

Original Sin in Tertullian and Cyprian: Conceptual Presence and Pre-Augustinian Content?

Despite the fact that Augustine was the first to coin the term *peccatum originale*,¹ the question of the possible pre-Augustinian roots of the doctrine is much debated: are there pre-Christian, Biblical, or Patristic antecedents to be indicated?² In this debate on the origin and sources of the doctrine of original sin, a second question arises: what is the role African Christianity played in the development of this concept and its content? The first chapter of Miles Hollingworth's recently published *Saint Augustine of Hippo: An Intellectual Biography* is entitled "Out of Africa".³ Hollingworth claims that Augustine's theology is determined by its 'Africanness (*sic*)' – which he identifies as Augustine's meta-narrative of the participation of all human beings in Adam, in other words, the Augustinian doctrine of original sin. Hollingworth was not the first to establish a link between the African theological milieu and Augustine's theology of original sin and grace. In his polemics with Augustine, Julian of Aeclanum labelled the bishop of Hippo's thinking as "African theology" (and the bishop himself a *poenus disputator*⁴), in order to dismiss his doctrine of original sin. A little more recently, in an article from 1967, Gerald Bonner initiated scholarly debate on the question of whether

1. M. LAMBERIGTS, 'Peccatum originale', in: *Augustinus-Lexikon* IV, 3/4, R. Dodaro, C. Mayer, Ch. Müller (eds.), A.E.J. Grote (red.), Basel, 2014, 599-615, 600.

2. For a current state of the art and further literature concerning the debate about the 'traditional' or 'innovative' character of Augustine's doctrine of original sin, see A. DUPONT, 'Was There an *Africitas Theologica*? Preliminary Inquiry into the Regional Specificity of the North African and Augustinian Theology of Original Sin and Grace (ca. 200–450 CE)', *Eirene. Studia Graeca et Latina*, 50, 2014, 317-332, 321-324.

3. M. HOLLINGWORTH, *Saint Augustine of Hippo: An Intellectual Biography*, London, 2013.

4. *C. Iul.* 3, 32 (PL 44, 719).

Augustine's understanding of original sin is a specifically African doctrine.⁵ Arguing the 'African origins of the Augustinian doctrine of the fall and original sin', Bonner refers to the following three African texts predating Augustine, which were and still are a permanent source for debate in patristic scholarship in this regard. Favoring the postponement of baptism to a more 'mature' age, Tertullian seems to accept the existing practice of infant baptism *in articulo mortis* in *De baptismo* 18, 5 and speaks of *uitium originis* in *De anima* 41, 1. Supported by an episcopal council, Cyprian argues in *Epistula* 64, 5 that infants should be baptized, and in this context mentions the Adamic sin. Referring to the same texts, Leo Scheffczyk concluded that particularly in North Africa the Christian doctrine of sin was developed in a new way: by the construction of the concept of original sin.⁶

The present contribution will evaluate Bonner's claim and examine whether these three and additional relevant texts of Tertullian and Cyprian—Augustine's two African predecessors—really support an Augustinian notion of original sin. Is it possible to detect in the works of his predecessors Augustine's highly specific definition of original sin and its implications, as formulated especially in the bishop's anti-Pelagian treatises, which center around the issue of original sin? Briefly summarized, the Augustinian teaching of original sin can be outlined as follows: Augustine argued that *peccatum originale* does not only entail Adam's first sin and human participation in this primal fall, but also comprises (1) an *originalis reatus* ("original guilt"), which applies to the whole human race, (2) resulting in hereditary penal consequences (mortality, ignorance, sinful concupiscence), (3) which explains why all infants after Adam's fall are born in a sinful state and hence need to be baptized immediately *in remissionem peccatorum* (to escape hell when they die), (4) and why humanity is constantly in need of all-encompassing predestined *gratia*. The research question guiding our article thus is: did Tertullian and Cyprian lay the foundations of the *doctor gratiae*'s highly sophisticated doctrine of original sin? We will, first of all, gather as exhaustively as possible, all available evidence – pointing both to a possible negative and affirmative answer to our research question. In processing this quite elaborate collection of sources, we will gradually see that Augustine's view of original sin can be recognized in his two predecessors, that they share a certain common conceptual framework in this perspective.

5. G. BONNER, 'Les origines africaines de la doctrine augustinienne sur la chute et le péché originel', *Augustinus*, 12/45-48, 1967, 97-116.

6. L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Urstand, Fall und Erbsünde. Von der Schrift bis Augustinus* (Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte, B. II, F. 3a, T. 1), Freiburg/Basel/Wien, 1981, 87-103.

TERTULLIAN

Especially when rebuking Julian of Aeclanum, Augustine lists manifold patristic authors as authorities, in addition to scriptural arguments, for his understanding of original sin. Surprisingly, Tertullian does not feature in his survey of sources.⁷ In *De Haeresibus* 86 he even labels Tertullian as a heretic. Despite the fact that Augustine explicitly rejected the materialism of Tertullian's psychological traducianism in his response to Julian of Aeclanum's charge that Augustine's doctrine of original sin was inspired by traducianism,⁸ one cannot deny some face value parallels between Tertullian's theology and anthropology and Augustine's theory of hereditary sin. Tertullian's recourse to notions such as *tradux peccati*, *uitium originis*, and *corruptio naturae* prompted Leo Scheffczyk to conclude that Tertullian developed the *denkmodell*, or "theoretical model", of original sin,⁹ and Julius Gross to discover in Tertullian the first "germ" of original sin.¹⁰ Other scholars, such as Eric Osborn, are of the opinion that some of the origins of the idea of original sin can be discerned in Tertullian, but that the construction of this doctrine cannot be attributed to him.¹¹ In a very nuanced way, Frédéric Chapot argues that the question of original sin as such was not a primary concern for Tertullian. Rather, he was preoccupied with the consequences of Adam's sin for the individually sinning Christians: the *uitium originis* as a condition of sinful desire and death that instigates Christians to fall again like Adam.¹² In sum, on the one hand, contemporary scholars debate whether the Augustinian idea of original sin can be found in Tertullian, and if so, to what extent. Augustine, on the other

7. F. CHAPOT, 'Tertullian', in: *Augustine through the Ages. An Encyclopedia*, A.D. Fitzgerald (ed.), Grand Rapids/Cambridge, 1999, 822-824.

8. *C. Iul. imp.* 2, 178.

9. L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Urstand, Fall und Erbsünde...*, 90-100.

10. J. GROSS, *Geschichte des Erbsündendogmas 1. Entstehungsgeschichte des Erbsündendogmas. Von der Bibel bis Augustinus*, Basel/München, 1960, 121. Other scholars perceiving original sin in the œuvre of Tertullian, include: A. D'ALÈS, *La théologie de Tertullien*, Paris, 1905³. E. POLTO, *Evoluzione del pensiero di Tertulliano sulla dottrina del peccato*, Biella, 1971. H. RONDET, 'Le péché originel dans la tradition. Tertullien, Clément, Origène', *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique*, 67, 1966, 115-148.

11. E. OSBORN, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West*, Cambridge, 2003, 167.

12. F. CHAPOT, 'Le péché d'origine dans la première littérature latine chrétienne. La réflexion de Tertullien', in: *Cahiers Disputatio*, 1. *Le péché originel*, Paris, 2008, 69-77.

hand, denies any theological lineage with his African predecessor in this regard.¹³ This ambivalent observation calls for a careful rereading of the œuvre of this Carthaginian founding father of Latin Christianity.

Tertullian firmly believes that mankind was originally created by God as good such that mankind's original nature was and still is good. In *De anima* 22, 2, he expounds that the soul is created immortal and intelligent. Designating God as the author of patience, and the devil as that of impatience, Tertullian asserts in *De patientia* 5, 11-13 that at the beginning Adam was innocent, an intimate friend of God, and an inhabitant of Paradise. His impatience (a vice understood by Tertullian as indicating disobedience both to God and divine order), however, made him fall from Paradise. At this juncture, Tertullian calls the sin of Adam the *prima delicti origo*, which initiated God's *prima iudicii origo*.¹⁴ A similar terminology for Adam's first sin is *primordiale delictum*, to be found in *De ieiunio aduersus psychicos* 4.¹⁵ In *Aduersus Hermogenem*, Tertullian argues, following an anti-gnostic line of reasoning, that matter as such should not be considered evil, since otherwise the Creator would also be evil and God's punishment of human sin would be unjust. He also emphasizes that man's salvation consists in the restoration of his nature's original innocence and integrity.¹⁶

The essence of Adam's first sin is his voluntary disobedience to God, Tertullian notes in *De exhortatione castitatis* 2, 5. The same emphasis on Adam's free will in his primordial disobedience is for obvious dogmatic reasons also clearly attested in Tertullian's apologetics against Marcion. *Aduersus Marcionem* 2, 2, 7 argues

13. The relationship of Augustine to Tertullian is far more complicated than the extent of this article allows to do justice to. Augustine found inspiration for many themes in the writings of his African predecessor. However, also the 'ambiguous' way in which Augustine related himself respectfully to the authority of Tertullian, being at the same time fully aware of the latter's 'heterodoxy', needs careful consideration.

14. *De patientia* 5, 11-13 (SC 310, 74-76): "Perit igitur et alius homo per inpatientiam alterius, perit immo et ipse per inpatientiam suam utrobique commissam, et circa Dei praemonitionem et circa diaboli circumscriptionem, illam seruare, hanc refutare non sustinens. Hinc prima iudicii unde delicti origo, hinc Deus irasci exorsus unde offendere homo inductus, inde in Deo prima patientia unde indignatio prima, qui tunc maledictione sola contentus ab animaduersionis impetu in diabolo temperauit. Aut quod crimen ante istud inpatientiae admissum homini inputatur? Innocens erat et Deo de proximo amicus et paradisi colonus: at ubi semel succidit inpatientiae, desiuit Deo sapere, desiuit caelestia sustinere posse."

15. *De ieiunio aduersus psychicos* 4 (CSEL 20, 278-279; CCSL 2, 1261). Cf. "originale delictum" in Augustine's *c. ep. Pel.* 2, 14.

16. *Aduersus Hermogenem* 11, 3 (SPM 5, 28): "Quodsi contra <erit> mali finis, cum praeses eius diabolus abierit in ignem quem praeparauit illi deus et angelis eius, prius in puteum abyssi relegatus, cum reuelatio filiorum dei redemerit conditionem a malo utique uanitati subiectam, cum restituta innocentia et integritate conditionis pecora condixerint bestiis et paruuli de serpentibus luserint, cum pater filio posuerit inimicos sub pedes, utique operarios mali – itaque si finis malo competit, necesse est competierit initium <et> erit materia habens initium habendo et finem mali; quae enim malo deputantur, secundum mali statum <matrariae> computantur."

that the transgression of Adam consisted in preferring his own judgement above God's.¹⁷ Not God, but human free will, is responsible for the entry of death, suffering, and difficult labour into the world, God's stern punishments for Adam's infringement.¹⁸

In addition to the aforementioned loss of innocence, the consequences of Adam's sin are serious and manifold. *De baptismo* 5, 7 exemplifies that man's likeness to God is vitiated as a consequence of Adam's sin and needs to be restored by grace. According to Adhémar d'Alès' exegesis of this passage, Tertullian perceives a double original resemblance between Adam and God: according to nature (*ad imaginem Dei*) and grace (*ad similitudinem eius*). The first is indelible, the second, which in d'Alès' reading is ruined by original sin, needs to be revived by baptism.¹⁹ *De anima* 52, 2 explains that death is not a natural condition for mankind, but rather the result of human sin. If man had not sinned out of free

17. *Aduersus Marcionem* 2, 2, 7 (*Tertullian Adversus Marcionem*, E. Evans [ed., trans., comm.], Oxford, 1972, 90-91): *Aut quis dubitabit ipsum illud Adae delictum haeresim pronuntiare, quod per electionem suae potius quam divinae sententiae admisit?* "For can anyone hesitate to describe as heresy, or choosing, that transgression of Adam which he committed by choosing his own judgement in preference to God's?"

18. *Aduersus Marcionem* 2, 11, 1-2 (ed. Evans, 119): "From now on the man is bent down towards the earth, who before was taken out of the earth: from now on turned towards death, though previously towards life: from now on in coats of skins, who before had been naked and unashamed. Thus the goodness of God came first, as his nature is: his sternness came afterwards, as there was reason for it. The former was ingenerate, was God's own, was freely exercised: the latter was accidental, adapted to need, an expedient. For as it was not right that nature should hold its goodness in restraint and inoperative, neither was it seemly that reason should dissemble and escape its sternness. The former was God's duty paid to himself, the latter his duty to circumstances."

Aduersus Marcionem 2, 11, 2 (ed. Evans, 118): "Exinde homo ad terram, sed ante de terra; exinde ad mortem, sed ante ad uitam; exinde in scorteis uestibus, sed ante sine scrupulo nudus. Ita prior bonitas dei secundum naturam, seueritas posterior secundum causam. Illa ingenita, haec accidens; illa propria, haec accommodata; illa edita, haec adhibita. Nec natura enim inoperatam debuit continuisse bonitatem, nec causa dissimulatam euasisse seueritatem. Alteram sibi, alteram rei deus praestitit."

19. A. D'ALÈS, *La théologie de Tertullien*, 264.

De baptismo 5, 6-7 (*Tertullian's Homily on Baptism*, E. Evans [ed., trans., comm.], London, 1964, 14): "Ita restituitur homo deo ad similitudinem eius qui retro ad imaginem dei fuerat: imago in effigie, similitudo in aeternitate censetur [...]."

Ernest Evans offers the following commentary on this passage: "I translate Fr Refoulé's note, which is both brief and lucid: 'By his sin man had been reduced to his primary condition of image of God: by baptism he has been restored to God according to his eternal likeness, that of grace. Tertullian here reproduces the distinction, frequently employed by St Irenaeus, between *imago* (nature) and *similitudo* (grace). This is the only place I know of where Tertullian makes use of this distinction. Elsewhere he simply states that man was made in the image of God, that is, in the image of Christ. Cf. *De Res. Carn.* 6' – i.e. *quodcumque enim limus exprimebatur Christus cogitabatur homo futurus*, etc.'" (ed. Evans, 65-66.)

will, he would not have died.²⁰ Tertullian frequently asserts that Adam's sin is not only the cause of the physical death of mankind, but also the source of all sins: mankind's spiritual death. *De paenitentia* 2, 3 describes how the sins of humanity originate in Adam, the first of the human race, and how, as a consequence, the condemnation of humanity, namely the ejection from Paradise and subjection to death, started with him.²¹ *Aduersus Marcionem* 1, 22, 8 reads: "Man is condemned to death for picking from one paltry tree, and out of that proceed sins with their penalties, and now people who have not known so much as one single sod of Paradise are all of them perishing."²² The sentence for the first sin is passed on to all humans, and includes both man's mortality and his sinful inclination. *De anima* 38, 2 links sexual concupiscence with the first sin of Adam and Eve, and this sexual lust is suggested to be one of the consequences of the fall for all of humanity.²³ Precisely through concupiscence the whole man is involved in the indictment of the first transgression and consequently infected with the guilt of perdition, as we read in *De resurrectione carnis* 34, 2.²⁴ In this regard, Gerald Bonner states that Augustine's understanding of *concupiscentia* was rooted within an African tradition. Jonathan Yates evaluated Bonner's claim, and confirmed that there is an 'Augustinian' notion of concupiscence present in Tertullian and Cyprian at the level of "ideas and attitudes concerning *concupiscentia* and its general semantic domain", with regard to the explicit link with a negative interpretation of post-lapsarian sexuality. At the same time, because of the differences in contexts and literary genres, Augustine's systematized exposition surpasses the

20. *De anima* 52, 2 (CCSL 2, 858): "Qui autem primordia hominis nouimus, audenter determinamus mortem non ex natura secutam hominem, sed ex culpa, ne ipsa quidem naturali; facile autem usurpari naturae nomen in ea quae uidentur a natiuitate ex accidentia adhaesisse. Nam si homo in mortem directo institutus fuisset, tunc demum mors naturae adscriberetur [*sic*]. Porro non in mortem institutum eum probat ipsa lex condicionali comminatione suspendens et arbitrio hominis addicens mortis euentum. Denique si non deliquisset, nequaquam obisset."

21. *De paenitentia* 2, 3 (CSEL 76, 142-144): "Nam deus post tot ac tanta delicta humanae temeritatis a principe generis Adam auspicata, post damnatum hominem cum saeculi dote, post eiectum paradiso mortique subiectum, cum rursus ad suam misericordiam maturuisset, iam inde in semetipso paenitentiam dedicauit, rescissa sententia irarum pristinorum ignoscere pactus operi et imagini suae."

22. *Aduersus Marcionem* 1, 22, 8 (ed. Evans, 59-61).

Aduersus Marcionem 1, 22, 8 (ed. Evans, 58-60): "Homo damnatur in mortem ob unius arbusculae delibationem, et exinde proficiunt delicta cum poenis, et pereunt iam omnes qui paradisi nullum caespitem norunt."

23. *De anima* 38, 2 (CCSL 2, 841): "Si enim Adam et Eua ex agnitione boni et mali pudenda tegere senserunt, ex quo id ipsum sentimus, agnitionem boni et mali profitemur. Ab his autem annis et suffusior et uestitior sexus est, et concupiscentia oculis arbitris utitur et communicat placitum et intellegit quae sint et fines suos ad instar ficulneae contagionis prurigne accingit et hominem de paradiso integritatis educit, exinde scabida etiam in ceteras culpas et delinquendi non naturales, cum iam non ex instituto naturae, sed ex uitio."

24. *De resurrectione carnis* 34, 1-2: cf. *infra* note 37.

rather limited treatment of *concupiscentia* in Tertullian and Cyprian, according to Yates, and therefore is to be considered as his own innovation.²⁵

Anticipating Augustine's doctrine of the *natura bona sed uitata*,²⁶ Tertullian stresses that Adam's sin generally impacted human nature, but did not destroy its original goodness as created by God. In his anthropology of the human soul, he teaches that the natural condition of the soul is rational, and that the first sin added an irrational element to the soul, which God had created rational. *De anima* 16, 1 states:

“The irrational element, however, must be thought to have come later, resulting from the suggestion of the serpent and producing the very act of the first transgression. From then on, this irrational element became embedded in the soul, developed with the soul, and, as it happened at the very beginning of the soul's existence, gave every appearance of being an essential element of the soul.”²⁷

In *De anima* 16, 7, Tertullian adds that this irrationality is a second, later, and deteriorated nature.²⁸ *De anima* 41, 1-2 confirms that sin introduced a different nature *ex originis uitio*,²⁹ while the first, original nature of the human soul remains inextinguishably rational and good since it has been made so by the Creator:

25. G. BONNER, ‘Concupiscentia’, in: *Augustinus-Lexikon* I, 7/8, C. Mayer (ed.), K.H. Chelius (red.), Basel, 1994, 1113-1122. J. YATES, ‘Was there Augustinian concupiscentia in pre-Augustinian North Africa?’, *Augustiniana*, 51, 2001, 39-56.

26. S. 294, 14 (PL 38, 1344): “Quam respiciens et apostolus dixit, fuimus et nos aliquando natura filii irae [Eph. 2, 3]. Non accusamus naturam. Naturae auctor Deus est. A Deo bona est instituta natura: sed per malam uoluntatem a serpente uitata est. Ideo quod fuit in Adam culpa, non naturae, nobis propagatis factum est iam naturae.”

27. *De anima* 16, 1 (*Tertullian on the Soul* [The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation, 10], E.A. Quain [tr.], New York, 1950, 163-309, 212).

De anima 16, 1 (CCSL 2, 802): “Est et illud ad fidem pertinens, quod Plato bifariam partitur animam, per rationale et irrationale. Cui definitioni et nos quidem applaudimus, sed non ut naturae deputetur utrumque. Naturale enim rationale credendum est, quod animae a primordio sit ingenitum, a rationali uidelicet auctore. Quid enim non rationale, quod deus iussu quoque ediderit, nedum id quod proprie afflatu suo emisit? Irrationale autem posterius intellegendum est, ut quod acciderit ex serpentis instinctu, ipsum illud transgressionis admissum, atque exinde inoleuerit et coadoleuerit in anima ad instar iam naturalitatis, quia statim in naturae primordio accidit.”

28. *De anima* 16, 7 (CCSL 2, 803): “At cum dicit: fuimus aliquando natura filii irae, inrationale indignatium suggillat, quod non sit ex ea natura quae a deo est, sed ex illa quam diabolus induxit, dominus et ipse dictus sui ordinis: non potestis duobus dominis seruire, pater et ipse cognominatus: uos ex diabolo patre estis, ne timeas et illi proprietatem naturae alterius adscribere, posterioris et adulterae, quem legis auenarum superseminatorem et frumentariae segetis nocturnum interpolatorem.”

29. Augustine too uses the concept of “uitium originis”, see for instance: *gr. et. pecc. or.* 2, 17. Cf. J. ALEXANDRE, ‘Aux sources de la conception augustiniennne du péché originel: l’*originis uitium* de Tertullien’, in: Chartae caritatis. *Études de patristique et d’antiquité tardive offertes à Yves-Marie Duval* (Collection des Études augustiniennes, Série Antiquité, 173), Paris, 2004, 419-436.

“Besides the evil that mars the soul as a result of the machinations of the Devil, still another evil has previously affected it, and this is in a certain sense natural to it³⁰, since it flows from its origin. As we have said, the corruption of nature is a second nature, one which has its own god and father, namely, the author of all corruption. Nevertheless, there is some good in the soul, the remains of that original, divine, and genuine good which is its proper nature. That which comes from God is overshadowed, but not wholly extinguished. It can be obscured, since it is not God; but it cannot be completely extinguished, since it is of God.”³¹

Consistent with *ex originis uitio*, in *De anima* 41, 1, Tertullian frequently pronounces the complicity of humanity with Adam in his primal sin. *De anima* 20, 6 designates Adam as *matrix omnium, princeps generis*, and *fons naturae*,³² and in *De exhortatione castitatis* 2, 5 as *princeps et generis et delicti*.³³ *De testimonio animae* 3, 2 stipulates that the whole human race is infected from Adam’s seed: *totum genus de semine infectum*.³⁴ According to *De resurrectione carnis* 49, 6, we participate both in Adam’s sin (*collegium transgressionis*) and its penal consequences: “For we have worn the image of the old man by partnership in transgression, by fellowship in death, by exile from Paradise.”³⁵ As long as we are not baptized, we share Adam’s carnal nature. *De anima* 40, 1-2 elucidates this point:

30. “...naturale quodammodo...”: “Le modulateur *quodammodo* montre que le péché n’appartient pas proprement à la nature de l’âme humaine, mais qu’en s’introduisant en elle, il s’est attaché à elle et coexiste en elle avec le bien de Dieu. [...] L’apparition du mal dans l’âme n’a pas chassé le bien qui vient de Dieu. Le bien appartient à l’homme depuis l’origine et il est constitutif de sa nature: l’expression «proprement naturel» (*proprie naturae*) s’oppose au *naturale quodammodo* de la phrase précédente.” F. CHAPOT, ‘Le péché d’origine...’, 71.

31. *De anima* 41, 1-2 (FC 10, 273).

De anima 41, 1-2 (CCSL 2, 844): “Malum igitur animae, praeter quod ex obuentu spiritus nequam superstruitur, ex originis uitio antecedit, naturale quodammodo. Nam, ut diximus, naturae corruptio alia natura est, habens suum deum et patrem, ipsum scilicet corruptionis auctorem, ut tamen insit et bonum animae, illud principale, illud diuinum atque germanum et proprie naturale. Quod enim a deo est, non tam extinguitur quam obumbratur. Potest enim obumbrari, quia non est deus, extingui non potest, quia a deo est.”

32. *De anima* 20, 6 (CCSL 2, 812-813): “Apparet quanta sint quae unam animae naturam uarie collocarint, ut uulgo naturae deputentur, quando non species sint, sed sortes naturae et substantiae unius, illius scilicet quam deus in Adam contulit et *matricem omnium* fecit; atque adeo sortes erunt, non species substantiae unius, id est uarietas ista moralis, quanta nunc est, tanta non fuerit in ipso *principe generis* Adam. Debuerant enim fuisse haec omnia in illo ut in *fonte naturae* atque inde cum tota uarietate manasse, si uarietas naturae fuisset.”

33. Cf. *infra* note 40.

34. *De testimonio animae* 3, 2: cf. *infra* note 39.

35. *De resurrectione carnis* 49, 6 (*Q. Septimii Florentis Tertulliani De resurrectione carnis liber. Tertullian’s Treatise on the Resurrection*, E. Evans [ed., trans., comm.], London, 1960, 142).

De resurrectione carnis 49, 6 (ed. Evans, 142): “Sicut portauimus imaginem choici, portemus etiam imaginem supercaelestis: portauimus enim imaginem choici per collegium transgressionis, per consortium mortis, per exilium paradisi.”

“Every soul is considered as having been born in Adam until it has been reborn in Christ. Moreover, it is unclean until it has been thus regenerated (Rom. 5, 14; 6, 4). It is sinful, too, because it is unclean, and its shame is shared by the body because of their union. Now, although the flesh is sinful and we are forbidden to walk in accordance with it (Gal. 5, 16), and since its works are condemned for lusting against the spirit (Rom. 6, 12-14), and men therefore are marked as carnal (Rom. 8, 5), still the body does not merit this disgrace in its own right.”³⁶

In addition to inheriting Adam’s punishment, and to the fact that the first sin made sinning possible by introducing sin in a sinless world, on two occasions Tertullian suggests that mankind is liable to Adam’s guilt. This he refers to as the above mentioned *meritum perditionis* in *De resurrectione carnis* 34, 1-2, and the *reatus* in *De baptismo* 5, 6-7, which we will discuss in the following pages.

Tertullian explains that the impact of the fall on Adam’s offspring proceeds through the latter’s seed. *De testimonio animae* 3, 2 certifies:

“Satan [...] the artificer of every error, the corrupter of the whole world; through him, man was deceived from the beginning so that he transgressed the commandment of God and, therefore, having been given unto death, made the whole human race, which was infected by his seed, the transmitter of condemnation.”³⁷

36. *De anima* 40, 1-2 (FC 10, 271).

De anima 40, 1-2 (CCSL 2, 843): “Ita omnis anima eo usque in Adam censetur, donec in Christo recenseatur, tamdiu immunda, quamdiu recenseatur, peccatrix autem, quia immunda, recipiens ignominiam et carnis ex societate. Nam etsi caro peccatrix, secundum quam incedere prohibemur, cuius opera damnantur concupiscentis aduersus spiritum, ob quam carnales notantur, non tamen suo nomine caro infamis.”

See *De resurrectione carnis* 34, where Tertullian explains that Christ has come to save both man’s body and soul: “In the first place, when he says he has come for the purpose of saving that which has perished, what do you allege has perished? Man, undoubtedly. In whole or in part? In whole, of course, seeing that the transgression which is the cause of man’s perdition, having been committed alike by the prompting of the soul from concupiscence and by the act of the flesh from tasting, has involved the whole man in the indictment of transgression and consequently infected him with the guilt of perdition. As then he has totally perished by sinning, totally will he be saved, unless perchance that sheep gets lost without its body, and without its body is brought home.”

De resurrectione carnis 34 (ed. Evans, 93-97).

De resurrectione carnis 34, 1-2 (ed. Evans, 92-96): “In primis cum ad hoc uenisse se dicit ut quod periit saluum faciat, quid dicis perisse? Hominem sine dubio. Totumne an ex parte? Utique totum, siquidem transgressio, quae perditionis humanae causa est, tam animae instinctu ex concupiscentia quam et carnis actu ex degustatione commissa, totum hominem elogio transgressionis inscripsit atque exinde merito perditionis impleuit. Totus itaque saluus fiet qui periit totus delinquendo, nisi si et ouis illa sine corpore amittitur et sine corpore reuocatur.”

37. *De testimonio animae* 3, 2 (*Tertullian, The Testimony of the Soul* [FC 10], R. Arbesmann [tr.], 131-143, 136).

De testimonio animae 3, 2 (CSEL 20, 139): “Satanan denique in omni uexatione et aspernatione et detestatione pronuntias, quem nos dicimus malitiae angelum, totius erroris artificem, totius saeculi interpolatorem, per quem homo a primordio circumuentus, ut praeceptum dei excederet, et propter ea in mortem datus exinde *totum genus de suo semine infectum suae etiam damnationis traducem fecit.*”

This seminal transmission is also depicted in *De exhortatione castitatis* 2, 5:

“And if you ask me whence comes this volition of ours by which we set our will against the will of God, I should reply that it comes from our own selves. Nor is this rashly said, if, indeed, Adam, the author of our race and of our fall, willed the sin which he committed; for you yourself must needs be like the father whose seed you are. The devil did not force on Adam the choice of sin, but merely supplied him with an object he might choose. The will of God entered in to make his choice a matter of obedience.”³⁸

The transmission of the Tertullianic original sin through Adam’s semen theologically results in the position that Christ is excluded from this Adamic seminal lineage. *De carne Christi* 14, 1 states that Christ became flesh to restore the flesh. Tertullian stresses that Christ came in the *likeness* of the flesh of sin, but not in sinful flesh itself. He has taken flesh similar to us, but not marked by the sin of Adam (*genere non uitio Adae aequanda*), since Christ is not born from the seed of Adam. *De carne Christi* 16, 1-4; 5 reads:

“Our contention, however, is not that the flesh of sin, but that the sin of the flesh, was brought to nought in Christ, not the material but its quality, not the substance but its guilt, according to the apostle’s authority when he says, *He brought to nought sin in the flesh* (Rom. 8, 3). [...] the flesh of Christ, itself not sinful, was the like of that to which sin did belong, and is to be equated with Adam in species but not in defect. From this text we also prove that in Christ there was that flesh whose nature is in man sinful, and that it is by virtue of this that sin has been brought to nought, while in Christ that same flesh exists without sin which in man did not exist without sin.”³⁹

De carne Christi 17, 3, conceiving Christ’s incarnation as the reversal of Adam’s fall, repeats that Christ was not born through human seed, Christ “[...] taking to

38. *De exhortatione castitatis* 2, 5 (W.P. LE SAINT, *Tertullian, Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage* [ACW 13], Westminster, Md., 1951, 42-64, 44).

De exhortatione castitatis 2, 5 (SC 319, 74): “Porro si quaeris, unde uenit ista uoluntas, qua quid uolumus aduersus dei uoluntatem, dicam: ex nobis ipsis. Nec temere. Semini enim tuo respondeas necesse est, siquidem ille princeps et generis et delicti Adam uoluit quod deliquit. Neque enim diabolus uoluntatem ei imposuit delinquendi, sed materiam uoluntatis subministravit. Ceterum uoluntas ei de inobaudientia uenerat.”

39. *De carne Christi* 16, 1-4; 5 (*Q. Septimii Florentis Tertulliani De carne Christi liber. Tertullian’s treatise on the Incarnation*, E. Evans [ed., trans., comm.], London, 1956, 55-59).

De carne Christi 16, 2-4; 5 (ed. Evans, 54-58): “Defendimus autem non carnem peccati euacuatam esse in Christo sed peccatum carnis, non materiam sed naturam, nec substantiam sed culpam, secundum apostoli auctoritatem dicentis, *Euacuauit peccatum in carne*. Nam et alibi in similitudine inquit carnis peccati fuisse Christum, non quod similitudinem carnis acceperit quasi imaginem corporis et non ueritatem, sed similitudinem peccatricis carnis uult intellegi quod ipsa non peccatrix caro Christi eius fuit par cuius erat peccatum, genere non uitio Adae aequanda.”

Evans (152) comments the “non materiam sed naturam” as follows: “If, as previously suggested, *natura* indicates the essential attributes of an object, and since in this context *natura* is balanced by *culpa*, we must suppose that the *uitium* shortly to be referred to has taken such hold upon humanity as to be no fortuitous accident but to have become a factor in what St Augustine calls *natura secunda*: that is, Tertullian, with his usual sense of realities, is prepared to face the fact of original sin (*uitium*), and original guilt (*culpa*).”

himself flesh of the ancient seed without the agency of the ancient seed, so that he might reshape it with new (that is, spiritual) seed when he had first by sacrifice expelled its ancient defilements.”⁴⁰ Thus, because Christ was born without the interference of the Adamic seed he could expiate the *antiquitatis sordes*.⁴¹ Opposing Mary with Eve, Tertullian concludes:

“So then, God brought down into the womb his own Word, the good brother [Christ], that he might erase the memory of the evil brother [Cain]: for the salvation of man Christ must needs come forth from that organ into which man already under condemnation had entered.”⁴²

Being infected by Adam, mankind thus needs salvation, which according to Tertullian necessitates baptism. Without baptism, it is impossible – for children as well as for baptized parents – to be clean or holy, according to *De anima* 39, 4.⁴³ *De anima* 41, 4 continues:

40. *De carne Christi* 17, 3 (ed. Evans, 59).

De carne Christi 17, 3 (Evans, 58): “Haec est natiuitas noua, dum homo nascitur in deo, ex quo in homine deus natus est carne antiqui seminis suscepta sine semine antiquo, ut illam nouo semine, id est spiritali, reformaret exclusis antiquitatis sordibus expiatam.”

41. Augustine’s *s.* 152, 8 offers a similar exegesis of Rom. 8, 3b (“In similitudinem carnis peccati misit Deus Filium suum. Et de peccato damnauit peccatum in carne.”) For further Patristic references and scholarly studies concerning this particular exegesis, see: G. PARTOENS, A. DUPONT, ‘*Sed de quo peccato?* Augustine’s exegesis of Rom. 8:3c in *sermo* 152, 9-11’, *Vigiliae Christianae. A Review of Early Christian Life and Language*, 66, 2012, 190-212.

42. *De carne Christi* 17, 6 (ed. Evans, 61).

De carne Christi 17, 6 (ed. Evans, 60): “In uuluum ergo deus uerbum suum detulit bonum fratrem, ut memoriam mali fratris eraderet: inde prodeundum fuit Christo ad salutem hominis quo homo iam damnatus intrauerat.”

43. *De anima* 39, 4 (FC 10, 270-271): “This is the reason why St. Paul said that, when either of the parents was sanctified, the children could be born holy, as much from the privilege of Christian birth as from the conferring of Christian baptism. For, he says: ‘Otherwise they would have been born unclean’ (1 Cor. 7, 14), as if the children of believers were in some sense destined for holiness and salvation, and in the pledge of this hope he supported those marriages which he wished to continue. In general, of course, he was mindful of the words of Christ: ‘Unless a man be born of water and the Spirit, he will not enter into the kingdom of God’ (John 3-5); in other words, he cannot be holy.”

De anima 39, 4 (CCSL 2, 842-843): “Hinc enim et apostolus ex sanctificato alterutro sexu sanctos procreari ait, tam ex seminis praerogatiua quam ex institutionis disciplina. Ceterum, inquit, immundi nascerentur, quasi designatos tamen sanctitatis ac per hoc etiam salutis intellegi uolens fidelium filios, ut huius spei pignore matrimonii, quae retinenda censuerat, patrocineretur. Alioquin meminerat dominicae definitionis: nisi quis nascetur ex aqua et spiritu, non inibit in regnum dei, id est, non erit sanctus.”

Baptism erases sin (*De baptismo* 1, 1; 6, 1), extinguishes death (*De baptismo* 2, 1), sanctifies through the Holy Spirit (*De baptismo* 4, 1), restores the original sweetness of man’s soul (*De baptismo* 9, 2-3), forgives sins and sanctifies through Christ (*De baptismo* 10, 5; 11, 3). Referring to Matt. 28, 19 and John 3, 5, *De baptismo* 12, 1; 13, 3 sets forth that it is impossible to obtain salvation without baptism.

“Therefore, when the soul embraces the faith, it is regenerated by this new birth in water and virtue celestial; the veil of its former corruption is removed and it at last perceives the full glory of the light. Then is it welcomed by the Holy Spirit as, at its physical birth, it was met by the evil spirit. The flesh naturally follows the soul which is now wedded to the Spirit and, as part of the wedding dowry, it is no longer the slave of the soul but the servant of the Spirit. A blessed marriage, indeed; but, would that no infidelity were to follow!”⁴⁴

In *De baptismo* 5, 6-7, Tertullian writes that baptism takes away both punishment (*poena*) and guilt (*reatus*).

“[...] now every day saves nations, destroying death by the washing away of sins. Evidently as the guilt is removed the penalty also is taken away. In this way is man being restored to God, to the likeness of him who had aforesaid been in God’s image – the image had its actuality in the man-God formed, the likeness becomes actual in eternity – for there is given back to him that spirit of God which of old he had received of God’s breathing, but afterwards had lost through sin.”⁴⁵

This passage does not explicitly formulate whether Tertullian envisages personal or original guilt. At first sight *reatus* seems to refer here to the concrete and individual sin rather than original sin. The broader textual context of *reatus* might suggest an underlying connection to original guilt: by stating that baptism returns to man the spirit of God, which mankind had originally received from God at the moment of creation, but which he lost by sinning, the link with the sin of the first man is made apparent, which is also the case with Tertullian’s statement “*corruptio pristina*” in *De anima* 41, 4. Universal participation in Adam’s guilt is thus suggested. Baptism, however, does not end temptation. For this reason, Tertullian concludes his *De baptismo* 20, 5 with the confession that he too is to be considered a sinner.⁴⁶

44. *De anima* 41, 4 (FC 10, 273-274).

De anima 41, 4 (CCSL 2, 844): “Proinde cum ad fidem peruenit reformata per secundam natiuitatem ex aqua et superna uirtute, detracto corruptionis pristinae aulao totam lucem suam conspicit. Excipitur etiam a spiritu sancto, sicut in pristina natiuitate a spiritu profano. Sequitur animam nubentem spiritui caro, ut dotale mancipium, et iam non animae famula, sed spiritus. O beatum conubium, si non admiserit adulterium!”

45. *De baptismo* 5, 6-7 (ed. Evans, 15).

De baptismo 5, 6-7 (ed. Evans, 14): “[...] nunc quotidie populos conseruant deleta morte per ablutionem delictorum. Exempto scilicet reatu eximitur et poena. Ita restituitur homo deo ad similitudinem eius qui retro ad imaginem dei fuerat: imago in effigie, similitudo in aeternitate censetur: recipit enim illum dei spiritum quem tunc de adflatu eius acceperat sed post amiserat per delictum.”

46. *De baptismo* 20, 5 (ed. Evans, 43): “Therefore, you blessed ones, for whom the grace of God is waiting, when you come up from that most sacred washing of the new birth, and when for the first time you spread out your hands with your brethren in your mother’s house, ask of your Father, ask of your Lord, that special grants of grace and apportionments of spiritual gifts be yours (cf. Hebr. 2, 4). Ask, he says, *and ye shall receive* (Matt. 7, 7-8). So now, you have sought, and have found: you have knocked, and it has been opened to you. This only I pray, that as you ask you also have in mind Tertullian, a sinner.”

Despite Tertullian's fervent plea for the necessity of baptism, he discourages paedobaptism in *De baptismo* 18, 5:

"It is true our Lord says, *Forbid them not to come to me* (Matt. 19, 14).⁴⁷ So let them come, when they are growing up, when they are learning, when they are being taught what they are coming to: let them be made Christians when they have become competent to know Christ. Why should innocent infancy come with haste to the remission of sins? Shall we take less cautious action in this than we take in worldly matters? Shall one who is not trusted with earthly property be entrusted with heavenly? Let them first learn how to ask for salvation, so that you may be seen to have given to one that asketh (*cf.* Matt. 5, 42)."⁴⁸

The text does not make clear whether Tertullian reacts against a practice of general infant baptism, or against emergency baptisms of babies (*in articulo mortis*). Probably the renouncement of infant baptism does not apply to baptisms *in articulo mortis*, but to the administration thereof in normal circumstances to healthy babies. Tertullian indicates his preference for adult baptisms: a person

De baptismo 20, 5 (ed. Evans, 42): "Igitur benedicti, quos gratia dei expectat, cum de illo sanctissimo lauacro noui natalis ascenditis et primas manus apud matrem cum fratribus aperitis, petite de patre, petite de domino, peculia gratiae, distributiones charismatum subiacere. Petite et accipietis, inquit. Quaesistis enim et inuenistis, pulsastis et apertum est uobis. Tantum oro, ut cum petitis etiam Tertulliani peccatoris memineritis."

47. Epigraphical evidence indicates that children were only baptized when in danger of life. In Augustine's Hippo, baptism was likewise intended for adults, usually carried out during the vigil of Easter, and children were only baptized if their lives were at risk. Concerning paedobaptisms *in articulo mortis*, we should not forget that, in a time infant mortality was high, emergency baptisms for sick babies was certainly not uncommon, on the contrary. There are also other previous sources of infant baptism, which are not *per se* to be considered as in *articulo mortis*. Relevant for our contribution is for instance Tertullian's reaction against infant baptism in *De baptismo* 18, 5; and Cyprian's *De lapsis* 9; 25. The reality of the African praxis of infant baptism is not disputed by scholars, the question remains, however, why it happened: are infants baptized because of the belief in an innate sin, as Augustine argued? Did mothers bring sick children to church for baptism because they thought there was a healing power in the baptismal waters, or did they consider baptism necessary in case their child would die? The latter – the need to baptize infants who had not personally sinned – might imply the acceptance of a universal innate sin, in other words: 'original sin'. Everett Ferguson offers a *status quaestionis* on the discussion whether a shift in opinion about the condition in which babies are born caused the practice of infant baptism (Kurt Aland), or that the latter existing practice changed ideas about infantile innocence in late second century (Joachim Jeremias e.a.). E. FERGUSON, *Baptism in the Early Church. History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K., 2009, 369 (n. 19), 400. K. ALAND, *Taufe und Kindertaufe*, Gütersloh, 1971. J. JEREMIAS, *Nochmals: Die Anfänge der Kindertaufe*, München, 1962.

48. *De baptismo* 18, 5 (ed. Evans, 39).

De baptismo 18, 5 (ed. Evans, 38): "Ait quidem dominos, *Nolite illos prohibere ad me uenire* (Matt. 19, 14): ueniant ergo, dum adolescent, dum discunt, dum quo ueniant docentur: fiant Christiani cum Christum nosse potuerint. Quid festinate innocens aetas ad remissionem peccatorum? Cautius agetur in saecularibus, ut cui substantia terrena non creditur diuina credatur? Norint petere salutem, ut petenti dedisse uidearis."

should be free to willingly make decisions and assume responsibilities. Tertullian makes this clear by referring, on a legal level, to the age at which persons can legitimately own possessions, and on a pastoral-theological level, to the capacity to grasp the significance of becoming a Christian through the sacrament of baptism. In *De anima* 38, 2 Tertullian adds that teenagers should wait until they marry for baptism, that is, until they reach the age of concupiscence. Moreover, Tertullian's understanding of the baptismal pledge as a personal denunciation of pagan idolatry and as the promise of a daily ethical commitment to Christ, seems to imply adult candidates, fully aware of the consequences of their conversion to Christianity.⁴⁹

Tertullian stresses the necessity of baptism for salvation (*De baptismo* 11sq.: baptism is necessary for salvation; *De anima* 39, 4: no person – even children of baptized parents – is pure without baptism). Combining this necessity with Tertullian's rejection of infant baptism, it seems as if Tertullian, at this juncture, is merely considering personal sins/factual sins, which infants have not committed yet, and not considering original sin. Another explanation could be that he generally thinks that children are innocent as such. Ernest Evans comments on Tertullian's opinion on paedobaptism: "He could hardly have taken this attitude (apparently in opposition to what was already common enough church practice) unless he had held lightly to the doctrine of original sin."⁵⁰ Tertullian's warning that one should not *festinare* (rush or hurry) innocent infants to baptism, is, according to Pier Franco Beatrice, "without a doubt the clearest proof of the 'Augustinian' conception of original sin being essentially foreign to Tertullian." The fact that Tertullian, again according to Beatrice, "opposes and criticizes in no uncertain terms the rush to baptize newborns" suggests that "such a practice had become very widespread in Roman Africa toward the end of the second century", influenced by the encratite doctrine of original sin.⁵¹ Gerald Bonner considers Tertullian's disapproval of the existing practice of infant baptism as evidence that the original evil (*ex originis uitio* in *De anima* 41, 1, cf. *supra*) with which every soul is afflicted is not due to transmission from Adam, according to Tertullian, but to infection from pagan influences.⁵² Evans concurs: "Thus it appears that original sin, in so far as Tertullian envisages it, is a consequence not of natural descent from Adam, but of investment by pagan influences before and after birth." Admittedly, the aspect of "pagan contamination" could indeed offer an explanation for Tertullian's scepticism concerning infant baptism, as specifically expressed in *De baptismo* 18, 5. However, we have uncovered many passages in Tertullian's

49. *De corona militis* 3; *De spectaculis* 24.

50. Ed. Evans, 101.

51. *The Transmission of Sin. Augustine and the Pre-Augustinian Sources* (American Academy of Religion - Texts & Translation), P.F. Beatrice, A. Kamesar (tr.), Oxford, 2013, 232-233.

52. G. BONNER, 'Baptismus paruulorum', in: *Augustinus-Lexikon* I, 3/4, C. Mayer (ed.), K.H. Chelius (red.), Basel, 1990, 592-602, 593-594.

œuvre which clearly attest to a doctrine of a sinful lineage passed on from Adam, encompassing the whole of humanity, sharing Adam's transgression and corrupted nature. We, however, have found no instances that stipulate that children also participate in the latter. Does Tertullian think that children are not responsible for their Adamic heritage until the so-called age of reason, when they are personally accountable to resist irrationality and concupiscence? Discerning a certain notion of original sin in Tertullian's theology renders his hesitation over infant baptism in *De baptismo* 18, 5 somewhat doctrinally incoherent, at least if we understand original sin in the Augustinian sense. However, Tertullian's concerns about infant baptism were perhaps not inspired by doctrinal motivations, but should perhaps be situated on a pastoral and ethical level.⁵³ His constant urging of Christians to take full ethical commitment and his permanent emphasis of human free will could explain his preference for "consenting adults", who are fully aware of both the forgiving nature of this sacrament and of the full consequences of the baptismal commitment. Finally, we should not overlook the fact that in *De baptismo* 18, 5, Tertullian, who was not shy about speaking his mind, does not completely forbid or vehemently condemn the practice of infant baptism. In this text he only advises against it and states his preference for adult baptism.

Geoffrey Dunn concludes his meticulous analysis of Tertullian's soteriology as follows:

"On the whole, his interest was in the subjective dimension of soteriology – what must the Christian do to participate in salvation – rather than in the objective dimension which is concerned with what Christ himself has done for humanity. This is so particularly because of Tertullian's concern with questions of baptism and reconciliation."⁵⁴

Although the primary objective of our study of Tertullian has been to distinguish evidence of the doctrine of original sin, we also encountered elements of a doctrine of divine grace, confirming Dunn's findings. On several occasions, Tertullian declares that Adam was "skillfully" created by God in his own image, with a good nature, rationality and even immortality. The only cause of the loss of this innocent and immortal state, the addition of a second irrational nature, is man's free will. Adam's punishment is therefore just. Baptism, however, brings salvation, and Christ will restore God's original image. Yet, at the same time, Tertullian states that baptism does not imply the end of temptations, and especially warns against the lust of the flesh. Augustine, at this juncture, would state that, after baptism, Christians constantly need grace. Without that divine assistance, Christians cannot successfully resist sin, the *doctor gratiae* contends. In Tertullian, however, we did not encounter the need of such a permanent post-baptismal grace to lead a life of virtue. *De ieiunio adversus psychicos* 4, for instance, declares that the primordial

53. For Tertullian's preoccupation for individual salvation and his concern for personal commitment to this baptismal salvation, see F. CHAPOT, 'Le péché d'origine...', 73-75.

54. G. D. DUNN, 'A survey of Tertullian's soteriology', *Sacris Erudiri*, 42, 2003, 61-86, 86.

sin will be expiated, and God made this possible by giving us the option of abstinence. Similarly, Tertullian's expositions on penance, patience, and chastity seem to be fully based on unaided human action. While Tertullian believes that sin added an irrational element to human behavior, in one way or another he believes that there is still enough rationality in mankind to attempt a postbaptismal virtuous life based on human capacities alone.

CYPRIAN

Contrary to the lack of references to Tertullian, Augustine quite often refers to Cyprian as support for his concept of original sin (i.e., twenty-one references in *Contra Iulianum*, and thirty-two references in *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*). More specifically, the bishop of Hippo argues that Cyprian's authority is a proof that Augustine's interpretation of original sin was not Manichean, contrary to Julian of Aeclanum's accusation, because Cyprian had already upheld it before 'the stench of the Manichean pestilence' arose.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Augustine seldom quotes Cyprian directly. When he does, he mainly cites three Cyprianic sources: several passages from *De Oratione Dominica* and from *Testimonia (Ad Quirinium)* 3, 4, to illustrate the main aspects of his understanding of mankind's sinful state and its need of divine grace, and the already mentioned *Epistula* 64, on the necessity of infant baptism.⁵⁶

Before addressing *Epistula* 64, a much discussed source in patristic circles, we will first consider those passages in Cyprian's œuvre which deal with Adam's sin and its consequences for humanity. *De zelo et liuore* 4 states that mankind is created in the image of God, but the devil, being jealous of mankind, "[and ...] at the instigation of envy, deprived man of the grace of immortality which he had been given [...]."⁵⁷ In *De bono patientiae*, Cyprian explains that mankind lost this original state because of Adam and Eve's first sin. Referring to God's sentence passed upon Adam and Eve when they were expelled from paradise in Gen. 3, 17-19, Cyprian, in *De bono patientiae* 11, explains that the human condition, including

55. *C. ep. Pel.* 4, 25.

56. For detailed references of Augustine quoting Cyprian, see E. DASSMANN, 'Cyprianus', in: *Augustinus-Lexikon* II, 1/2, C. Mayer, (ed.), K. H. Chelius (red.), Basel, 1996, 196-211, 208-209. For Augustine's recourse to Cyprian's *auctoritas*, see also J. PATOUT BURNS, 'Appropriating Augustine Appropriating Cyprian', *Augustinian Studies*, 36/1, 2005, 113-130. A. DUPONT, M. GAUMER, M. LAMBERIGTS, 'Cyprian in Augustine: from Criticized Predecessor to Uncontested Authority', in: *The Normativity of History*, (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium), L. Boeve, T. Merrigan, M. Lamberigts (eds.), Leuven/Paris/Dudley MA, 2015, 33-66.

57. *De zelo et liuore* 4 (*Saint Cyprian. Treatises* [The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation, 36], R.J. Deferrari [trans., ed.], Washington D.C., 1958, 295-296, 295).

De zelo et liuore 4 (CCSL 3A, 76): "[...] dum stimulante liuore homini gratiam datae immortalitatis eripit [...]."

mortality, is a punishment for Adam's first transgression: "We are all bound and confined by the bond of this sentence until, having paid the debt of death, we leave this world."⁵⁸ The whole human race participates in Adam's condemnation. In considering biological death as a result of the condemnation of Adam, Cyprian thus emphasizes the solidarity of mankind in Adam's death. *De bono patientiae* 12 states that when a baby is born, he starts crying because he cannot do anything else but cry, for "with natural foresight he laments the anxieties and labors of this mortal life, and at its very beginning, by weeping and lamentations his young soul testifies to the trials of the world which he is entering."⁵⁹ Likewise, Cyprian describes at length that human *fragilitas* and *infirmitas* is the result of Adam's first transgression in *De bono patientiae* 17. "[...] in that first transgression of God's command, strength of body departed with immortality, and infirmity entered the body by death [...]."⁶⁰ In other words, Cyprian holds that the fall of the first human couple impacted all of humanity. In the previously considered passages, however, this impact is restricted to the sharing of Adam and Eve's punishment by the whole human race (i.e., human mortality in all its aspects).

More explicit references by Cyprian to the presence of a doctrine of original sin are his descriptions of the respective *sordes* and *uulnera* humanity suffers as a consequence of Adam's sin, and from which humanity needs to be liberated by Christ in baptism.⁶¹ In *De habitu uirginum* 23, Cyprian states:

58. *De bono patientiae* 11 (G.E. Conway [trans.], FC 36, 273-274, 274).

De bono patientiae 11 (CCSL 3A, 124): "Huius sententiae uinculo colligati omnes et constricti sumus, donec morte expuncta de isto saeculo recedamus."

59. *De bono patientiae* 12 (FC 36, 274).

De bono patientiae 12 (CCSL 3A, 125): "Prouidentia naturali lamentatur uitae mortalis anxietates, et labores et procellas mundi, quas ingreditur in exordio, statim suo ploratu et gemitu rudis anima testatur."

60. *De bono patientiae* 17 (FC 36, 280-281).

De bono patientiae 17 (CCSL 3A, 128): "[...] in illa prima transgressione praecepti firmitas corporis cum immortalitate discesserit et cum morte infirmitas uenerit [...]."

61. *Ep. 74, 7* (*The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage. Vol. IV: Letters 67-82* [Ancient Christian Writers, 47], G.W. Clarke [trans., an.], New York, NY, 1989, 74): Parallelism: just as Adam was (1) first shaped by God, (2) and then God breathed the breath of life onto his face, Christians are (1) first born in baptism, (2) and then receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands. Both the (1) generation and (2) sanctification by baptism are only procured within the one Church. Similarly, forgiveness of sins can only be granted in the name of Christ within the one Church. Thus, contrary to Stephen I's recognition of 'heretical baptisms', all heretics/schismatics (re-) entering the Church need to be (re-)baptized.

Ep. 74, 7 (CCSL 3C, 571-572): "Porro autem non per manus inpositionem quis nascitur quando accipit spiritum sanctum, sed in baptismo, ut spiritum iam natus accipiat, sicut in primo homine Adam factum est. Ante eum deus plasmauit, tunc insufflauit in faciem eius flatum uitae. Nec enim potest accipi spiritus, nisi prius fuerit qui accipiat. Cum autem natiuitas christianorum in baptismo sit, baptismi autem generatio et sanctificatio apud solam sponsam Christi sit, quae parere spiritaliter et generare filios deo possit, ubi et ex qua et cui natus est qui filius ecclesiae non est? Vt

“All indeed who attain to the divine and paternal gift by the sanctification of baptism put off therein the old man by the grace of the saving waters, and, renewed by the Holy Spirit, they are cleansed from the impurities of the old contagion by a second birth. But the greater sanctity and truth of the second birth belong to you [the virgins] who no longer have desires of the flesh and of the body.”⁶²

Likewise, *De opere et eleemosynis* 1 reads:

“For when the Lord had come and healed the wounds which Adam had borne and had cured the old poisons of the serpent, He gave him when made whole a law not to sin anymore lest something more serious happen to him in his sinning. We were restricted and shut within a narrow limit by the prescription of innocence. And the infirmity of human frailty would have no resource nor accomplish anything, unless again divine goodness came to the rescue and by pointing out the works of justice and mercy opened a way to safeguard salvation, so that by almsgiving we may wash away whatever pollutions we later contract.”⁶³

Sordes and *uulnera* express the consequences of Adam’s primal sin. Cyprian, however, does not clearly indicate whether these consist in participation in and transmission of the Adamic sin and guilt. Reference to a general human sinful state in *Testimonia (Ad Quirinum)* 3, 54, is founded in the tripartite passages of Job 14, 4 (“For who is pure from filth? Not one; even if his life be of one day on the earth.”), Ps. 50 [51], 7 (“Behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins has my mother conceived me.”), and 1 John 1, 8 (“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”), which together underscore the idea that nobody is *sine sorde et sine peccato*, “without filth and without sin”.⁶⁴ Augustine knew these verses too, and quoted them mainly against the notion of *impeccantia*, meaning that no person is without sin either (1) before baptism,

habere quis possit deum patrem, habeat ante ecclesiam matrem. Cum uero nulla omnino haeresis, sed neque aliquid schisma habere salutaris baptismi sanctificationem foris possit, in tantum Stephani fratris nostri obstinatio dura prorupit, ut etiam de Marcionis baptismo, item Valentini et Appelletis et ceterorum blasphemantium in deum patrem contendat filios deo nasci, et illic in nomine Iesu Christi dicat remissionem peccatorum dari ubi blasphematur in patrem et dominum et deum Christum.”

62. *De habitu uirginum* (A.E. Keenan [trans.], FC 36, 51).

De habitu uirginum 23 (CSEL 3/1, 204): “Omnes quidem qui ad diuinum munus et patrium baptismi sanctificatione perueniunt hominem illic ueterem gratia lauacri salutaris exponunt et innouati Spiritu sancto a sordibus contagionis antiquae iterata natiuitate purgantur. Sed natiuitatis iteratae uobis maior sanctitas et ueritas competit, quibus desideria iam carnis et corporis nulla sunt.”

63. *De opere et eleemosynis* 1 (R.J. Deferrari [trans., ed.], FC 36, 227-228).

De opere et eleemosynis 1 (CSEL 3/1, 373): “Cum Dominus adueniens sanasset illa quae Adam portauerat uulnera et uenena serpentis antiqua curasset, legem dedit sano et praecepit ne ultra iam peccaret, ne quid peccanti grauius eueniret. Coartati eram et in angustum innocentiae praescriptione conclusi. Nec haberet quid fragilitatis humanae infirmitas adque inbecillitas faceret, nisi iterum pietas diuina subueniens iustitiae et misericordiae operibus ostensis uiam quandam tuendae salutis aperiret, ut sordes postmodum quascumque contrahimus eleemosynis abluamus.”

64. Cf. *De Oratione Dominica* 12: we need to be daily washed from our sins.

because every person has original sin; or (2) after baptism, the original guilt is washed away, however *concupiscentia* (inclination to sin) remains as the result of original sin, and nobody can resist this *concupiscentia* and everybody now commits personal sins (thus as a consequence of original sin).⁶⁵ Cyprian's combination of these three verses, however, does not necessarily imply a doctrine of original sin, as the reference may be limited to personal sins.⁶⁶

An important text that demonstrates how Cyprian tends to restrict sin to individual sins is *Epistula 55*. In this letter Cyprian explains to bishop Antonianus his personal shift from an uncompromising position to a conciliatory approach towards those who lapsed during the persecutions. Criticizing Novatian's total rejection of the *lapsi*, Cyprian is convinced that no one should be excluded from penitence and forgiveness of sins. In this context, the bishop of Carthage explicitly asserts that one cannot be held accountable for another person's sins. This exclusive emphasis on the personal responsibility of sin seems to run counter to the intuition of original sin, and is certainly opposed to the idea of the transmission of sin and participation in Adam's guilt.

"We remain true to our faith, we follow the guidance set by God's teaching, we are in agreement with the dictates of truth. We maintain that each person must be held responsible for the sin he commits himself and that no one can be made guilty for anyone else, for the Lord warns us with these words: 'The just man's justice will be upon him, and the wicked man's wickedness will be upon him' (Ez. 18, 20), and likewise, 'Fathers shall not die for their children and children shall not die for their fathers. Every man shall die for his own sins' (Deut. 24, 26)."⁶⁷

65. For source material and further reading, see: M. LAMBERIGTS, 'Peccatum', in: *Augustinus-Lexikon* IV, 3/4, R. Dodaro, C. Mayer, Ch. Müller (eds.), A. E. J. Grote (red.), Basel, 2014, 581-599.

66. *Testimonia (Ad Quirinum)* 3, 54 (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, R. E. Wallis [trans.], A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, A. Cleveland Coxe [eds.], Buffalo, NY, 1886, 547).

Testimonia (Ad Quirinum) 3, 54 (CCSL 3, 141): "Apud Iob: *Quis enim mundus a sordibus? Nec unus, etiam si unius diei sit uita eius in terra*. Item in psalmo XLVIII: *In facinore conceptus sum et in peccatis aluit me in utero mater mea*. Item in epistula Iohannis: *Si dixerimus quia peccatum non habemus, nos ipsos decipimus, et ueritas in nobis non est*."

For further references concerning Cyprian's *Testimonia*, see: A. ALEXIS-BAKER, 'Ad Quirinum Book Three and Cyprian's Catachumenate', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 17/3, 2009, 357-380.

These verses constitute an Augustinian *topos* against every idea of possible 'sinlessness'. See A.-M. LA BONNARDIÈRE, 'Les commentaires simultanés de Mat. 6, 12 et I Jo. I, 8 dans l'œuvre de s. Augustin', *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 1, 1955, 129-147.

67. *Ep. 55, 27 (The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage. Vol. III: Letters 55-66 [Ancient Christian Writers, 46], G. W. Clarke [trans., an.], New York, NY, 1986, 51).*

Ep. 55, 27 (CSEL 3/2, 645-646): "Nobis autem secundum fidem nostram et diuinæ prædicationis datam formam competit ratio ueritatis unumquemque in peccato suo ipsum teneri nec posse alium pro altero reum fieri, cum Dominus præmoneat et dicat: iustitia iusti super eum erit et scelus scelerati super eum erit. Et iterum: non morientur patres pro filiis et filii non morientur pro patribus. Vnusquisque in peccato suo morietur."

In the previous paragraph of *Epistula 55, 27*, Cyprian argues that the Novatianist Church cannot claim to be free of idolatry, since within their Church there are also adulterers and defrauders, and Paul equates the latter with idolaters in Eph. 5, 5 and Col. 3, 5-6.

“It follows, therefore, that if they [= heretics, followers of Novatian] claim one man is polluted by another’s sin and if, as they maintain and contend, the idolatry of the guilty passes on to the innocent, then on their own argument, they cannot clear themselves of the guilt of idolatry, since it is established on the authority of the Apostle [Eph. 5, 5; Col. 3, 5-6] that adulterers and defrauders, with whom they are in communion, are idolaters.”⁶⁸

In this paragraph, Cyprian seems to take distance from the idea that an innocent person can be contaminated by a sinner by suggesting that the Novatianists ‘claim’, ‘maintain’, or ‘contend’ (*dicunt, contendunt*) this. Subsequently, he juxtaposes his own position to the Novatianist (*nobis autem*), declaring that only his position concerning the personal responsibility of sin is according to faith, divine proclamation and truth. The stress on the personal accountability and the possible denial of contamination by the sins of another in *Epistula 55* is not at all consistent with the Augustinian notion of original sin.

After this exploration of Cyprian’s œuvre, we can now turn to *Epistula 64*. In this letter Bishop Fidus is presented a report of the decisions taken by the sixty-six bishops of the Carthaginian synod probably of May 252, at which Cyprian was present. One of the issues discussed during this council was the following question posed by Fidus: Is it proper to baptize an infant immediately, on the second or third day after its birth, or should one wait eight days before baptizing infants, similar to the prescribed waiting period of eight days for the Old Testament circumcision?⁶⁹

While *Epistula 64* is most often referred to as a recommendation for paedobaptism in the traditional history of dogma and liturgy, the specific impetus of this letter and conciliar decision was not whether infants should be baptized or not, but how fast they should be baptized.⁷⁰ The episcopate gathered in Carthage, and Fidus too accepted the practice of infant baptism. Fidus did not object to pae-

68. *Ep. 55, 27* (ACW 46, 50).

Ep. 55, 27 (CSEL 3/2, 645): “Ita fit ut si peccato alterius inquinari alterum dicunt et idolatriam delinquentis ad non delinquentem transire sua adseueratione contendunt, excusari secundum suam uocem non possint ab idololatriae crimine, cum constet de apostolica probatione moechos et fraudatores quibus illi communicant idololatrias esse.”

69. *Ep. 64, 2*. The reference to Jewish purity legislation at this juncture could refer to the believe that children were born ‘stained’, even before the idea of original sin was formed.

70. David W. Perry defends a rather unique interpretation of *Ep. 64*, namely that it should not be considered as proof for a widespread practice of paedobaptism. It only serves as evidence for baptisms *in articulo mortis* which were massively necessitated in the form of household baptisms by the plague of 252 – the plague Cyprian devoted his treatise *De mortalitate* to. D.W. PERRY, ‘Cyprian’s Letter to Fidus: a new perspective on its significance for the history of infant baptism’, in: *Studia Patristica 65*, Leuven/Paris/Walpole Mass., 2013, 455-450.

dobaptism, only the very early application thereof. His question pertained to the legitimacy of the opinion to postpone infant baptism after the eighth day of birth. He held – as we can deduce from Cyprian’s answer, since Fidus’ original letter is not preserved – that an infant was not clean before the eighth day.⁷¹ Hence, Fidus feared kissing the feet of an infant younger than eight days. According to the testimony of this letter the kissing of the feet was a part of the African baptismal liturgy.⁷² This uncleanness of infants in their first eight days could perhaps be taken in a literal, hygienic sense: babies were not washed immediately after birth. More probably, Fidus believed newborns were impure in a ritualistic and spiritual sense, because the latter is the line of argument Cyprian and his episcopal confratres countered in their response.

Cyprian and the Carthaginian council fathers rule in favor of not delaying infant baptism for eight days. They offer five reasons for their decision. First of all, in general terms, they believe that every human soul – old or young – should be saved through baptism, including newborn babies.

“Our Council adopted an entirely different conclusion [compared to Fidus’ position]. No one agreed with your [Fidus’] opinion on the matter; instead, without exception we all formed the judgement that it is not right to deny the mercy and grace of God to any man that is born.”⁷³

“[...] we may be different, so far as the world is concerned, in the development of our bodies depending on various ages, but there is no difference between us so far as God is concerned. Unless you are prepared to claim that even that very grace which is given to the baptized is distributed in greater or lesser degree according to the ages of the recipients! Whereas, in truth, the Holy Spirit is not measured out but is conferred equally upon all through the bounty and loving-kindness of the Father. For just as God draws no distinction between persons, so neither does He between ages, but He shows Himself a Father equally to all, being evenhanded in the distribution of his heavenly graces.”⁷⁴

71. *Ep.* 64, 4.

72. Cf. G. W. CLARKE, ‘Cyprian’s Epistle 64 and the Kissing of Feet in Baptism’, *The Harvard Theological Review*, 66/1, 1973, 147-152.

73. *Ep.* 64, 2 (ACW 46, 110).

Ep. 64, 2 (CCSL 3C, 419): “[Quantum uero ad causam infantium pertinet, quos dixisti intra secundum uel tertium diem quam nati sint constitutos baptizari non oportere et considerandam esse legem circumcisionis antiquae, ut intra octauum diem eum qui natus est baptizandum et sanctificandum non putares, longe aliud in concilio nostro uisum est.] In hoc enim quod tu putabas esse faciendum nemo consensit, sed uniuersi potius iudicauimus nulli hominum nato misericordiam dei et gratiam denegandam.”

74. *Ep.* 64, 3 (ACW 46, 110-111).

Ep. 64, 3 (CCSL 3C, 421): “[Sed illic aequalitas diuina et spiritalis exprimitur, quod pares atque aequales sint omnes homines, quando a deo semel facti sunt,] et possit aetas nostra in incrementis corporum secundum saeculum, non secundum deum habere discrimen: nisi si et gratia ipsa quae et baptizatis datur pro aetate accipientium uel minor uel maior tribuitur, cum spiritus sanctus non de mensura sed de pietate atque indulgentia paterna aequalis omnibus praebetur.”

“Every man without exception has the right to be admitted to the grace of Christ since Peter, too, in the Acts of the Apostles declares: ‘The Lord has said to me that no man is to be called impure and unclean’ (Acts 10, 28).”⁷⁵

Secondly, Cyprian and his colleagues reject the idea that a baby is unclean, as it has been newly created by God. Kissing the feet of an infant (*cf. supra*), embracing what God has made, is tantamount to kissing the hands of the Creator.⁷⁶ Moreover, whatever God has made, he made perfect and complete, including babies in their mothers’ wombs.⁷⁷ *Ergo*, babies, at birth, are pure.

The third argument is that the Old Testament circumcision of the flesh on the eighth day was a prefiguration (*sacramentum, umbra, imago*) of Christ’s resurrection on the eighth day and consequently of the spiritual circumcision given by the Lord (i.e., salvation through baptism). The circumcision of the spirit superseded and made void the circumcision of the flesh.

“And that is the reason why, in our view, no one is to be prevented from obtaining grace by that law which was once in the past in force: circumcision of the flesh ought not to block the way to the circumcision of the spirit.”⁷⁸

The basis of the fourth reason not to exclude the newly born from baptism in the first week of their lives is that it would be illogical since the gravest sinners are

75. *Ep.* 64, 5 (ACW 46, 111-112).

Ep. 64, 5 (CCSL 3C, 423): “[...] sed omnem omnino admittendum esse ad gratiam Christi, quando et Petrus in actis apostolorum loquatur et dicat: *dominus mihi dixit neminem hominum communem dicendum et inmundum.*”

See also the conclusion of the letter in *Ep.* 64, 6 (ACW 46, 112): “And so, dearest brother, our verdict at the council was this: we ought not to be the cause for debarring anyone from access to baptism and the grace of God, for he is merciful, kind and loving towards all men.”

Ep. 64, 6 (CCSL 3C, 425): “Et ideo, frater carissime, haec fuit in concilio nostra sententia a baptismo atque a gratia dei, qui omnibus misericors et benignus et pius est, neminem per nos debere prohiberi.”

76. *Ep.* 64, 4.

77. *Ep.* 64, 2, by which Cyprian thus implies that the mother’s womb does not render a baby unclean.

78. *Ep.* 64, 5 (ACW 46, 111).

Ep. 64, 5 (CCSL 3C, 423): “Propter quod neminem putamus a gratia consequenda inpediendum esse ea lege quae iam statuta est, nec spiritalem circumcissionem inpediri carnali circumcissione debere, [...]”

Abraham van de Beek situates the different opinion of Fidus and Cyprian within a broader difference in Christology and ecclesiology. Fidus sees the Church as a prolongation of Israel and Christ as the new means of obtaining grace after the OT sacrifices, and thus baptism as a way to belong to the covenant. Cyprian believes in the Church as the new eschatological fulfillment of the kingdom of God, precisely fulfilled in Christ, explaining his idea of baptism as dying to the old world and rising in eternal life in Christ. A. VAN DE BEEK, ‘Cyprian on Baptism’, in: *Cyprian of Carthage: Studies in his Life, Language, and Thought* (Late antique history and religion, 3), H. Bakker, P. van Geest, H. van Loon (eds.), Leuven, 2010, 143-164.

allowed remission of sins in baptism, while in infants only the Adamic contagion should be removed.

“Besides, if anything could stand in the way of obtaining grace, it would rather be adults, men of mature and more advanced years, who might have their way blocked by their more grievous sins. But remember this: even in the case of those who have sinned most grievously, offending many times in their past lives against God, they are granted remission of their sins, subsequently, on becoming believers. No one is denied access to baptism and grace. How much less reason is there then for denying it to an infant, who, being newly born, can have committed no sins. The only thing that he has done is that, being born after the flesh as a descendant of Adam, he has contracted from that first birth the ancient contagion of death. And he is admitted to receive remission of his sins all the more readily in that what are being remitted to him are not his own sins but another’s.”⁷⁹

Augustine considers this passage from Cyprian as a clear proof that there existed before him a clear and authoritative tradition of original sin.⁸⁰ Scholars who believe that Augustine systematized a previous tradition, follow Augustine in their reading of *Epistula* 64, 5.⁸¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, for instance, writes: “Cyprian would thus appear to have been the first teacher of the Church to connect an explicit argument for the baptism of infants with an explicit statement of the doctrine that, through their physical birth, children inherited the sins of Adam and the death that was the wages of sin.”⁸² This exegesis needs careful reconsideration, by evaluating what is present and absent in this text, and by comparing it with the previously mentioned elements in Cyprian’s œuvre outside *Epistula* 64, 5.

Three elements are of importance in Cyprian’s plea for immediate infant baptism in *Epistula* 64, 5: (1) An infant has not sinned, unless he is *secundum Adam carnaliter natus*, (2) contracting by this first birth the *contagium mortis antiquae*.

79. *Ep.* 64, 5 (ACW 46, 112).

Ep. 64, 5 (CCSL 3C, 423-425): “Ceterum si homines inpedire aliquid ad consecutionem gratiae posset, magis adultos et prouectos et maiores natu possent inpedire peccata grauiora. Porro autem si etiam grauissimis delictoribus et in deum multum ante peccantibus, cum postea crediderint, remissa peccatorum datur et a baptismo atque gratia nemo prohibetur, quanto magis prohiberi non debet infans qui recens natus nihil peccauit, nisi quod secundum Adam carnaliter natus contagium mortis antiquae prima natiuitate contraxit, qui ad remissam peccatorum accipiendam hoc ipso facilius accedit quod illi remittuntur non propria sed aliena peccata.”

80. Augustine quotes Cyprian’s *ep.* 64, 5 in *s.* 294, 19; *pecc. mer.* 3, 10-11; *nupt. et conc.* 2, 51; *c. ep. Pel.* 4, 23; *c. Iul.* 1, 6; 14; 22; *haer.* 88; *ep.* 166, 23; *ep.* 217, 6; *c. Iul. imp.* 1, 50.

81. *Cf. supra* note 2.

82. J. PELIKAN, *Development of Christian Doctrine: Some Historical Prolegomena*, New Haven, 1969, 87, quoted by G. W. CLARKE, ACW 46, 314.

Cf. “When Cyprian approved the practice [of infant baptism] because it gave the children access to the grace of Christ, he attempted to identify some form of sin from which the infants were being freed. He specified the contagion of death arising from Adam’s sin, rather than any guilt of the child.” J. PATOUT BURNS, R. M. JENSEN, *Christianity in Roman Africa. The Development of Its Practices and Beliefs*, Grand Rapids, 2014, 229.

(3) These infantile sins are more easily forgiven to the baby because they are *non propria, sed aliena peccata*. The phrasing *secundum Adam carnaliter natus, prima natiuitate contraxit*, and *contagium mortis antiquae* could indeed suggest an Augustinian original sin. As seen above, *De opere et eleemosynis* 1 states that Christ came to heal the wounds of Adam, and to cure the old poison of the serpent. The plural of *uulnera* recalls the plural of *peccata aliena* in *Epistula* 64, 5, and the *uenena antiqua* resembles the *mors antiqua*. The *peccata aliena* of *Epistula* 64, 5 and the *uulnera* of *De opere et eleemosynis* 1 thus indicate the consequences of Adam's primal sin for all of humanity. While we can discuss the question of whether the *uulnera* of *De opere et eleemosynis* 1 would only entail the physical mortality resulting from the fall – likewise acknowledged in *Epistula* 64, 5 in the expressions *secundum Adam carnaliter* and *contagium mortis antiquae* – *Epistula* 64, 5 seems to go a step further by considering the innate *aliena peccata* of babies as a result of being born according to Adam. The latter reading would imply that the relation between Adam and his descendants comprises more than only physical death. This interpretation, in combination with the biblical assertion that nobody is *sine sorde et sine peccato* in *Testimonia (Ad Quirinum)* 3, 54, would seem to end in a doctrine of original sin in the full Augustinian sense.

However, as argued above, *Testimonia (Ad Quirinum)* 3, 54 does not contain explicit indications that Cyprian was thinking about anything else but the impossibility of living without committing individual sins. Similarly, *Epistula* 64, 5 states on the one hand that everybody shares in the flesh and death of Adam. On the other hand, Cyprian does not explicitly conclude that Adam's progeny actually shares in the guilt of Adam's first sin. Admittedly, Adam's sins need to be forgiven in babies, but Cyprian writes that these sins are *non propria*. In contrast to Cyprian, however, in the Augustinian sense, the sin of Adam is not *alienum*, but *proprium* or *nostrum*, because of the presence and participation of all mankind in Adam in the first sin.⁸³ Precisely because these sins remain *aliena*, they are more easily remitted according to Cyprian. As such, Cyprian does not seem to hold infants personally accountable for Adam's sin, different from the Augustinian understanding of original sin. He repeatedly explained to Fidus that newborns are not unclean at birth. Moreover, the adjective *aliena* confirms the anti-novatianist assertion in Cyprian's *Epistula* 55, 27 that one is not responsible for another's sins. Kenneth Wilson observed that it would be "incredibly incompetent" of Cyprian and his colleagues to plead for immediate infant baptism without mentioning its most urgent argument – namely, the fate of hell for deceased unbaptized children

83. Augustine refers to these "peccata aliena" from *ep.* 64, 5 in *c. Iul. imp.* 3, 35; 61, but shifts the meaning of this Cyprianic term radically: the sins of our parents are on the one hand "aliena", but on the other hand they become ours, since we were present in our parents when they committed their sins. More in particular, the sin of Adam, which is an "alienum sed paternum peccatum", becomes "nostrum peccatum", because of our presence in Adam (*cf.* Augustine's reading of "in quo" of Rom. 5, 12) when he sinned for the first time (*c. Iul.* 6, 28; *c. Iul. imp.* 2, 163).

because they are not acquitted of original sin – if they believed in Augustinian inherited guilt.⁸⁴

In terms of original sin understood as humanity sharing the guilt of the first sin, it would perhaps make more sense not to talk about *peccata* in the plural, but in the singular. Advocates of the thesis of a full-fledged Cyprianic original sin could contend that Cyprian perceived two layers in original sin: the first transgression committed by Adam (*contagium mortis antiquae*), and the further sinful consequences of this first sin (*peccata aliena*). I argue, however, that Cyprian's text as such does not contain clear evidence to support such a reading.

I agree that Cyprian believes that Adam's fall affected humanity and introduced death into the world. This death is more than a merely biological death, but also has spiritual ramifications, linking the *mors antiqua* with the *peccata aliena*. The textual evidence of *Epistula* 64, 5 does not enable us to conclude that Cyprian believed in a universal human sin and guilt. Not personal sin, nor original sin, but the spiritual death that affected the whole human race is thus, according to Cyprian, the reason to baptize infants, and preferably as soon as possible.

The fifth, rather rhetorical, argument not to deprive newborn babies of immediate baptism, is based on the fact that from the moment they are born, they beg for help by crying.⁸⁵ To some extent, this is a more positive appreciation of babies' weeping compared to Cyprian's *De bono patientiae* 12, in which the tears of babies express the sorrowful human condition, and is certainly different from Augustine's understanding of the cry of babies as an attestation of original sin.⁸⁶

Regarding grace, Vinzenz Buchheit has suggested that Cyprian's self-description of his conversion in *Ad Donatum* 3-4 contains elements of a doctrine of grace in the context of baptism (as liberation from sin which human beings are not able

84. K.M. WILSON, 'Sin as Contagious in the Writings of Cyprian and Augustine', in: *Studia Patristica* 70, Leuven/Paris/Walpole Mass., 2013, 37-45, 39. Wilson pleads to understand the Cyprianic necessity of infant baptism on two levels, integrating Cyprian's view on the "contagium mortis antiquae": (1) to forgive the sinful contagion of mortal birth inherited from Adam, (2) to remove the contamination with sins from others – e.g. by the contact with schismatics, heretics, sinners, etc. (The latter is vehemently rejected by Augustine.) The innocent state infants are born in thus implies that the urgency for baptismal purification is not caused by an original sin, but rather by the concern to protect them from sinful influences of contemporary sinners. Inta Ivanovska distinguishes in her analysis Cyprian's idea on the possibility of contamination of infants by the pagan outside world from Augustine's doctrine of an innate internal contamination by original sin. I. IVANOVSKA, 'Baptized Infants and Pagan Rituals: Cyprian versus Augustine', in: *Children in Late Ancient Christianity*, C.B. Horn, R.R. Phenix (eds.), Tübingen, 2009, 45-73.

85. *Ep.* 64, 6.

86. According to Augustine, the crying of babies can refer to: their (original) wretchedness – even to the degree that they resist baptism – or to their begging for baptism: *bapt.* 4, 23, 31; *pecc. mer.* 1, 25, 36; *gr. et lib. arb.* 22, 44; *ep.* 187, 7, 25; *s.* 293, 10; *s.* 294, 17; *en. Ps.* 125, 10. See also the famous passage in *Conf.* 1, 7 on the sinful nature of babies. Fr. REFOULÉ, 'Misère des enfants et péché originel d'après saint Augustin', *Revue thomiste*, 63, 1963, 341-362.

to effect), which is, together with other elements, inspired by African baptismal creeds and the writings of Tertullian. This description exhibits similarities with Augustine's account of his own conversion and with his more general ideas on grace.⁸⁷ Similarly, the description of the grace of creation in *De zelo et liuore* 4 as the original endowment of immortality, and the "grace of saving waters" in *De habitu uirginum* 23 as purification and sanctification through baptism, is in line with Augustine's thoughts. His specifically anti-Pelagian vision of original sin, however, intrinsically implies a certain doctrine of grace – antecedent, all-inclusive, unmerited, absolute grace – and predestination of the elect. Although grace is certainly not absent in the reflections by Cyprian which we have explored concerning human sin, but is present in a very positive way, his concept of grace differs from the Augustinian doctrine of grace. *De bono patientiae* 17 states that mankind in its state of bodily weakness and infirmity needs to struggle with temptations by exercising *patientia*, which is a human duty and responsibility. Cyprian does not add that man can achieve this only through the help of additional and permanent grace, as the bishop of Hippo believes. Like Augustine, *De opere et eleemosynis* 1 observes that one is inclined to sin after baptism, but contrary to Augustine, Cyprian states that God's law as such is sufficient against temptation, to help the "infirmity of human frailty" by pointing out the works of justice and mercy, and thus opening a way to safeguard salvation. Man is able to achieve this on his own, no additional grace is required. Giving alms, moreover, is a sufficient means to erase postbaptismal sins. Again, Cyprian does not mention the need for additional grace in order to resist sins and, when committed, to erase them after baptism. *Epistula* 64 places positive emphasis on baptismal grace. Everybody is created in a perfect and complete way by God. The remission of sin and the sanctification by the Holy Spirit as baptismal grace are not to be denied to anybody. God, in his bounty and loving-kindness, distributes grace equally to everyone. The latter is quite different from Augustine's predestination of the few elect.

CONCLUSION

In order to reach any conclusions about the possible African nature or origin of the concept and content of original sin, other pre-Augustinian African sources besides Tertullian and Cyprian need to be researched, and a careful comparison with the possible presence of this notion outside North African theology is necessary. This paper focused on Tertullian and Cyprian.⁸⁸ Our analysis of the three texts quoted by Gerald Bonner *c.s.* to underpin his appreciation of the African roots and foundation of original sin, has shown that they actually do not really enable one to make this claim univocally. Tertullian does not utterly reject infant

87. V. BUCHHEIT, 'Non homini sed Deo (Cypr. Don. 3-4*)', *Hermes-Zeitschrift Für Klassische Philologie*, 117/2, 1989, 210-226.

88. Further research will also need to take into account possible internal evolutions in the life and thought of Tertullian and Cyprian.

baptism in *De baptismo* 18, 5, but he is certainly not a great supporter of this practice, to say the least. Mentioning the *uitium originis* in *De anima* 41, 1 could be regarded as holding *in nucleo* the doctrine of original sin, but much more is needed than only this vague reference to consider Tertullian as embracing an Augustinian original sin. Cyprian's *Epistula* 64 pleads for infant baptism, and links the latter with Adam's sin, but at the same time upholds the purity of infants. In sum, these three African sources do not clearly nor explicitly articulate the Augustinian definition of original sin as we summarized the latter in our introduction. Does this observation also apply on Tertullian's and Cyprian's oeuvre *in toto*? After having extended the available evidence and after careful (re-)examination of the latter, we can respond the latter question, the initial research question of this article, in an affirmative way. We can confirm that Augustine's doctrine of original sin should not *per se* be understood as largely innovative – introduced as a novel and original idea by the bishop of Hippo –, but could be conceived as 'traditional' in the sense that the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian contained a similar intuition and concept of original sin. Augustine, evidently laying his own accents, shares a similar conceptual framework with Tertullian and Cyprian, *ergo*, all three stand *grosso modo* in the same tradition.

Tertullian's belief in the human free will, the individual responsibility for committing sin and resisting sin, his legalistic interpretation of baptism as an individual commitment, and his aversion for infant baptism, on the one hand, contradict the notion of original sin. On the other hand, the following elements come in the neighborhood of Augustinian original sin: holding Adam responsible for all human sins, indicating Adam as *princeps et generis et delicti*, and describing the *uitium originis* or *collegium transgressionis* that binds mankind with their forefather Adam, through a seminal infection (from which Christ is excluded), which transfers death, *sordes*, and an irrationality/inclination toward sin (as a second nature) and even – although very carefully – in two instances talking (*De resurrectione carnis* 34, 1-2: *meritum perditionis*; *De baptismo* 5, 6-7: *reatus* in its broader textual context) about the human participation in Adam's guilt. Admittedly, the questions remain whether Tertullian really intended to claim that it is the sin and/or guilt of Adam that is transmitted (or only its punishment or a kind of impurity), and why it is that children seem to escape from this Adamic sin and sinful second nature. Nevertheless, two centuries before Augustine developed the full rigor of the anti-Pelagian content of his concept of original sin, many aspects both of the concept and its core content seem to be present in Tertullian's anthropology and theology, although not very explicit and not with any clear answer to what specifically is intergenerationally transmitted.

Tertullian's protest against premature paedobaptisms faded away in the time of Cyprian. Cyprian clearly pleads for the general application of infant baptism, without however linking infant baptism in an Augustinian perspective with an innate and transferred original guilt. Cyprian holds children to be born in a pure state, and he emphasizes the personal accountability of sin. These elements seem to contradict the doctrine of original sin. The writings of the Carthaginian martyr bishop however also contain elements that point in the direction of this doctrine.

Humanity shares in and is contaminated with the penal consequences of the first transgression: death and the sorrowful human condition, the *sordes* and *uulnera* of Adam, the *culpa* of the flesh (in the context of Rom. 8, 3). That Cyprian is of the opinion that humanity is affected by the fall is clear. The extent of that impact is not explained in detail: does humanity only bear the punishment for Adam's sin, or does it effectively share in the primal sin and guilt? Answering these two questions for Tertullian, we could answer both affirmatively, although the evidence for the second answer is rather limited. In the case of Cyprian, we could only substantiate the first answer, while for the second we did not find any solid indications.

In the end, we should be careful to avoid anachronisms. During Tertullian's and Cyprian's life, and in their theological and pastoral setting, the Pelagian controversy was still far away from the horizon. Augustine was the first to solidly anchor infant baptism in the dogma of original sin, implying that the whole human race participates in the sin, its guilt and punishment of Adam. Such a strict position we did not encounter in Tertullian and Cyprian. Probably one of the most notable differences with the Augustinian original sin is the role granted to human free will by Tertullian and Cyprian. Since Adam's infringement seems not to impact the human capacity to lead a virtuous life, we did not find in these two African theologians the universal postbaptismal need for assisting grace to lead a good Christian life, quite different from Augustine's position in this regard. Despite the fact that we found the clearest indications of a *tradux peccati* in Tertullian, he rejects infant baptism and certifies the innocence of children. Cyprian favors infant baptism, based on the belief in a sort of an innate contamination in *Epistula* 64. Outside this letter, 'germs' of original sin in Cyprian are quite difficult to find. The most we can conclude is that Tertullian and Cyprian showed a remarkable interest in the first sin of human history and prepared some aspects of the Augustinian content of original sin: the juxtaposition of humanity's fall through Adam and salvation in Christ (baptism), the loss of mankind's creational innocence, an original transgression with lasting negative effects, contamination and/or transmission of the consequences of the Adamic sin influencing the human soul, making it prone to sin and necessitating baptism for redemption. The nature of what is transmitted and participated – whether the penal consequences or also the guilt – and how it would render infants impure, is not clearly answered. As such, Tertullian and Cyprian created a conceptual framework in which it was possible for Augustine to develop all aspects of his doctrine of original sin, some of which Tertullian and Cyprian probably would not completely agree with, including also some of the extreme implications of the Augustinian dogma.

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ABSTRACT: Augustine of Hippo's notion of *peccatum originale* did not come out of the blue. In the scholarly discussion about the 'traditional' or 'innovative' character of Augustine's doctrine of original sin, G. Bonner and M. Hollingworth argued for its specifically African roots. In order to evaluate the possible 'Africanness' of Augustine's concept of *peccatum originale*, the current article addresses the two main protagonists of African theological thinking before Augustine: Tertullian (2nd/3rd c.) and Cyprian (3rd c.). They explicitly reflected on (infant) baptism and (the Adamic) sin, issues relevant for the doctrine of original sin, and Augustine refers to their writings for this reason. Did Tertullian and Cyprian lay the foundations of the *doctor gratiae*'s highly sophisticated doctrine of original sin? To answer this question, we gathered as exhaustively as possible all available evidence. Processing this quite elaborate collection of sources shows that Tertullian and Cyprian created a conceptual framework in which it was possible for Augustine to develop all aspects of his doctrine of original sin, some of which differed considerably from the positions of Tertullian and Cyprian, including also some of the extreme implications of the Augustinian view.

RÉSUMÉ: La notion de *peccatum originale* développée par Augustin d'Hippone n'est pas sortie de nulle part. Au cours des débats entre les chercheurs au sujet du caractère « traditionnel » ou « novateur » de la doctrine augustinienne du péché originel, G. Bonner et M. Hollingworth ont mis en avant ses racines spécifiquement africaines. Pour évaluer la possible « africanité » du concept augustinien de *peccatum originale*, le présent article se consacre aux deux principaux protagonistes de la pensée théologique africaine antérieure à Augustin : Tertullien (II^e-III^e s.) et Cyprien (III^e s.). Ils se sont explicitement interrogés sur le baptême (des enfants) et sur le péché (d'Adam), questions qui sont en rapport avec la doctrine du péché originel, et c'est pour cette raison qu'Augustin fait référence à leurs écrits. Tertullien et Cyprien ont-ils posé les fondations de la doctrine, éminemment complexe, du péché originel défendue par le *doctor gratiae* ? Pour répondre à cette question, nous avons rassemblé, de la manière la plus exhaustive possible, l'ensemble des témoignages disponibles. L'élaboration de cette collection très développée de sources montre que Tertullien et Cyprien ont créé un cadre conceptuel dans lequel il devenait possible à Augustin de développer tous les aspects de sa doctrine du péché originel, dont certains différaient considérablement des positions de Tertullien et de Cyprien, y compris certaines des conséquences extrêmes des idées d'Augustin.

