Schoonenberg since he contends that the sin of the world continues to exert its influence upon us even when we become adults.

Even more importantly, Schoonenberg points out that "in this way Adam's fall and original sin with which man enters the world lose the mythological character which the isolated treatment of classic theology unintentionally gives them."¹⁹⁷ He admits that some will say that the intrinsic nature of the traditional doctrine is at risk of disappearing but says that "to this we reply that it becomes possible to develop a better theological notion of the influence of Adam's sin and of the sinful situation deriving from that sin, because we have discovered an analogical case from which these mysteries may be approached."¹⁹⁸ Schoonenberg maintains that even if it is proved that original sin differs too essentially from his example of the child born into a family of thieves, the comparison will still benefit the doctrine, since it will help the church to understand what the actual character of original sin is.

Schoonenberg conducts his analysis of the question of whether the sin of the world is identical with original sin by subdividing it into several parts, so as to contrast the church's doctrinal statements with the various parts of his theory. He says that the subdivided questions could read as follows:

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 178.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 179.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

Is the state of original sin equal to the fact of "being situated" by the sin of the world...? Should the "sequels to original sin" be equated with the implications of that "being situated", such as our powerlessness for the good? Is the manner in which we are situated by the sinful history of the world the same as the manner in which original sin has started in us? Is the influence of "Adam" to be equated with the influence of "the world"?¹⁹⁹

Since he can give only brief answers to these questions, Schoonenberg again refuses to draw any definitive conclusions, leaving that to the church itself to do, should it feel impelled by his evidence. He does however find such strong similarities between the two that he is sure that the sin of the world will be found to be an adequate explanation for the doctrine. Where the differences are too pronounced (for example, over the issue of the preternatural gifts), Schoonenberg points to the need to revise the classical theology and offers his own interpretation as a possible revision.

Taking his guide from the Scriptural references to such a history, Schoonenberg points out that the traditional doctrine of original sin has never had a concept of a history of sin. He says that this is therefore "the first complement to classic doctrine: between Adam and Abraham there extends a history of salvation and of doom. In its opposition to God's continual offer of salvation, sin, having entered the world, increases in power".²⁰⁰ Schoonenberg's concept of the history of sin makes room for the multitude of sins committed by God's people throughout history, as recorded in both the Old and New Testaments.

Schoonenberg analyzes his concept of situation in relation to the doctrine. He concludes that "in many respects an affirmative answer seems possible" to the question of whether the situation described in the sin of the world can be equated with original sin. He contends that what he describes as situation is "a lack of the life of grace, a

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 180.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 178.

powerlessness, a being dead to supernatural life (and to all love), and this is precisely the content of the state of original sin."²⁰¹ Schoonenberg is aware that criticism could be leveled that while the sin of the world might correspond with original sin, it might still be insufficient to explain it, but says that "it does not seem to be excluded that original sin may also be considered as the fact of being situated and that there is no objection against equating it with the fact of being situated through the sin of the world."²⁰² He feels that this is a useful conclusion to draw, since it takes account of the history of sin. More to the point, since this "being situated" has an interior effect on each person, it "corresponds to the fact that original sin exists in everybody as something proper to him."²⁰³

It is difficult, however, "to equate the further implications of 'being situated' through the sin of the world with what theology generally calls 'the sequels of original sin'."²⁰⁴ Schoonenberg knows that the traditional doctrine speaks primarily of the sequels in terms of what was lost after Adam's sin: the preternatural gifts with which Adam and Eve were originally endowed. These gifts pose a seemingly insurmountable problem for Schoonenberg's project, but he dismisses the problem by pointing out that theology has long had a problem with the gifts, since they rest on a non-evolutionary view of humanity's origins. Schoonenberg concludes that "one may safely drop these details, and even theologians who remain faithful to the classic doctrine do not hesitate to do so."²⁰⁵

Schoonenberg also examines whether it is possible to equate the traditional

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 180.

²⁰² *Ibid*, p. 181.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 180.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 181.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 182.

doctrine's belief that death is the result of the fall with the effects caused by the sin of the world. He knows that this will be a difficult enterprise, since both classical theology and the magisterium seem to speak of a more fatal response to the first sin than does the situationist theology. Examining the Council of Carthage's first canon which deals with the heresy that Adam was created as a mortal, Schoonenberg says that since Trent did not repeat the details of Carthage's statement but dealt only with the general idea of bodily death, simply making the distinction between it and the death of the soul, it might therefore be possible to admit a less physical result than Carthage emphasized. Schoonenberg acknowledges that "Carthage says something which it is difficult to reduce simply to the psychological experience of dying, and so does the classic theory of original sin."²⁰⁶ He asks if we therefore must conceive the pre-fall immortality strictly in biological terms, saying that this is difficult since it is hard to imagine how pre-fall humanity could have been so different in nature from us and from other animals as to not need to die. Schoonenberg maintains though that it is possible to reconcile the two theories even on this difficult point, through the use of a small modification of the traditional doctrine and through the application of anthropology to its concept of death, so that death takes on a different meaning. In this way, death "would become a farewell to the world, a leaving of the world, made necessary because sinful man, caught in concupiscence and bondage, must first give up the world and its inhabitants before he can find them again in the eternal 'God all in all'."²⁰⁷ Schoonenberg concludes that if this anthropological interpretation is found to be reconcilable with the church's teachings, then on this point also there is no contradiction between the consequences of the sin of the world and those of Adam's sin.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 183.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*.

As a final point before leaving his consideration of the question of the preternatural gifts in pre-fall humanity, Schoonenberg feels constrained to point out that the traditional doctrine's belief in the gifts needs in general to be reexamined. As a first step in such an enterprise, some of the gifts that the classic doctrine describes must be discarded. But the reconsideration must go further than this, according to Schoonenberg, to find a comprehensible unity in the gifts. He asks, "is it not possible to understand the immunity from concupiscence, immortality, and impassibility of the first human beings as various aspects of one single gift which may be seen in connection with the supernatural life of grace?"²⁰⁸ One such first step would be to view these gifts as aspects of a deep integration between soul and body, a concept that would see the body, informed more directly by the soul, saved from disintegration through this connection. Another step would be to see the gifts as still being a part of human nature, but a part that we can no longer access without God's grace, since our souls and bodies have lost their close unity. Schoonenberg concludes his analysis of the reconsideration with the statement that, "if it is possible to develop in this direction the theology of the preternatural gifts and of their loss on this point there will be no difference between the influence of Adam's sin and the influence of the sin of the world."²⁰⁹

Still searching for points of contact between his situationist theology and the classical doctrine of original sin, Schoonenberg turns his attention to the method by which original sin is transmitted between generations. He questions whether there is too great a difference in how the two theories see this transmission occurring, since the traditional doctrine attributes it to the act of procreation while his theology attributes it to the environment. Pointing out that Trent's description of the transmission - through

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 184.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 185.

procreation, not imitation - leaves open the actual meaning of procreation, Schoonenberg says that therefore the procreation can be taken to be either a direct or an indirect cause. If it is the former, then Schoonenberg says that the Fall should have a purely biological meaning, since it radically changed our human nature.

However, if procreation is understood only indirectly, then that would mean "that the act of procreation as such brings about man... but that the state of original sin as such is caused only by the historic situation in which the parents live."²¹⁰ As an example, Schoonenberg compares this with a child being a citizen of a country as the sole result of being born while the parents were visiting there. He is quick to point out that this example doesn't equate fully; that he doesn't mean to say that the influence of original sin is as minor as that of citizenship. But he says that both cases reveal how the parents' situation determines the situation for the child prior to any decisions on the child's part. Schoonenberg concludes that it is possible to interpret Trent's use of procreation as this type of indirect cause. He contends that "a direct influence of procreation does not contribute more powerfully to the sinful character of original sin than an influence connected with the educative influence of the family or of mankind."²¹¹

Schoonenberg raises a further point in defence of his theory when he points out that Scripture itself seems to view Adam's descendents in a religious as opposed to biological way. He therefore says that "If, because of all this, one prefers to admit an indirect influence of generation upon the state of original sin, this does not... seem to conflict with the decisions of the magisterium."²¹² As in the case of the preternatural gifts, Schoonenberg again maintains that his modification of the traditional doctrine frees

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* 186.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.* p. 187.

it of problems that have plagued it since Augustine's influence.

Only one point of difficulty remains in the comparison of the sin of the world and original sin, and this is the question of where that sin first originated. Schoonenberg admits that his theory makes it look as if the sin originates from the world, as opposed to Adam, and wonders, "Should Adam perhaps be equated with 'the world'; that is, with sinful humanity?"²¹³ He points out that he has already shown how necessary it is to link the whole history of sin back to Adam in one unbroken chain. This sin of Adam's would then be seen, from the context of the whole of the world's sin, as the first in a series. Of itself, it would suffice as the explanation for sin infecting the whole world.

The obvious next question to ask is whether or not the doctrine of original sin requires a direct line of descent for all of humanity from Adam as the first human. Schoonenberg is not interested at this point in the question of polygenism, since he feels that "neither Scripture nor tradition nor the magisterium give us directly any information within the domain of the human sciences."²¹⁴ Therefore, he says, "the theological question can only be whether that descent from one couple of first parents is or is not contained in the dogma of original sin."²¹⁵ If it isn't, then the question of polygenism belongs only to science.

Schoonenberg thinks that the magisterium would agree with this. He reminds us that, in *Humani Generis*, Pope Pius XII only said that so far it wasn't clear whether polygenism and original sin could be reconciled, not that they never could be. Schoonenberg admits that at this point it is still impossible to see how they could be reconciled and that we will still have to wait to see if it ever will be possible. Therefore,

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 187-188.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 188.

it is not possible to answer this point at this time.

Never one to shirk looking critically at his own theories, Schoonenberg admits that the following criticism could be levelled at his theology of the sin of the world:

For if the fall should not occur in one well-determined sin which affects each man by way of heredity, if it happens throughout a long history of sin, it is possible that Christ's redemption would, in a history of faith, hope and charity, impregnate a certain milieu so thoroughly that human beings living in it would start their existence in full openness for the life of grace; that is, without original sin, in a state of "immaculate conception".²¹⁶

This, of course, would be directly opposed to the traditional meaning of the doctrine of original sin.

It is at this point in his explanations, that Schoonenberg diverges the most from traditional teaching. He contends that the doctrine does not exclude the possibility of a Fall extended through history. He says that since "the universality of original sin is true for the times following the fall,... should that fall constitute a history, the possibility exists also for a gradual universalization of the state of grace."²¹⁷ Schoonenberg hypothesizes that other people than the Virgin Mary may have been born free of original sin; however, he sees this as occurring in a different manner from the way in which the church has traditionally conceived Mary's state, "that is, as a gift proceeding from Redemption".²¹⁸ Instead, Schoonenberg sees these "immaculate conceptions" occurring, "as it may be said, and is sometimes explicitly said, of Adam and Eve; that is, as a gift coming from primeval grace."²¹⁹

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 189.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 189-190.

Schoonenberg even sees it a possibility that the Redemption might create pockets, as it were, that are free from sin. However, he is aware that this is not in line with the church's traditional teaching. He admits that "the church maintains such a universality of original sin that even the children of Christian parents do not come into the world without it on account of their Christian environment; they can only be freed of it later through baptism."²²⁰ But baptism gives all the leeway that Schoonenberg needs. Reverting to the historical-critical method of analysis, Schoonenberg says that since this teaching of the church answers only specifically the question of the need for baptism, it is open to reinterpretation on other questions.

To begin with, Schoonenberg maintains that, for the time before baptism was first introduced, original sin's universality is questionable. This of course opens the way for his theory that original sin constitutes a history of sin in the world. However, he admits that this applies only to the time preceeding Christ, since "after Christ's death and resurrection... original sin is strictly universal; nobody escapes it." "Hence," he says, "it is difficult to deny that a certain event, a well-determined sin, has occurred in the world, which has brought about a situation that is irreversible not only for mankind in general but also for each individual person."²²¹

Again, we seem to be back at the need for a single first couple, but Schoonenberg says that if we accept the above, then there is another possibility: "The sin through which Christ has been excluded from the world and from our existence on earth is the fact which makes the situation of original sin inescapable for all."²²² It is the rejection of Christ which completely deprives all people of God's grace, so that all who are born after

²²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 190.

²²¹ *Ibid*.

²²² *Ibid*.

the crucifixion, are born without grace. However, Schoonenberg does not discuss how this lack of grace is transmitted. He simply says that "Should this explanation prove correct, from this point of view there is no need to admit one sinning couple of first parents—or, to put it positively, on this last point, too, there is not any difference between original sin and the sin of the world."²²³

Schoonenberg ends his examination of the possible differences and similarities between original sin and the sin of the world with an acknowledgement that his theology goes far beyond the classical doctrine. He emphasizes that his theories are new and tentative. This newness does not mean that they should just be rejected out of hand, however, since the sin of the world theology may offer a new vision for an ancient truth. But Schoonenberg also believes that the theory should not be accepted until it has demonstrated that it has value.

Schoonenberg himself accepts that, until this occurs, "there is a presumption in favour of the classic doctrine of original sin and also, in agreement with the position taught by the encyclical *Humani Generis*, against a theory which declares the existence of one couple of first parents irrelevant for the history of sin."²²⁴ He points out that theology is still groping for answers. This is why his analysis of the similarities between his theology of the sin of the world and the doctrine of original sin is put forth simply as a hypothesis. Schoonenberg acknowledges that some readers might be disappointed by the tentative nature of his answer and so he does give encouragement. He points out that "even should the classic doctrine of original sin not turn into a theology of the sin of the world, it can and should be enriched by it."²²⁵

²²³ *Ibid*, pp. 190-191.

²²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 191.

²²⁵ *Ibid*.

CONCLUSION

Piet Schoonenberg's theology of the sin of the world is a valuable analysis of the interrelatedness of all humanity throughout history. In his view of original sin, each child is born into a community contaminated by the accumulation of sins from the first sin in the pre-history of the race. This situation of sin, common to all, is the cause of human sinfulness, of moral evil. It is mediated to each child through the bad example. Without compromising the freedom of the child, it nonetheless limits it, requiring the radical choice to follow Christ in order to free oneself from the evil found all around one.

Schoonenberg sees his theology of the sin of the world as neither progressive nor conservative, though he knows that he is accused of being both. Instead, he is only interested in "upholding and developing tradition, by opening the past to the present for the future."²²⁶ Schoonenberg does not hesitate to apply his own theory to his theology; he is able to recognize that his theology is evolving and that it is itself a situated theory, influenced by his character and training, and dependent on them for its expression. He welcomes criticisms of his work, since he knows that "the Christian tradition is a history of continually ongoing interpretations and reinterpretations" and that therefore "no theology can be definitive."²²⁷

With this acknowledged limitation in mind, it is now time to apply Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology to the theories of Alice Miller, in order to examine how well the theology can account for the presence and transmission of child abuse.

²²⁶ Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, p. 9.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 8.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE SIN OF THE WORLD AS HERMENEUTIC FOR THE PROBLEM OF CHILD ABUSE

In Chapter One, we saw the magnitude of the problem of child abuse as outlined by Alice Miller: its deep roots in history, its transmission from generation to generation through the medium of parenting techniques and societal and religious teachings, and its negative effect on adult behaviour. In Chapter Two, after locating Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology within the context of the traditional Roman Catholic doctrine of original sin, we saw how Schoonenberg's theology explains the presence of sin in the world through the history of sin grown from the first sin, and of its inevitably corrupting influence on each generation through the situation of the early environment. Since, as we saw in the Introduction, there is a need for a theology that can account for the presence and transmission of child abuse, I proposed that Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology can function as a theological explanation for the problem as outlined by Alice Miller.

A major weakness in all the situationist theologies, according to the theologian, G. Vandervelde, is their failure to reflect the real situations of life. Even Schoonenberg, whom Vandervelde sees as the most accessible of the situationist theologians, is too abstract in his definition of situation. Vandervelde acknowledges that Schoonenberg deliberately rid his theory of real elements so that he could examine only the *essence* of situation.¹ Vandervelde points out that, "within limits, abstraction is an entirely legitimate

¹ "Schoonenberg... methodically expunges every element of human activity, every personal element, every element of free shaping and forming." [Vandervelde, *Original Sin*, p. 318.] Schoonenberg himself points out this aspect of his methodology. He explicitly warns his readers that he is not interested in the actual situations pointed to by his theology, but in the fact that all people *are* situated. [Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 105.]

process, an indispensable aid to every academic discipline."² But he warns that we mustn't forget that it is not an innocuous tool. The "*dissecting knife*" has its uses since it "makes it possible to obtain a clear view of the tissues, perhaps even of the cells, of human life".³ But Vandervelde points out that, "at the moment that these are laid bare, *life is gone*; the dissected tissue is no longer a functioning part of a living whole."⁴ He says that, therefore, abstraction is only useful so long as we keep in mind the "living whole", though, as he points out, "one must realize that the living whole is not re-obtained by simply putting the dissected elements - in our case 'freedom' and 'situation' - back together, for such reconstruction does not yield more than the imagined interaction of abstract, mutually exclusive concepts - the dead tissues of human life."⁵

It is for exactly this reason that I find such value in the use of Schoonenberg's theology to explain the problem of child abuse as outlined by Miller. It can easily be argued that Miller neglects to formulate any kind of a conceptual framework for her theories - she herself acknowledges this⁶ and says that it is not her purpose to do so. And Schoonenberg, as Vandervelde so accurately points out, does not describe the real aspect of the situation that he devotes so much attention to, but instead, provides a clear theoretical framework for understanding the presence, transmission, and effects of negative situations. The two theories are therefore complementary, with Schoonenberg's

² Vandervelde, *Original Sin*, p. 319.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ See Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. viii; and *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 316. As the wide range of references from her various works used for Chapter One reveal, Miller's theory is not at this point coherently framed. A coherent structure is inherent in her theory, however, as I have attempted to show with my outline of her work in Chapter One.

theology explaining the reality of child abuse that Miller reveals.

Before beginning a detailed analysis of how Schoonenberg's theology can be used, however, it is first necessary to emphasize again that it is not an exact explanation for every facet of Miller's theories. Schoonenberg's theology functions well as a framework, but since Schoonenberg was not explicitly writing about the subject of child abuse,⁷ his theology can be applied only in broad terms.

In this chapter, therefore, we will examine the primary differences between Miller's and Schoonenberg's theories prior to analyzing the points where Schoonenberg's theology dovetails with Miller's work, in order to show the specific aspects of her theory which his theology accounts for. After showing how Schoonenberg's theology provides a sufficient explanation for the problem, we will examine the position of the theology within the Roman Catholic Church, as it is necessary to ascertain whether Schoonenberg's theology is sufficiently acceptable within the church to be useful as a paradigm for its understanding of child abuse.

⁷ It is interesting to note, however, a reference in the new Dutch catechism that seems to speak of child abuse. When speaking of the contagiousness of the sin of the world, the authors of the catechism (Schoonenberg among them, and his influence on the passage is obvious) point out that even more terrifying than the truth that one person can hurt another is the truth that "one man can infect another with evil, with sin itself. There is the bad example by which the good is withheld, and in which evil is shown to be feasible. Where evil example is accompanied by deliberate perversion, we have the worst form of scandal, which led Jesus to make one of his most impassioned utterances: 'But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world for temptations to sin!' (Mt. 18:6-7)." [Piet Schoonenberg, et al (Higher Catechetical Institute at Nijmegen), *A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults* (with "The Supplement to A New Catechism" by Edouard Dhanis and Jan Visser), trans. Kevin. Smyth (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 265.]

It seems as if, in this passage, the authors of the catechism are saying that child abuse is the worst evil, because it infects the recipient with evil. Though the passage shows Schoonenberg's influence in its reference to the bad example, it is difficult to know whether the reference to hurting children is his contribution, since he does not speak of it himself in his own works on the sin of the world.

THE SIN OF THE WORLD AND THE PROBLEM OF CHILD ABUSE

The differences between Miller's theories and Schoonenberg's theology lie, to some extent, in the differences between the two fields of psychoanalysis and theology. Whereas Miller speaks of evil and violence, Schoonenberg refers to sin. Whereas Miller locates the end of evil in human education and activity, Schoonenberg locates it primarily in the return of Christ. Miller's rationale for her theory lies in her perception of an urgent need for society to understand the effects of its abuse of children so that it can work to prevent it. She is therefore profoundly concerned with the particular situations of abuse and with their effects on children. Schoonenberg's rationale for his theology lies in his desire to translate into accessible language the fact that the doctrine of original sin points to the human need for Christ.⁸ He is therefore not primarily interested in the specific situations which cause sin but in the concept of situation through which the original sin is mediated. Schoonenberg thus begins and ends his theology from a Christocentric perspective: the reason that we know of sin, whether it be personal sin or the sin of the world, is because of Christ. Miller has a humanistic perspective. For her, "the sole means of preventing the spread of a disease is correct, well-documented information on its cause."⁹ Miller concludes, therefore, that the problem of evil that is child abuse is purely environmental and a response to conditioning. Schoonenberg concludes that it is sin and therefore needs Christ's redemption.

Another major difference between the two theories lies in their view of human nature. Miller believes that children are born innocent. This innocence is neutral rather

⁸ Chukwudi Nwosah, *Original Sin in Dialogue*, p. 102.

⁹ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 192.

than positive,¹⁰ but it is nonetheless real: all evil grows out of the early environment, none is innate. Schoonenberg has a distinctly different perspective. While he does not believe that children are born evil, he does believe that there is an inclination to do evil that is exacerbated by the situation into which they are born.¹¹ This inclination is located by Schoonenberg in the very limitations of being human. Taking a philosophical approach to human nature that sees it as being fundamentally flawed in its essence, Schoonenberg says that "there is some reason for calling the limitation of a creature, certainly of a material creature, a 'metaphysical evil', since that limitation is not only the foundation of the very possibility of disorder and failure but also of their actual occurrence. Because nowadays we look at the world genetically, that failure of limitation occupies in the world a definite place which is statistically intelligible."¹² Miller has no similar concept, perhaps because she has no corresponding concept of a possibility of perfection, either at the time of creation, or at the end of history, as does Schoonenberg. Since she sees humanity as being on its own, dependent on no God for salvation, but only on itself, Miller doesn't discuss whether humanity might be limited in its essence. Instead, she accepts human nature as being simply what it is.

Yet another difference in Miller's and Schoonenberg's view of human nature lies in Schoonenberg's contention that it is an evolving nature: "Because of our body and our

¹⁰ As we saw in Chapter One, Miller believes that the child is like a tabula rasa, and that good is acquired as well as evil. See Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 154 and *For Your Own Good*, pp. ix and 85.

¹¹ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 89.

¹² Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 43. In this passage, Schoonenberg reveals how strongly he has been influenced by philosophy. His idea of limitation as a source of evil is very similar to Ricoeur's concepts of fallibility and fault (as in geological fault) as the location of evil in the person. See Paul Ricoeur, *Fallible Man: Philosophy of the Will*, trans. Charles Kelbley (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1967), pp. xix, 95-98, 216-224.

materiality we are a plurality of tendencies striving towards partial goods, a plurality in search of some order... Our need for food, for rest or activity, for shelter in conquest of the world, for privacy and society, our sexuality and aggressivity, our craving for domination and tenderness—all these drives do not from the start coexist in peaceful harmony. That harmony has to grow".¹³ Schoonenberg doesn't see these drives as resulting from sin but as being an integral part of human nature, emphasizing that, "*by his nature man is for himself a chaotic datum in need of integration through love.*"¹⁴ This is where sin comes in: sin's "influence consists not in the chaotic or as yet unintegrated features of our nature, but in the fact that it renders us unable to love, therefore, to integrate. Man is marked by sin not in so far as he lacks integration, but in so far as he lacks the love which alone can bring about that integration."¹⁵

Miller, however, does not accept that human nature includes any craving for domination or aggression. She theorizes that these drives and the lack of harmony in human nature are precisely the result of human evil.¹⁶ They are the consequences of child abuse which warp the child in such a way that we now regard these things as natural.¹⁷ Miller's perspective on human nature is thus radically different from that of Schoonenberg. Nonetheless, I believe that the parallels between the two theories are more striking than the differences and that Schoonenberg's theology can explain all the main features of Miller's theory. We will now, therefore, turn to an analysis of the parallel points between the two theories.

¹³ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 79.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ See, for example, Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, pp. 299-300.

¹⁷ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 194ff.

As we saw in Chapter One, Miller is convinced of the universality of child abuse and of its presence throughout history. Harrington points out that "Miller's theory is profoundly intergenerational in character.... By describing a mechanism for the transmission of the [poisonous pedagogy] from one generation to the next and by presenting this alleged mechanism to both professional and lay audiences, Miller was explicitly attempting to break what she saw as a tragic intergenerational connection."¹⁸ Clifford uses a similar concept to describe the method of transmission that Miller posits for child abuse: he calls it "generational contagion".¹⁹ It is interesting that Clifford would use such a phrase to describe the perpetuation of the cycle of abuse, since it is a phrase that could equally be used to describe Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology. Schoonenberg, as we have seen, contends that sin has permeated all of human history since the first sin; that Adam's sin was merely the first in a chain of interconnected sins that have spread a net which influences all who are born into the world. Children encounter this sin through the environment into which they are born and they, as they grow older, in turn contribute to it. Thus, sin is passed on through the generations.²⁰

Miller points to the power of the early environment when she says that, "to say that

¹⁸ David Harrington, "Child-rearing Antecedents of Suboptimal Personality Development: Exploring Aspects of Alice Miller's concept of Poisonous Pedagogy", *Studying Lives Through Time: Personality and Development*, David C. Funder, et al, eds. (Santa Cruz, CA: American Psychological Association, 1993), p. 291.

¹⁹ Clifford, "Narcissism, 'Nuclearism,' and 'Inner Infanticide': Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Idea of the Child in the Nuclear Age", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 1983, p. 41.

²⁰ Schoonenberg points out that "the solidarity of the successive generations in evil... has been most clearly expressed in Yahweh's word after the prohibition of idolatry in the Decalogue". [Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 99] He quotes the passage in Exodus where God says that he is "a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.[Exod.xx.5-6]" [*Ibid.*]

childhood shapes an individual's later life, is to be sure, an abstract statement, and only as such can it claim universal validity. The form such shaping takes is culturally determined and subject to the vicissitudes of society; it must be explored anew by every generation and be understood within the particular context of each individual life."²¹ Corroboration of her theory is offered by Lloyd deMause, editor of *The History of Childhood*, who says that, "because psychic structure must always be passed from generation to generation through the narrow funnel of childhood, a society's child-rearing practices are not just one item in a list of cultural traits. They are the very condition for the transmission and development of all other cultural elements, and place definite limits on what can be achieved in all other spheres of history."²²

Schoonenberg also hypothesizes a "link which connects the sins of one person with the sins of another, the sins of the father with those of the children."²³ He finds this link in the idea of punishment, "that is, the sequels which proceed from sin." Schoonenberg sees these sequels in "the loneliness, the fact of facing those who have been harmed by one's sin, the damage inflicted upon psychic and bodily health, the feeling of anxiety or of being unsheltered", all of which he says "may pass from the sinner to those who are entrusted to him or related to him."²⁴ Miller also contends that "the injustice, humiliation, mistreatment, and coercion a person has experienced are not without consequences. The tragedy is that the effects of mistreatment are transmitted to new and

²¹ Alice Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware: Society's Betrayal of the Child*, trans. Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum (New American Library, New York, 1984), p. 5.

²² Lloyd deMause, ed., *The History of Childhood: The Untold Story of Child Abuse* (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1988), p. 3.

²³ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 103.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

innocent victims, even though the victims themselves do not remember the mistreatment on a conscious level."²⁵

Therefore, it is in this intergenerational connection that I see the primary parallel between Miller's and Schoonenberg's theories. Both point to the history of human evil, and both see it as being transmitted through the early environment. Miller gives a far more detailed analysis of the specific mechanisms of the transmission than does Schoonenberg. As we saw, she hypothesizes that it is through the child-rearing techniques that she calls "poisonous pedagogy", through the wider influence of society, and through the teachings of religion that child abuse is transmitted. Schoonenberg, however, does acknowledge these influences. He says that, "modern individual and social psychology makes us realize to what extent the decision of our will is influenced by our way of seeing concrete reality, by the spontaneous reaction of our drives, and, hence, also by the knowledge and motivation which we may receive from others—in one word, by our whole former education and present environment. All this constitutes the ground on which, and the raw materials with which, our free decision takes shape."²⁶ James Mackey says that Schoonenberg "has been at pains to show that as men are ministers of grace to each other, preaching God's word and witnessing to him in their lives, so they may also be ministers of 'graceless situations' to each other."²⁷ Pointing out that Schoonenberg believes that this influence goes far deeper than mere example, Mackey says that it is, especially in family situations, "a question of instilling substitute ideals, thus shaping the mental attitude, the spiritual direction of others. It is a question of the formation of mind,

²⁵ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 247.

²⁶ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 111.

²⁷ Mackey, "New Thinking on Original Sin", p. 231.

character, personality, just as much as biological generation forms the body."²⁸ This is a clear parallel with Miller's theories on the influence of the family on the child,²⁹ and therefore this is one aspect of Miller's theories that Schoonenberg's theology can account for.

As we saw in Chapter One, Miller highlights the fear of loss of the parents' love as a primary mechanism by which child abuse is perpetuated throughout the generations. Pointing to both religious and secular prohibitions against hating or blaming parents, Miller emphasizes the complete dependence of the child on the abusers for food, shelter, and security. Because the child is forced to love the parents, it is nearly impossible for them to acknowledge their rage. Thus it becomes difficult for them to admit that their parents' behaviour was wrong and therefore not to be emulated. Questioning the parents enough to break the chain of abuse results in the loss of the parents' love - a risk that few children are able to take, even when they grow to be adults themselves.³⁰ Schoonenberg

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Freud's theories about the influence of the father on the child's moral behaviour can be seen as an influence on Miller's theories. But it can also be used to show the validity of Schoonenberg's contention about the inevitable influence of the environment on each person's behaviour. Freud says that, "As a child grows up, the role of father is carried on by teachers and others in authority; their injunctions and prohibitions remain powerful in the ego ideal and continue, in the form of conscience, to exercise the moral censorship." [Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, *Standard Edition*, Vol. XIX, p. 37.] If we unite Clifford's theory that parenting is a necessarily flawed activity, [Clifford, "Narcissism, 'Nuclearism,' and 'Inner Infanticide'", p. 42.] with Freud's theory that the child internalizes the father and others, we can see how the sin of the world is transmitted, to use Schoonenberg's terms. To put it into Miller's language, we can see how abuse is passed on from generation to generation, as each child takes the abusive parent (and/or other) into themselves and then follows their prohibitions and prescriptions with their own children or other victims.

³⁰ See Miller, *For Your Own Good*, pp. 4-5, 61, 117-118, etc. It is clear that Miller has been influenced by Freudian theory for this point. Freud acknowledges the child's helplessness and complete dependence on parents and says that the parents' influence on the child is so powerful because of this same "fear of loss of love." [Sigmund Freud,

points to this fear of the loss of love in a slightly different context: that of peer pressure. He emphasizes the overwhelming influence that peer pressure can have on a person, especially a young person, and says that the person can be motivated to perform sinful acts by the need to be accepted and by the fear of being ostracised if they refuse.³¹

While Miller and Schoonenberg differ in the degree to which they point out the child's need for protection and approval, it is nonetheless interesting to note that both of them see the situation of the early environment as having an enormous influence on the child's subsequent behaviour. Schoonenberg explores the concept of situation at length, as we have seen, speaking of the various types of bad example that are inevitable because of the presence of sin in the world. He sees the influence of this bad example as being often very subtle: the other's bad behaviour subliminally recommends similar behaviour to me. This influence may be immediate, or it may be delayed, not realizing full effect until later in life, but it is decisive, and, in the case of a seriously negative environment, determinant to at least some degree of the child's future behaviour.

This theory is not identical with Miller's theory of the repetition compulsion: of the child's need to project their repressed anger onto a substitute object, to reenact what was suffered in order to finally get attention for it. But what Schoonenberg proposes is not all that different. His view of the subtlety of the influence of the early environment can be seen to be parallel to Miller's acknowledgement that "what makes us sick are those

Civilization and its Discontents, trans. Joan Riviere, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1969), p. 61.] Freud goes on to say that, "If he loses the love of another person upon whom he is dependent, he also ceases to be protected from a variety of dangers. Above all, he is exposed to the danger that this stronger person will show his superiority in the form of punishment." [*Ibid.*]

³¹ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 113. Freud also sees this fear as determining the values that a person will have. He says that "what is bad is whatever causes one to be threatened with loss of love. For fear of that loss, one must avoid it." [Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 61.]

things we cannot see through".³² She theorizes that poisonous pedagogy is so successful at poisoning children's lives precisely because its cruelty is unacknowledged, because the child is told that they are being treated this way, "for your own good." Thus the negative influence is passed on - the subliminal message that the child is innately evil is received by the child with no opportunity given for argument or refutation.³³ Therefore, children who are raised with these negative examples of parenting will grow up seduced by their subtlety into repeating them with their own children and thus, Miller says, the cycle of abuse is perpetuated. Schoonenberg's theology can therefore also take account of this facet of Miller's theory. The need to repeat the bad example of abusive parenting is due to the fear of being rejected by the ones you must love.

Both Miller and Schoonenberg, in their work on the situation into which the child is born, emphasize the fact that there exist situations which are totally negative and which have an overwhelmingly negative effect on the child. Miller argues that only a child who has experienced at least some good in their environment can choose whether to do good. As we saw in Chapter One, she thinks that children raised only with bad examples will only be able to choose to do evil and will have no freedom to choose the good precisely because they have no knowledge of it.³⁴ Moreover, some children's souls can be completely murdered, according to Miller, and when this happens, great evil results. She turns for her example of this type of destruction to Hitler and Germany at the time of the Third Reich. Miller traces how parents' adamant insistence on total obedience can damage children severely. She asks, "what happens when not a trace of vital spontaneity

³² Miller, *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, p. 100.

³³ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, pp. 59-60.

³⁴ See, for example, Miller's account of the life of the convicted child-murderer and sex-offender Jürgen Bartsch in *For Your Own Good*, pp. 198ff.

remains because the child's upbringing was a total and perfect success, as was the case with people such as Adolf Eichmann and Rudolf Hess?"³⁵ According to Miller, "they were trained to be obedient so successfully and at such an early age that the training never lost its effectiveness; the structure never displayed any fissures,... nor did feelings of any kind ever jar it."³⁶ Unfortunately, until they died, these men, and so many like them, obeyed the orders they were given without ever questioning them, just as they had been trained to do. The result was the murder of over six million people.

Schoonenberg's example of a negative situation is both less severe and less real than Miller's. As we have seen, his theology has been criticized for being too far abstracted from reality. Nonetheless, even though he doesn't cite real examples, Schoonenberg also contends that there are situations which totally obscure the good. However, unlike Miller, Schoonenberg thinks that these types of situations are very rare. As we saw in Chapter Two, Schoonenberg uses as an illustration of such a situation, the example of a child born into a family of prostitutes or thieves, "in which the norms of honesty and chastity are not observed, wherein these values are not alive."³⁷ In Schoonenberg's example, unlike in Miller's, the situation is passively negative for the child, since it only deprives the child of positive values. Schoonenberg, it must be emphasized again, at no point speaks of active child abuse as a form of negative situation. Instead, the most that he speaks of is a situation similar to the psychic abuse defined by Miller as deprivation of proper care and nurturance.

One reason that Schoonenberg sees these totally negative situations as being rare is because he maintains that most families are not completely isolated in their negativity

³⁵ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 67.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 116.

since there are external factors which mitigate their influence on the child. However, Schoonenberg does not minimize the effects on children of those situations which are overwhelmingly negative. He sees the consequent constriction of freedom as being a type of death: "This is a partial 'death of the soul', with which a human being starts his existence as a human being. And throughout his whole life he remains burdened by that handicap, at least in so far as he remains imprisoned in the environment which has inflicted this death upon him."³⁸ Schoonenberg says that the person "remains in that way as long as another person does not break through the infernal circle, enter it or rather snatch him out of it—and take him up into communion with him by giving him a living example" of good.³⁹ Schoonenberg's theory of the negative situation can thus take account of the real, horrific case histories that Miller cites to substantiate her theories.

This latter point of Schoonenberg's, of the necessity of a person who intervenes for good in a person's life in order to free them from the evil of a negative situation, offers a good explanation for Miller's concept of the "enlightened witness". This, as we saw in Chapter One, is the person who witnesses and validates an abused child's feelings and thus gives them an example of love and compassion, therefore enabling them to escape the evil of the repetition compulsion. We will return to this parallel shortly, but it is useful to note that here too, Schoonenberg's theology can take account of Miller's theory.

As we have seen, both Miller and Schoonenberg struggle with the determinism that their theories seem to propose. Schoonenberg gives a serious warning: if sin robbed us totally of our freedom to choose, "the sinner would then... no longer [be] accountable for the actions he was to perform nor for the sin he had committed".⁴⁰ Throughout her first

³⁸ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, pp. 117-118.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 118.

⁴⁰ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 87.

three books, Miller ends up with exactly this weakness in her theory: she excuses parents from the blame for abusing their children by pointing out that they only do so because they were abused as children, thus revealing a deterministic theory positing a limited human freedom. In *Banished Knowledge*, Miller says that she previously exonerated these parents because of her need to exonerate her own parents of the abuse they inflicted on her. It was only after she was able to face the pain of her own childhood that Miller was able to see that her parents were responsible for hurting her and did have a choice of whether to do so or not.⁴¹ After facing this painful truth, Miller says that she was no longer "afraid to entertain, and express, the thought that parents are guilty of crimes against their children *even though* they act out of an inner compulsion and as an outcome of their tragic past."⁴² Miller thus succeeds in combining determinism with a theory of personal accountability.

However, whereas Miller did move to a theory of adult freedom, she still maintains that the freedom of many children is severely restricted. She points out that children *are* often forced to repress their emotions, to give their parents undeserved love, to parent their parents, and to perform many extremely painful acts such as those involved in sexual abuse, without any free choice whatsoever.⁴³ It is only as the child grows to adulthood that the ability to choose actions develops. Miller concludes that "everyone is shaped (this does not mean determined) by his or her childhood."⁴⁴

I see an explanation for this aspect of Miller's theory in Schoonenberg's concept

⁴¹ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, pp. 21-26.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 26.

⁴³ For a brief outline of this aspect of Miller's theory, see *For Your Own Good*, pp. 283-284.

⁴⁴ Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 51.

of a "situated liberty". As we saw in Chapter Two, Schoonenberg maintains that the situation of sin into which each child is born results in a constriction of the child's freedom. Schoonenberg emphasizes that this does not mean that the child's freedom is removed, but that it is restricted in range and operation. The harsher the originating environment, the narrower the range of freedom, but still freedom exists: as the child grows, they can choose to reject the negative examples surrounding them and choose the good. Schoonenberg's theory, then, of a gradual development of liberty from initial constriction can account for Miller's contention that, as children grow to be adults, they gain free will and the responsibility to use it. Since both point to the restriction of free will but insist on the need to act freely, the sin of the world theology can also explain this part of Miller's theory.

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Miller and Schoonenberg differ in how they see the end of human evil occurring, with Schoonenberg looking to Christ and Miller to human beings. There are certain parallels, however, that can be seen between their theories. Both do see the need to end human violence and both believe that such an end is possible. Schoonenberg maintains that evil and good are both at work in the world, and that the final outcome will be between a world defined and ruled by sin and a world of love. Only Christ can save us and lead us to the latter.⁴⁵ Miller would phrase it differently but say what I think is similar: that the destruction of the world through violent war is all too possible⁴⁶ but that there is hope that we can turn with love to the children we once were and the children we now raise and thus find healing and joy.⁴⁷ Only love, therefore, can heal us and lead us out of the cycle of abuse.

⁴⁵ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 196.

⁴⁶ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, pp. vii-viii.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 271-273.

Schoonenberg and Miller differ, naturally, in their views of individual redemption from the sin of the world.⁴⁸ Schoonenberg contends that it is dependent on the sinner accepting God's gift of grace, since otherwise, "the sinner clings to his own sinful choice, he keeps himself imprisoned in it, enslaved to it."⁴⁹ Miller argues that adults must find an enlightened witness of some sort to help them acknowledge their own childhood suffering in order to free themselves from the compulsion to repeat it.⁵⁰ But perhaps a parallel can be seen and Schoonenberg's theology can take account of even this aspect of Miller's theory. In his book, *Covenant and Creation*, Schoonenberg acknowledges a type of human witness similar to that posited by Miller. He says that "faith between human beings is always the acceptance of truths, but also, at the same time, a giving up of oneself to the person who is communicating them... that is, to his capability, insight, reliability, and even to the care and love which makes him communicate his knowledge to us."⁵¹ For Schoonenberg, "dialogue between people finds its deepest meaning not when it remains at the level of exchange of objective data which is in principle independent of the freely and personally determined existence of each of the participants, but when this existence, this personality, is unveiled, when there occurs a revelation and a meeting."⁵² Thus Schoonenberg points to the same deep level of healing interaction, of honesty and

⁴⁸ This is, of course, a phrase that Miller would never use. She would refer to it as being released from the trap of abuse, or "Out of the Prison of Confusion" (the title of Chapter 2 of *Breaking Down the Wall of Silence*), "The Liberating Experience of Painful Truth" (Chapter 9 in the same work).

⁴⁹ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, p. 87.

⁵⁰ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 172.

⁵¹ Piet Schoonenberg, *Covenant and Creation* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. xxi.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. xx.

respect between people, that Miller details in her theory of the enlightened witness. Miller contends that "people who from earliest childhood have been taken seriously, have been respected, loved, and protected, cannot but treat their own children in the same way because their souls and their bodies have absorbed and stored this lesson at an early age. From the very beginning they learned that it is right to protect and respect the weaker, and it becomes something they take for granted."⁵³ Schoonenberg says of his own theory that "if dialogue between human beings can bring about all this and achieve its highest development, if it brings about such a unity and is thence carried further", how much more is this so when we find relationship with "the God of our salvation".⁵⁴

There is therefore perhaps a further parallel in that, for Schoonenberg, the God whom he looks to for redemption is a God of love who listens to us and cares for us, a God who acts as what Miller would call an enlightened witness for us. Schoonenberg says that faith in human love "has its resemblance to faith in the witness of God, in that through such a human witness error and deception are ruled out, and it holds true of God - though in an infinitely deeper and fuller sense - that neither he nor they can be mistaken or deceive us".⁵⁵ According to Schoonenberg, God is a more trustworthy witness, more steadfast, more true, than human witnesses are capable of being: "for these, whilst being the most personal, are at the same time by reason of our subjectiveness the most threatened forms of faith between men."⁵⁶ In Schoonenberg's concept of God as a God of love, therefore, we can see a parallel with Miller's contention that the healing of the individual can only come about through the help of a loving human relationship.

⁵³ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 174.

⁵⁴ Schoonenberg, *Covenant and Creation*, p. xx.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp. xxi-xxii.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. xxii.

This aspect of Schoonenberg's theology therefore takes full account of Miller's theory and can provide a useful model for pastoral responses to victims of child abuse.

As we have seen, Miller does make use of the religious concept of forgiveness as another means by which the transmission of child abuse can be halted.⁵⁷ According to Miller, it is only when the abused person, through the help of a witness, is able to face what was done to them and feel their anger and rage, that they can begin to let go of it and actually forgive their abusers. This forgiveness frees them from the need to repeat the abuse with their own children or with others. Interestingly enough, Miller says that this forgiveness comes about as the result of grace.⁵⁸ Schoonenberg, as a theologian, argues that grace is a gift from God and is the result of turning to God in genuine love and need.⁵⁹ But otherwise, in this instance too, Schoonenberg's theology can explain Miller's theory.

One further possible parallel between Schoonenberg's and Miller's theories of redemption from human evil lies in Miller's concept of the world being saved from evil through the teaching of a child. As we saw in Chapter One, Miller says that "it is only from a child who was never injured that we can learn entirely new, honest, and truly humane behavior."⁶⁰ Thus, she posits the need for a child who is born without the stain of the corruption of the world to lead the world to healing. Schoonenberg would say that this was a child born without sin and would point to Jesus,⁶¹ whose life taught an "entirely new, honest, and truly humane behavior."

⁵⁷ Miller, *For Your Own Good*, p. 247.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, pp. 65-66.

⁶⁰ Miller, *Banished Knowledge*, p. 176.

⁶¹ See Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin*, pp. 15-18.

Both Miller and Schoonenberg therefore highlight the history of human evil and its development and transmission throughout the generations. Both point to the decisive influence of the early environment on adults' behaviour, outlining how the child's situation warps their freedom without negating it completely, except in rare cases. And both find an end to human evil through loving relationships, through the power of the good example. Schoonenberg's focus may be on Christ as the redeemer of the sin of the world, but nonetheless, his theology does function to explain the presence and transmission of child abuse, as outlined by Miller. Though he does not speak specifically of it, Schoonenberg's theory that human evil grows out of the history of sins against humanity which corrupt every child's first environment explains where child abuse comes from, why it is so powerful an influence on the child's future behaviour, and why it continues to be transmitted from generation to generation. Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology is thus a useful hermeneutic to use to understand the problem of the abuse of children.

THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOONENBERG'S SIN OF THE WORLD THEOLOGY

It is now time to question whether Schoonenberg's theology is acceptable enough to the church to be used by it as an explanation for the presence of child abuse in the world. We must question whether his theology has met with sufficient approval, either as an interpretation of the doctrine of original sin or as an explanation for the effects of original sin in the world.

As we saw in Chapter Two, Schoonenberg himself hesitates to definitively identify his sin of the world theology as being identical to the traditional doctrine of original sin outlined by the Council of Trent and the teaching of the magisterium. He himself maintains that his interpretation provides an adequate explanation for all the facets

covered by the doctrine, but he admits that his theology has yet to prove its worth and that the presumption is still on the side of the classical doctrine. The most that Schoonenberg is willing to state is that he is convinced that his theology can enrich the traditional understanding of the doctrine.

The magisterium has shown itself unwilling to accept Schoonenberg's reinterpretation of original sin. Piet Schoonenberg was one of the co-authors of *A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults*,⁶² the Dutch catechism first published in 1966. This *Catechism*, while receiving an *imprimatur* from Cardinal Alfrink, was promptly criticised by Rome. Pope Paul VI appointed a committee comprised of six cardinals to question the authors of the work and make recommendations for changes.⁶³ The Dutch Bishops were reluctant to publish a revised edition incorporating the corrections, and as a result, the corrections were published as a *Supplement* at the back of subsequent editions of the catechism.⁶⁴ The longest section of the *Supplement* is the one on original sin, because it was this section that the Cardinals most objected to.

It is not possible to know which sections of the *New Catechism* were worked on specifically by Schoonenberg, but it is very clear to see that, at the very least, he had a hand in writing the section on original sin, "The Power of Sin", since it reflects a theology

⁶² Piet Schoonenberg, et al (Higher Catechetical Institute at Nijmegen), *A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults* (with *The Supplement to A New Catechism* by Edouard Dhanis and Jan Visser), trans. Kevin. Smyth (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

⁶³ Information on this controversy comes from Albert C. Outler, "Review of A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 37, March 1969, pp. 100-101, 104; and Vandervelde, *Original Sin: Two Major Trends in Contemporary Roman Catholic Reinterpretation*, p. 48.

⁶⁴ Vandervelde says that the *Supplement* "is the meagre result of a concerted attempt by Rome to correct the *New Catechism* by thoroughly revising it". [Vandervelde, *Original Sin*, p. 48.]

that is very similar to his own. While there have been no specific condemnations of Schoonenberg's theology from the hierarchy, their criticisms of the situationist theology propounded in the *New Catechism* make it clear that the sin of the world theology is not acceptable to them as an interpretation of the doctrine of original sin. The Cardinals' *Declaration* says that "*though in consequence of the questions about the origin of the human race in its gradual development, the dogma of original sin now presents new difficulties, the New Catechism must faithfully reproduce the doctrine of the Church about man, who rebelled against God at the beginning of history*".⁶⁵ After repeating the traditional formulation of the doctrine, including the loss of the preternatural gifts, the punishment of death, and the transmission to all subsequent people through propagation, the Cardinals say that "*discussions must be avoided which could give the impression that the individual members of the human family were stained by original sin only because they are exposed by their origin to the influence of human society where sin reigns and so find themselves from the beginning on the way to sin*".⁶⁶

Acknowledging that the story in Genesis 3 does not give definitive form to the doctrine, the authors of the *Supplement*, bowing to the Cardinals' corrections, point to the church's sources for the doctrine: "the New Testament and the teaching of the Church, which has the assistance of the Holy Spirit".⁶⁷ The church's traditional formulation, then, must be respected because it was defined with the aid of the Holy Spirit - it was not simply an arbitrary decision on the part of theologians or church councils. The teaching of the magisterium is to be followed: the *Supplement* cites the minimal

⁶⁵ Dhanis and Visser, *The Supplement to A New Catechism*, p. 519.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 521.

references to Adam in *The Documents of Vatican II*,⁶⁸ and Paul VI's summation of the doctrine (quoted in Chapter Two, Part One of this thesis) contained in "The Credo of the People of God",⁶⁹ and says that these are the sources which must be used along with the teachings of the Council of Trent for the only acceptable formulation of the doctrine of original sin. It is clear, then, that Schoonenberg's situationist theology is unacceptable to the magisterium as an interpretation of the doctrine.

The response of other Catholic theologians to Schoonenberg's theology has been mixed. Zoltan Alszeghy and Maurizio Flick, two theologians who took part in the Symposium on Original Sin with Schoonenberg, reject the situationist theologies of original sin because they are based on "the presupposition that man is a sinner simply because of the selfish society which prevents his development."⁷⁰ Alszeghy and Flick maintain that such theories do not take sufficient account of what they see as the traditional formulation of the doctrine's insistence on the transmission of original sin at the time of conception. They describe the situationist theologians' theory of transmission between Adam's sin and each individual's sin as a "continuous corruption of the young",⁷¹ a concept that they find inadequate to explain the effect of original sin on the person.

⁶⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, No. 2, p. 15, and *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 22, p. 220, in *The Documents of Vatican II, Introduction and Commentaries by Catholic Bishops and Experts: Responses by Protestant and Orthodox Scholars*, Walter M. Abbott, general editor, Joseph Gallagher, trans. ed. (New York: Guild Press, 1966).

⁶⁹ Paul VI, "The Credo of the People of God", *Solemni hac liturgia*, 30 June 1968, *Vatican Council II: More Postconciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, general editor (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982), p. 391.

⁷⁰ Zoltan Alszeghy and Maurizio Flick, "A Personalistic View of Original Sin", *Theology Digest*, Vol. XV, No. 3, Autumn 1967 (Synopsis of "Il peccato originale in prospettiva personalistica", *Gregorianum* 46 (1965), 705-732.), p. 192.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

E. F. O'Doherty, another symposium participant, criticizes Schoonenberg for assuming that original sin is nothing more than the human context, than a situatedness "which is already an orientation towards evil" and "a form of guilt by association".⁷² O'Doherty concludes that, "in the end, it seems to me, Schoonenberg is saying that 'Original Sin' is the collective processing of individual men by the accumulated sins of history and culture. But whatever this is, it is not sin."⁷³ O'Doherty is willing to admit that society does influence the person towards evil, but he is unwilling to see this as the location of original sin. He contends that original sin is an inherited condition that is innate to human nature.

Alfred Vanneste also criticizes Schoonenberg's concept of original sin as humanity's situatedness. He admits that Schoonenberg's theology "gives us an interesting analysis of the notion of situation in the light of modern psychology and philosophy."⁷⁴ Nonetheless, he rejects this as an interpretation of original sin because he thinks that it is wrong to use situation as an alibi for personal sin, "to use it as a basis for the solution of problems situated on the deepest and the most intimate level of the human person."⁷⁵ Vanneste criticizes Schoonenberg for doing away with the concept of free will, saying that Schoonenberg is inclined to exonerate people for the evil they do on the basis of their corruption by the world.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Vanneste maintains that Schoonenberg

⁷² E. F. O'Doherty, "Original Sin as Seen by a Catholic Psychologist", *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2, April 1967, p. 117.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 122.

⁷⁴ Alfred Vanneste, *The Dogma of Original Sin*, trans. Edward P. Callens (Brussels: Vander, 1975), p. 175.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 176.

⁷⁶ Schoonenberg explicitly rejects this position. See *Man and Sin*, p. 87. As we saw in Chapter Two, Schoonenberg is very careful to preserve the idea of free will, even as he

overemphasizes "the evil and sinful character of the situation of present-day mankind",⁷⁷ in order to bolster his theory. It is difficult to see how Schoonenberg can be accused of overemphasizing it when one compares his examples of sinful situations to Miller's examples of destructiveness. For his own theology, Vanneste insists on the radical personal responsibility for sin that he sees in Augustine's theology.

In James Forsyth's article, "Original Sin and Psychoanalysis", he questions the situationist reinterpretation of original sin, especially whether Trent's use of the term 'generation' can be used to denote the whole process of procreation, "including both birth and one's ongoing interpersonal relationships".⁷⁸ Forsyth acknowledges some value in the situationist view that all people are born into an involuntary state that leads to sin, but he contends that the situationists err in assuming that the environment will, of necessity, be harmful.⁷⁹ He also questions the situationists' contention that evil has been constantly increasing in the world since the first sin, since he finds it difficult to equate this with the "more optimistic vision of eschatological fulfillment as the culmination of the historical process of human striving."⁸⁰

acknowledges that the sin of the world limits it.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 177.

⁷⁸ James Forsyth, "Original Sin and Psychoanalysis", *Interpreting Tradition: The Art of Theological Reflection*, ed. Jane Kopas (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), p. 136.

⁷⁹ Forsyth uses Erickson's model of generativity to explain the doctrine of original sin. He says that for Erickson, the process of child-rearing "is no longer the negative one of being gradually assimilated into a sinful environment with the resulting evil consequences, but rather the process of parenting, nurturing, and educating in which humanity does not its worst to corrupt the child, but its best to transmit moral principles and values." [Forsyth, "Original Sin and Psychoanalysis", p. 140.] In this article, Forsyth gives an interesting analysis of how Erickson's concept of generativity could be applied to the doctrine of original sin.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 138.

In place of the situationist theologies, Forsyth proposes an interpretation of original sin that sees it not as growing out of "the realization of one's solidarity with sinful humanity but from the realization of the inadequacy of one's own and human civilization's 'good works', to authenticate or justify one's existence."⁸¹ He maintains that the situationists' interpretation of original sin needs the acknowledgement that awareness of sin grows not out of immersion in it, but out of the highest "religious, moral, and cultural achievements" of humanity.⁸² This view takes account of the positive progress in humanity, instead of the negative growth of sin that Forsyth sees the situationists' interpretation emphasizing.

Forsyth sees the Freudian concept of the death instinct as a corrective to the sin of the world theologies, since it offers an understanding of the "painful experience of the gap between actual existence and essential being".⁸³ He finds in this explanation the universal experience that is expressed by the concept of original sin. Forsyth therefore concludes that "Sin is not the result of harmful environmental influences; sin, or rather our awareness of it, is paradoxically the result of beneficial environmental influences. Such an interpretation seems to me to be more in keeping with the intent of the Tridentine formula which is to emphasize that sin, in the first instance, is in the individual and not in the environment."⁸⁴ Forsyth, therefore, rejects the sin of the world as original sin. Contrary to Schoonenberg's and Miller's positions that the environment has an inevitably corrupting influence on all born, Forsyth maintains that the environment is good and that it is the contradiction between this good and the aggression within us that

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

gives rise to the consciousness of sin.

G. Vandervelde, whose major work on original sin, *Original Sin: Two Major Trends in Contemporary Roman Catholic Reinterpretation* contains such a valuable analysis of the situationist theologies, offers thoughtful criticism of them as well. Vandervelde contends that, in the attempt to clearly reveal the nonvoluntary nature of original sin, the situation of the person is too radically separated from their freedom. Another criticism concerns the minimal role for baptism in the situationist theology. Vandervelde thinks that baptism's importance is downplayed by the situationists because their theory sees the privation of grace coexisting simultaneously with the universal grace of Christ. Thus, baptism is no longer a transition from privation to a state of grace, but simply incorporation into the church.⁸⁵

Vandervelde, however, is not entirely critical of the situationist theologies. He acknowledges that, in particular, Schoonenberg gives an excellent expression of the nature of personal sin.⁸⁶ Vandervelde also praises Schoonenberg for the "creativity of his early innovations... and the breadth of his mature conception".⁸⁷ Nonetheless, while he does acknowledge that the situationists have made a valuable contribution to the reinterpretation of original sin, he maintains that their concept of history is flawed. Vandervelde says that they have abandoned the "religious direction of history",⁸⁸ which, for him, lies in the progression from sin to grace. Thus he believes that this means that "both perspective and potential concreteness are lost."⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Vandervelde, *Original Sin*, pp. 254-256.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 321.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 58.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 333.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

As we have seen, Schoonenberg's theology has been criticized by other theologians working on the doctrine of original sin. There are many, however, who either propose similar theologies⁹⁰ or who accept the situationist theology and use it for the basis of their own work.⁹¹ André-Marie Dubarle, for example, is one who developed a sin of the world theology quite similar to Schoonenberg's.

After conducting an exhaustive exegesis of all the biblical passages that could be applicable to the doctrine of original sin, Dubarle applies the same historical-critical method to the teachings of the magisterium as does Schoonenberg, and reaches similar conclusions. Dubarle accepts that it is too early yet to state definitively whether the sin of the world is identical with original sin, but he thinks it is clear that "in the perspective of Scripture original sin is continued, relayed and conveyed to us by the sin of the world."⁹²

Dubarle acknowledges the influence of psychoanalysis on the sin of the world theologies, saying that theologians can learn from what psychoanalysis teaches about the

⁹⁰ As we saw in the Introduction to this thesis, the major theologians who have developed a situationist interpretation of original sin are André-Marie Dubarle, A. Hulsbosch, Karl Rahner, Henri Rondet, and Karl-Heinz Weger. Vandervelde studies only the works of Schoonenberg, Rahner, and Weger for the situationist interpretation in his work, *Original Sin: Two Major Trends in Contemporary Roman Catholic Reinterpretation*. Because he has provided such an excellent analysis of Rahner's and Weger's theology, we will only briefly examine the work of Dubarle in this section, to see how his sin of the world theology coincides with Schoonenberg's while making explicit use of psychoanalysis.

⁹¹ See for example: Josef Fuchs, "The 'Sin of the World' and Normative Morality", *Gregorianum*, Vol. 61, No. 1, 1980, pp. 51-76; Sharon MacIsaac, *Freud and Original Sin* (New York: Paulist Press, 1974); David Parker, "Original Sin: A Fresh Approach", *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol. 13, July 1989, pp. 228-245; and Richard Swinburne, "Original Sinfulness", *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, Vol. 27, Band 1985, pp. 235-250; as well as the examples given below.

⁹² André-Marie Dubarle, *The Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd., 1964), p. 229.

influence of early experiences on the developing child: "During [the] period of childhood the human being is extremely open to injuries that may be inflicted on it by defective behaviour on the part of those about it."⁹³ Pointing out that some experiences are more formative of a child's character than are others, Dubarle says that therefore, "we may come to envisage psychological factors alongside physical heredity, which already passes on certain blemishes or disorders, in order to explain the universal propagation of a state of sin in all man."⁹⁴ In the following passage, Dubarle describes the world in terms that show how the sin of the world theology can be used to take account of the reality and effects of child abuse:

It is inevitable that there should be some injurious and deforming contacts among the multitude of human relationships in which a young child becomes involved and which he needs absolutely for his formation, just as he needs food to build up his body. Between generation in the strict sense of the word and the bad example received from an adult there is an incalculable mass of social and psychological influences brought to bear on a subject in the process of formation, providing him of necessity with the instruments of his psychic life.⁹⁵

Dubarle maintains that we can say that this psychic inheritance is inherited, as Trent stated, *propagatione non imitatione*.

Dubarle concludes that each person is therefore radically dependent on their environment and that this is a determining factor in humanity's nature. Since all of humanity is under the influence of the whole history of sin in the world, it is not surprising that each child would be influenced by it. Dubarle says that he sees original sin "as a truly tragic and actual situation: no longer merely the loss of wonderful gifts at a great remove from our day and condition, but the moral and religious perversion in which every man finds himself inevitably plunged by reason of his birth into a perverted

⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 241.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*.

environment".⁹⁶

Many theologians, whether writing for an academic or a lay audience, make use either explicitly or implicitly of the main premise of the sin of the world theologies: that original sin is environmentally mediated. Stephen Duffy, like Dubarle, incorporates psychoanalytic theory with his theology to help him understand the origin of evil in human nature. He adapts a theory similar to that held by the situationists, when he locates the child's inheritance from the parents genetically but more importantly, environmentally. Duffy points out that, according to basic psychoanalytic theory, "parents unconsciously, for the most part, transmit by word and act to their offspring the values and meanings that are their own and their culture's, and these are absorbed unconsciously by children."⁹⁷ Children thus inherit their genetic traits from their parents and also their "psychic shape, a myriad of psychological assets and liabilities, and among the latter proclivities to sloth and pride, irrationality and evil."⁹⁸ Duffy emphasizes that sin works on the infant before the child is even capable of thinking for itself. He agrees with the situationist theologians, saying that: "Before being able to choose, one is, merely by being historically situated, inextricably caught in an immense web of reciprocity in evil that one cannot escape and that has forming power."⁹⁹ Echoing Schoonenberg's idea of a situated freedom, Duffy says that "situated in a poisonous solidarity, the horizon of freedom constricts and the motives and insights presented to it are ruinous. Being situated in this way is something intrinsic, an inner determination of every human."¹⁰⁰ Thus, Duffy affirms the sin of the world theologies for giving an adequate account of the truth pointed to by the doctrine of original sin.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 244.

⁹⁷ Stephen J. Duffy, "Our Hearts of Darkness: Original Sin Revisited", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 49, 1988, p. 613.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 616.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

James Mackey, an Irish theologian who was also a participant in the Symposium on Original Sin, struggles in his theology with the question of polygenism. Recognizing that polygenism creates a serious problem for attempts to understand how Adam's sin became universal, Mackey contends that theologies which posit that one of the first people "influenced the others towards moral deterioration, and so all future men were subject to deteriorating influence,"¹⁰¹ are vastly superior to theologies that use such concepts as corporate personality. Therefore, Mackey aligns himself with Schoonenberg, agreeing with the Dutch theologian's concept of the sin of the world, since he finds it to be an obvious truth that children are morally determined by their environment.

Peter de Rosa also accepts the situationist approach to original sin. He argues that there has traditionally been too much emphasis on the individual nature of original sin and that attention has been too focused on the sin of a single man and not enough upon the whole accumulation of sin in history. He maintains that we must "take into account the sins of the Gentiles, the sins of the Jews, the rejection of God's messengers (the prophets and Christ), [and] the iniquity of our own day."¹⁰² Like Schoonenberg, de Rosa is convinced that humanity is historical in character: "Man must be studied historically, for he is a historical animal and possesses a growing historical awareness. He must be studied socially, too, for he shares with his fellows a community-or society-situation."¹⁰³ Thus, de Rosa accepts Schoonenberg's analysis of the sin of the world. He too is convinced that freedom is limited by the situation into which one is born. As does Schoonenberg, de Rosa sees more influences acting on a person's freedom than simply the parental ones. He points to the influences that society, culture, history, and biology exert on people's choices. De Rosa insists that "we are not individuals who happen to be social but essentially social beings who gradually and imperfectly become

¹⁰¹ James P. Mackey, "Original Sin and Polygenism: The State of the Question", *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2, April 1967, p. 114.

¹⁰² Peter de Rosa, *Christ and Original Sin* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company), 1967, p. 121.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 122.

aware of our individuality."¹⁰⁴

Like de Rosa, Pierre Smulders also thinks that undue attention has been paid to the relationship of the first sin to infants. He too argues that that emphasis misses the point that all of humanity are sinners together in a history of sin. Primarily interested in how original sin affects adults, Smulders finds it difficult to understand why the church began to emphasize the original sin of infants, why "the accent shifted from the experience of adult life to the condition of infants, from solidarity in sin to exclusive concern with what original sin meant for each person, from a dynamic power that oriented men to personal sins to a static reality identical for adults and infants."¹⁰⁵ Smulders maintains that if we reexamine the doctrine of original sin from the larger view of solidarity in sin, "we can rediscover its full meaning. We will see original sin as a power of sin that grows along with mankind itself, because each sinner gives it a new force and impulse."¹⁰⁶ Smulders therefore agrees with the interpretation of original sin as the sin of the world. He accepts a definition of original sin as "the situation in which man finds himself because he enters a world where sin reigns" because he is convinced that "man's environment—especially its institutions, value systems, and peculiar web of inter-personal relations—can influence the formation of personality."¹⁰⁷ Therefore, Trent's teaching that original sin passes through propagation rather than imitation, indicates only that each person incurs the sin by birth into the community of sinners. Smulders contends that procreation "can include not only the strictly biological aspects, but also all the factors by which mankind makes someone its member, including education, environment, and example."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Pierre Smulders, "Evolution and Original Sin", *The Mystery of Sin and Forgiveness*. Staten Island, NY: Society of St. Paul, 1971, p. 234.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 236.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 239.

That Schoonenberg's theology points to a reality that is clearly obvious - the radical influence of the early environment - is seen in the subtle influence that the concept of the sin of the world has exerted on a wide variety of sources. For example, C. J. Peter, author of a *New Catholic Encyclopedia* article on original sin, implicitly recognizes the situationists' arguments when he points out that "an age that has come to recognize the major influence of heredity and environment on man may not find it difficult to understand that man, even from a religious-moral point of view, can be affected both adversely by human evil that he did not perpetrate and favorably by good for which he was not ultimately responsible."¹⁰⁹

Pope Paul VI's writings often seem to reveal an acceptance of a genesis for human evil similar to that of the sin of the world theology. He says that "God's profound and mysterious goodness has brought it about that an inescapable supernatural relationship binds us together; as a result the evil-doing of one individual harms others, just as the holiness of one individual benefits others".¹¹⁰ While he does not accept the sin of the world theologies as adequate interpretations of the doctrine of original sin, Paul VI nonetheless reveals that he was either influenced by them or else aware independently of the truth to which they point: that the sins of the world do breed more sins. He also seems to affirm Schoonenberg's insistence that the whole history of sin has importance for the transmission of original sin, saying that sin "has a grandiose history, and that history drags us all into the unhappy inheritance of that famous original sin which was the first cause of death and of the psycho-ethical imbalances that disturb our moral life."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ C. J. Peter, "Original Sin: In Catholic Faith and Theology", *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p. 779.

¹¹⁰ Paul VI, "A Revision of the Rules on Indulgences" (Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*), trans. Gareth Edwards, *The Pope Speaks: The Church Documents Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1967, p. 125-126.

¹¹¹ Paul VI, "The Christian Response to Evil and Suffering" in *The Pope Speaks: The Church Documents Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1970, p. 23.

The Council of Vatican II also speak of the history of sin in the world in their document, "*Gaudium et Spes*", and reveal a historical consciousness that is similar to Schoonenberg's. The authors say that "history itself speeds along on so rapid a course

Paul VI thus seems to affirm the situationist theology to at least some degree.

Pope John Paul II also acknowledges the concept of the history of sin, though he too does not abandon the traditional formulation of the doctrine of original sin. In his encyclical, "Dominum et Vivificantem", he says that original sin "is the sin that according to the revealed word of God constitutes the principle and root of all the others. We find ourselves faced with the original reality of sin in human history and at the same time in the whole of the economy of salvation."¹¹² Again, John Paul II seems to be influenced by situationist theology when he says, in his encyclical, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis", that "not to observe [the ten commandments] is to offend God and hurt one's neighbor, and to introduce into the world influences and obstacles which go far beyond the actions and the brief lifespan of an individual. This also involves interference in the process of the development of peoples, the delay or slowness of which must be judged also in this light."¹¹³ This should not be taken for an acceptance of the sin of the world theology, but as an acknowledgement of the power of the phenomena to which it points.

The widespread acceptance by some of the church of the sin of the world theology is perhaps best shown by its inclusion in the new Dutch catechism. The same work points to an important fact about the waning power of Rome to restrict the content of doctrines. As we saw in Part One of Chapter Two, Vandervelde contends that one impetus for the

that an individual person can scarcely keep abreast of it. The destiny of the human community has become all of a piece... Thus, the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one." [Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II, Introduction and Commentaries by Catholic Bishops and Experts: Responses by Protestant and Orthodox Scholars*, trans. Joseph Gallagher, ed. (New York: Guild Press, 1966), pp. 203-204.] Furthermore, the authors acknowledge that "a monumental struggle against the powers of darkness pervades the whole history of man. The battle was joined from the very origins of the world and will continue until the last day, as the Lord has attested. Caught in this conflict, man is obliged to wrestle constantly if he is to cling to what is good." [*Ibid.*, p. 235.]

¹¹² John Paul II, "Dominum et Vivificantem", *Origins*, Vol.16, No. 4, June 12, 1986, p. 87.

¹¹³ John Paul II, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis", *Origins*, Vol.17, No. 38, March 3, 1988, p. 653.

proliferation of reinterpretations of the doctrine of original sin was the questioning of the infallibility of the magisterium's teachings. According to Vandervelde, "the appearance of a mere *Supplement* rather than a revised and corrected *New Catechism*... is the clearest and most significant witness to the failure of Rome to impose its boundaries of reinterpretation upon its theologians and even upon its church provinces [since] the Dutch Bishops commissioned the writing of the *New Dutch Catechism* and subsequently supported its authors' opposition to the incorporation of the corrections demanded by Rome".¹¹⁴ Vandervelde cites another theologian's comment on the significance of the fact that only a *Supplement* was published: "'Welch ein Unterschied zwischen der lahmen Reaktion Roms auf den Holländischen Katechismus und Roms Vorgehen gegen den Modernismus! Wie tief müssen seither Autorität und Macht des Heiligen Stuhles selbst im katholischen Bereich gesunken sein!'"¹¹⁵ Since *A New Catechism* became a best-seller in the Netherlands and was rapidly translated, despite the lack of authorization, into French, German, and English, it is clear that the sin of the world theology outlined by Piet Schoonenberg has gained a certain degree of acceptance, even if not from the magisterium.

It is therefore possible to conclude that the sin of the world theology does have recognizable merit and has gained at least partial acceptance as a possible interpretation of original sin and clearer acceptance as an explanation for the effects of original sin. Because of its wide influence, I propose that the sin of the world is a useful hermeneutic for the church's understanding of the problem of child abuse.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that Schoonenberg's theology provides a very adequate explanation

¹¹⁴ Vandervelde, *Original Sin*, p. 48.

¹¹⁵ Julius Gross, *Geschichte des Erbsündendogmas: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Problems vom Ursprung des Übels*, Vol. IV (München: Ernst Reinhardt Verlag, 1972), p. 323, cited in Vandervelde, *Original Sin*, p. 49. In English, the text reads: "What a difference between the lame reaction of Rome to the Dutch Catechism and Rome's fight against modernity! How profoundly the authority and power of the Holy See has sunk since then in the Catholic realm!" [translation my own.]

for the main points of Miller's theories on the presence and transmission of child abuse. According to his sin of the world theology, child abuse can be seen as the result of the first sin passed on to the children and throughout the subsequent generations, through the medium of the primary situation into which all are born, impacting on human freedom and leading, through the power of the bad example, to further abuse unless the help of a loving witness is sought. And we have seen that Schoonenberg's theology is sufficiently acceptable to the church to be used by it as a hermeneutic for the problem. While Schoonenberg's theology has been criticized for being an abstraction from reality, it is nonetheless precisely for this reason that I believe that it is most useful for explaining child abuse. Many theorists have outlined the horrific face of child abuse, and we have reviewed Miller's theories to gain an understanding of the full extent of the problem: its origins, nature, and means of transmission. However, as we have seen, there has been a dearth of theological attempts to account for the reason for the problem's existence. Schoonenberg's theology, in its abstraction, provides a good framework for understanding the problem of the abuse of children in all its complexity.

CONCLUSION

The magnitude of the problem of the abuse of children is finally beginning to be recognized in our society. While statistics vary widely, there can be no question that the problem needs serious attention. Repeatedly, studies have shown that we cannot view child abuse as an isolated phenomenon, or as a recent one. Instead, as we have seen, there is a long history of the misuse of children. In order to deal with the problem as a society, we need first to understand it: where it comes from, how it is transmitted, what its effects are; and then to determine how we can end it. Garbarino and Hershberger see this project as needing "full participation... from pastors, theologians, physicians, and social scientists in an effort to build cooperatively from the special contributions of each."¹ While theories about the causes and consequences of abuse have proliferated, theology's role in the discussion has to date been confined to "the reconstruction of the creation doctrines of male-female relations, marriage and family, and the mind-body relationship; to the reconciliation doctrines of grace, forgiveness and healing; and to the ministry doctrine of clergy-law relationships; with some attention also to images of God and theodicy."² The Roman Catholic Church has recognized that child abuse needs to be dealt with and as a result, there is a growing literature on pastoral responses. As yet, however, even though humanity has traditionally turned to religion for help in understanding why evil exists, there have been no attempts at finding a theological

¹ James Garbarino and John K. Hershberger, "The Perspective of Evil in Understanding and Treating Child Abuse", *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 20, No. 3, Fall 1981, pp. 215-216.

² Mary Potter Engel, "Evil, Sin, and Violation of the Vulnerable", *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite & Mary Potter Engel, eds. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1990), p. 154.

framework for understanding this particular type of human evil. Such a framework is needed, both in order to aid the pastoral interventions and to help the church make sense of the existence of this evil in the world. In this thesis, therefore, I proposed that Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology could make a useful contribution to the discussion of child abuse by providing a framework that could take account of many of the aspects of child abuse revealed in the theories of Alice Miller.

Before beginning my examination of Schoonenberg's theology and its context as a proposed reinterpretation for the doctrine of original sin, I first used the works of the eminent theorist, Alice Miller, to illuminate the full complexity of the problem of the abuse of children. I examined Miller's theories on how the abuse is transmitted from generation to generation, through the medium of "poisonous pedagogy" and the teachings of religion, and the mechanisms by which she thinks the transmission occurs: the repression of the child's rage that results from love and dependency, the need to project that rage on to a substitute object, and the need to repeat what was suffered in order to at last gain attention for it. I used one of Miller's case histories, the life of Hitler, to show the effects of abuse on adult behaviour, since Miller contends that all human destructiveness is a consequence of abuse suffered during childhood. And finally, I examined Miller's contention that abuse can be halted, and the means by which she thinks this can occur: through the help of an enlightened witness, therapy, the education of society about the problem itself, and through forgiveness, grace, and the example of a child who grows up free from the taint of abuse.

Miller's theory of "generational contagion"³ may not be uniformly accepted as the

³ Michael Clifford, "Narcissism, 'Nuclearism,' and 'Inner Infanticide': Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Idea of the Child in the Nuclear Age", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 1983, p. 41.

explanation for the transmission of child abuse,⁴ but it is now widely recognized.⁵ The popular media have also seen the same link that Miller reveals between early childhood abuse and later violent behaviour.⁶ Like Miller, I believe that acknowledging the

⁴ Other models emphasize biological causes, "factors within the individual perpetrator", "social forces and stresses", or look to "behavioral dynamics in the reciprocal relationship between the child and the abusive caretaker." [Garbarino and Hershberger, "The Perspective of Evil in Understanding and Treating Child Abuse", p. 208.]

⁵ For a few of the many books that recognize the generational transmission of abuse, see: Church Council on Justice and Corrections, eds., *Family Violence in a Patriarchal Culture: A Challenge to Our Way of Living* (Ottawa: Church Council on Justice and Corrections, Canadian Council on Social Development, Health and Welfare Canada, 1988); Lloyd deMause, ed., *The History of Childhood: The Untold Story of Child Abuse* (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1988); Susan Forward and Craig Buck, *Betrayal of Innocence: Incest and its Devastation* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978) and *Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989); Patricia Love and Jo Robinson, *The Emotional Incest Syndrome* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990); Florence Rush, *The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1980); and Gay Search, *The Last Taboo: Sexual Abuse of Children* (London: Penguin Books, 1988).

⁶ One major example of this was the coverage of the killing of a young murderer, Robert Sandifer Jr., aged 11 years. The *Ottawa Citizen* article, "Abused at 3, Criminal at 9, Dead at 11", clearly accepts the theory that criminality is the result of child abuse: "Robert Sandifer Jr. was neglected and burned with cigarettes before he was three. He bounced from his grandmother's home to group homes and from the back of police cars to detention centres most of the rest of his life." The article quotes Patrick Murphy, Public Guardian, as saying that Robert "was in trouble from the moment he was conceived. His family made him a sociopath." ["Abused at 3, Criminal at 9, Dead at 11", *The Ottawa Citizen*, Friday, Sept. 2, 1994, p. A1.] Other coverage of the child's death came to the same conclusion.

Another example is the Prescott, Ontario, child abuse scandal first uncovered in 1989. The magnitude of the abuse - 275 victims (178 female, 97 male) and 122 accused abusers - was shocking. ["Cycle of Child Sex Abuse Broken in Prescott", *The Ottawa Citizen*, Saturday, March 25, 1995, p. A1-2, B1-2.] Investigation into the cases revealed "the awful extent of abuse that bound four generations in misery." [*Ibid*, p. A1] The cyclic nature of the abuse was clearly revealed by the testimony of the accused, who almost all reported having been abused themselves.

historical roots of child abuse and its environmental transmission⁷ will aid us in working to prevent the problem. By helping us to see how our society and we ourselves aid in its perpetuation, Miller makes it possible for genuine change to occur.

In Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology, I find a valuable framework that can be used to increase our understanding of the problem of child abuse as outlined by Alice Miller. I contend that his theology's relevance lies in its ability to take account of many of the aspects of child abuse that Miller highlights. It can thus help the church to understand why abuse occurs and how it is transmitted, and therefore assist the church in providing better pastoral responses. The first contribution that Schoonenberg's theology can make to the discussion lies in his definition of sin as offense against one's neighbour, and hence against God's creation, which provides a useful corrective to the view of sin as 'disobedience'. Mary Potter Engel points out the danger in the latter definition: "Many battered women are trapped in abusive relationships because they have been raised to believe that disobedience to their husbands is unbiblical and sinful.... Our children also suffer when we define sin as disobedience.... Because this is often the only notion of sin drilled into them, they find it hard to understand let alone resist, the violent

⁷ Many who are willing to accept that the environment contributes to the creation of human destructiveness are yet unwilling to see it as the sole source. This perspective was well expressed by the Second Vatican Council. While recognizing the impact of the social environment and its positive effect on the fulfillment of human destiny, the authors also acknowledge that, "it cannot be denied that men are often diverted from doing good and spurred toward evil by the social circumstances in which they live and are immersed from their birth." ["Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World", Part 1, Chapter II, 25, *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, ed., Joseph Gallagher, trans. ed. (New York: Guild Press, 1966) p. 224.] But the authors nonetheless insist on the innate nature of evil. They say that, while the flaws in the social order do indeed result "in part from the natural tensions of economic, political, and social forms... at a deeper level they flow from man's pride and selfishness, which contaminate even the social sphere. When the structure of affairs is flawed by the consequences of sin, man, already born with a bent toward evil, finds there new inducements to sin, which cannot be overcome without strenuous efforts and the assistance of grace." [*Ibid.*]

and violating actions of their parents or other elders toward them."⁸ Schoonenberg's use, then, of a definition that emphasizes that it is precisely in hurting each other that we most offend God, makes a valuable contribution to the theology of child abuse.

Second, Schoonenberg's theology takes full account of the history of abuse, and of the weight of this history: the sins of the generations are such that no-one can any longer be born without being contaminated by them.⁹ Society and even the teachings of Christianity inevitably bear signs of this abuse¹⁰ and in turn transmit it to the next generation. The belief in the "wicked child", or, the child born damned with the stain of

⁸ Mary Potter Engel, "Evil, Sin, and Violation of the Vulnerable", p. 157.

⁹ The theologian Sharon MacIsaac says that "the susceptibility of each to each, most importantly at a preverbal level, the extent of what is perceived and communicated unconsciously, explains the singular virulence of the sin of the world." [Sharon MacIsaac, *Freud and Original Sin* (New York: Paulist Press, 1974), p. 119.] In a passage that echoes Miller's theory, MacIsaac points out that "childhood implies a heightened and uncritical susceptibility to environmental influence. At the same time, however, it is the period in which the deepest inner formation is effected, where dispositions are assumed so intimately that they can only rarely be distanced from in adulthood." [*Ibid.*]

¹⁰ Some contend that society's sinful influence is primarily mediated through the institutions that structure it. Neither Schoonenberg nor Miller take account of these "structures of sin". Pope John Paul II says that "It is important to note... that a world which is divided into blocs, sustained by rigid ideologies and in which instead of interdependence and solidarity different forms of imperialism hold sway, can only be a world subject to structures of sin." [*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, p. 653] He says further that, "'Sin' and 'structures of sin' are categories which are seldom applied to the situation of the contemporary world. However, one cannot easily gain a profound understanding of the reality that confronts us unless we give a name to the root of the evils which afflict us." [*Ibid.*] It would be interesting to analyze the contributions which an understanding of these sinful structures could make to both Schoonenberg's and Miller's theories.

For a detailed analysis of the concept, see the following works by the American theologian, Walter Wink: *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); and *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

original sin,¹¹ is but one example of how the sin of the world has spread its negative influence throughout the world. Therefore, Schoonenberg's emphasis on the impact of the history of sin in the world on each individual can help the church's pastoral responses by reminding it that the cases of child abuse that it deals with are not isolated phenomena but need to be dealt with in a community context. Schoonenberg highlights the "generational contagion" that Miller sees as having such an important role in the transmission of child abuse, and thus reminds the church that it needs to work inter-generationally, targeting the next generation in an affected family as much as the current ones.

Thirdly, Schoonenberg emphasizes the need to work to heal the primary situations into which children are born. Since it is within these situations that Schoonenberg, and Miller, see the primary means of the transmittal of the sin of the world, it is here that interventions must take place. The passive bad example or the active one: both say to the child, this is the way the world is, do as I do. Schoonenberg's concept of situation is far more abstract than Miller's real documentation of child abuse, but it does provide a useful conceptual framework for the reality that she exposes. And it thus emphasizes the place where church and society can begin their primary interventions - the family home - as well as calling for changes in society.

Fourth, in Schoonenberg's concept of the "good example", his illustration of how

¹¹ Some theorists point to the doctrine of original sin itself as an example of an abusive theology. Engel says that "it is this doctrine that continues to be one of the most powerful tools in the church's collusion with society in the victimization of women, children, and elders." [Mary Potter Engel, "Evil, Sin, and Violation of the Vulnerable", p. 154.] See also Carole R. Bohn, "Dominion to Rule: The Roots and Consequences of a Theology of Ownership" (pp. 105-116) and Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Western Religious Tradition and Violence Against Women in the Home" (pp. 31-41) in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds. (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989).

we can all be mediators of the good for each other, we can see a framework that can take account of Miller's call for us to heal society by being "enlightened witnesses". The Christian portrayal of God has often been criticised for being that of a dominating, cruel male god.¹² The image of God that Schoonenberg offers, that of a steadfast, trustworthy God who is more constant a friend than any person can be, can therefore be used by pastoral theology to help victims of child abuse lean on the one who is always there. Moreover, the church can learn from Schoonenberg's theology ways of intervening that can help lead children away from a life of repetitive abuse. It can emphasize the need for all of us to become good examples for each other in order to assist in the healing of our world. Thus, Schoonenberg's theology is both useful and relevant to the church in its attempts to understand the problem of child abuse.

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore the particular evil that is child abuse,

¹² Miller, as we saw in Chapter One, describes God as "easily offended, jealous, and basically insecure", characteristics which she says explain why he acts like a dictator and is so vengeful. [Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, p. 219.]

Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker question the whole foundation of Christianity, the crucifixion of Jesus, and say that it reveals an image of God as abuser. They ask, "is it any wonder that there is so much abuse in modern society when the predominant image or theology of the culture is of "divine child abuse" - God the Father demanding and carrying out the suffering and death of his own son?" [Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?", *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds. (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), p. 26.]

Others who analyze the negative images of the male God are: Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); Naomi R. Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979) and *The End of God: Important Directions for a Feminist Critique of Religion in the Works of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1982); Sheila Redmond, "The Father God and Traditional Christian Interpretations of Guilt, Anger, Suffering and Forgiveness as Impediments to Recovery from Father-Daughter Incest", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1992); and Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983).

as outlined by Alice Miller, and to propose Schoonenberg's sin of the world theology as a useful framework for understanding the problem. While it is not a thesis in Catholic theology, it has nonetheless been necessary to examine the context in which Schoonenberg developed his theology. I find that Schoonenberg's theology is a helpful tool and only examined the magisterium's response to it in order to ascertain whether the theology had attained a sufficient degree of acceptability or influence in the church to be useful to it as a hermeneutic device for pastoral responses. As a Catholic theologian, Schoonenberg feels compelled to abide by the magisterium's restrictions and thus only proposes that his theology could be a possible reinterpretation of the doctrine of original sin, therefore moderating his own theology. While I view this as regrettable, I do not think that it necessarily impedes the usefulness of his theology for those seeking to understand the problem of child abuse.

While not accepted yet by the church's teaching authority as an accurate description of original sin, Schoonenberg's theology has nonetheless gained wide acceptance, as we have seen. The sin of the world theology has already demonstrated its value as an interpretation of original sin and of its effects in the world, and can therefore be readily used by the church in its efforts to understand the presence and transmission of child abuse. The fact that the sin of the world is offered as an interpretation of the doctrine of original sin adds to its value, since Christianity has traditionally turned to the doctrine when struggling with the problem of human destructiveness.¹³ It seems

¹³ The fact of the presence of original sin in the world should not drive us to passive despair, but to active work, according to the situationist theologian, Karl Rahner. While we must not forget the power of God's grace working in the world to redeem it from sin, we also must not ignore the responsibility that this gives us. Rahner maintains that "the Christian, by his active planning and shaping of the future in justice and love, must produce a concrete historical manifestation of this presence of grace." [Rahner, "Original Sin", *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. IV, ed Karl Rahner, et al (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 333.]

appropriate, therefore, that the sin of the world theology can function as a framework for understanding the problem of child abuse.

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