

NOTRE DAME GRADUATE SCHOOL OF CHRISTENDOM COLLEGE

THE FIRST SIN: COULD FEAR HAVE PLAYED A PART?

SUBMITTED TO DR. BURNS AS REQUIRED PAPER IN COURSE ON THE VIRTUES

BY
BRENDAN GRAVES

ALEXANDRIA, VA
JUNE 2013

The First Sin: Differing Interpretations

In several instances in his *Summa Theologiae* and *Compendium theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas discusses the first sin of man, including man's state before the first sin and how the sin could have occurred, what that first sin must have been, and how the respective sins of Adam and Eve compared to each other. St. Thomas offers a remarkably comprehensive and coherent analysis of man's original state and the first sin that caused his fall. In his book *A Father Who Keeps His Promises*, Dr. Scott Hahn offers his own interpretation of the scripture surrounding the first sin. It is surprising to find that Hahn's theories have aspects that appear to be irreconcilable with St. Thomas' explanations, as well as the tradition with which St. Thomas agrees.

St. Thomas explains how man's original state put him in harmony with God and made him immortal. He also discusses how the first sin, which he argues had to be primarily the sin of pride, still managed to occur despite man's harmonious state and cause his fall. Hahn seems to argue that the first sin was ultimately a sin of fear, which would not have been possible in the harmonious state described by St. Thomas. As for what man might have had to fear, Hahn appears to diverge from St. Thomas and tradition by implying that man was capable of experiencing some form of suffering and death before the fall.

Original Justice

St. Thomas' argument that the first sin was pride hinges on his understanding of man's pre-fall state of original justice. St. Thomas divides the basis for man's original justice into three relationships of subordination. First, he starts with the idea that in man's original state, the body

was controlled perfectly by the soul, meaning that man was free from illness and death (*C.T. I*, 186). Second, the soul's sense appetite was completely subordinate to reason, and man's reason was subject to God, which would have meant that no passion could ever arise in man if it were opposed to reason or God. St. Thomas characterizes this lack of unruly passions as "complete peace of mind" in man (*C.T. I*, 186). Third, man's will was subordinate to God. Man approached all things keeping in mind God as his ultimate end (*C.T. I*, 186). It was upon this submission of the will to God that man's state of original justice depended (*C.T. I*, 188). The total submission of the will to God made it possible for the body to be subject to the soul and the soul's lower powers subject to reason. God was responsible for giving the soul the ability to control the body, empowering the soul to rationally control the sense powers, and giving reason its authority (*C.T. I*, 186). For St. Thomas, the subjection of the body to the soul and the sense powers to reason was not natural, but rather the result of sanctifying grace (*S.T. I*, q. 95, a. 1).

St. Thomas also holds that grace worked to enlighten the first man's intelligence. The first man would have known profound supernatural truths and lived in steady contemplation of God as he is knowable through his works.¹ The first man's knowledge of God was greater than our knowledge of God in our fallen state (*S.T. I*, q. 94, a. 1). In addition to his superior knowledge of God, the first man's intellect was also incapable of being deceived. The first man could never have given his intellectual assent to something false while in the state of original justice (*S.T. I*, q. 94, a. 1).

It is important to note that despite the first man's total peace of mind and enhanced knowledge of God, St. Thomas explains that man still had free will and retained the power to sin. This is because the first man's will still had not been "confirmed in good" by attaining the

¹ Henri Rondet, *Original Sin: The Patristic and Theological Background* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1972), 162.

beatific vision (*C.T. I*, 186). If man were to sin, this would mean the end of the state of original justice, and man would now be exposed to suffering and death (*C.T. I*, 186).

The Genesis Story

Genesis records only one prohibition given to man by God: Man can eat from any tree in the Garden of Eden except for the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God warns, “From that tree you shall not eat; when you eat from it you shall die.”² In St. Thomas’ view, since man’s pristine original state depended on man submitting his will to God, God presented man with precepts to follow, so that man would “be accustomed from the very beginning” to following God’s will. The prohibition against eating from this one tree was such a precept (*C.T. I*, 188). St. Thomas argues that eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil was not intrinsically evil, but rather evil simply because God had commanded against it. As for the tree’s name, St. Thomas writes that the tree did not have the power to confer knowledge; rather, eating of the tree caused man to learn through experience “the difference between the good of obedience and the evil of disobedience” (*C.T. I*, 188).

Man’s fall begins when the devil, in the form of a serpent, approaches Eve and, distorting God’s actual command, asks her, “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat from any of the trees in the garden?’”³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer interprets the devil’s question as an attempt to appear innocent, to wrap himself in piety. Satan is introducing Eve to the concept that man might “be in the position to establish or dispute whether a word is the Word of God or not.”⁴ In Bonhoeffer’s interpretation, the devil at this point is merely suggesting that there might be a misunderstanding,

² Gn 2:17 NABRE

³ Gn 3:1

⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall, Temptation* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 66.

the implication being that God, due to his unlimited love, would never impose a limitation on man. The evil in the devil's question - the invitation to become the judge of God and his Word - is hidden; it is through the appearance of piety that the devil's strategy becomes so dangerous.⁵

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger makes a similar observation, noting that instead of denying God, the serpent begins his attack on man with "an apparently completely reasonable request for information, which in reality, however, contains an insinuation that lures him from trust to mistrust."⁶ Ratzinger interprets the serpent's question to Eve as introducing doubt about God's covenant with man.⁷

Eve answers the serpent, telling him, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat it or even touch it, or else you will die.'"⁸ The serpent replies, saying, "You certainly will not die! God knows well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know good and evil."⁹ St. Thomas views the devil's words as an attack that takes advantage of the human intellect's natural desire to overcome ignorance. The promise to Eve that her eyes will be opened implies that she is currently in a state of ignorance and offers her knowledge instead (*C.T.* I, 189). St. Thomas also views the serpent's reference to knowing good and evil as suggesting the possibility of "perfect knowledge" (*C.T.* I, 189). When the serpent tells Eve that she could be like a god, he is offering her greatness. St. Thomas believes the temptation for Eve here is rooted in the desire of the human will, free in its very nature, to avoid being under the command of others (*C.T.* I, 189). Dom Eugene Boylan writes that although the exact meaning of

⁵ Bonhoeffer, 66 - 69.

⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1990), 83.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Gn 3:2-3

⁹ Gn 3:4-5

the serpent's words is difficult to understand, the serpent is promising total independence from God that would allow Adam and Eve to decide what is right and wrong on their own. This analysis is compatible with St. Thomas' argument that the serpent is preying on man's natural desires for knowledge and independence.¹⁰

Although the fruit of the tree does not kill Adam and Eve, the conventional interpretation is that when the serpent tells Eve that she will not die, he is lying to her, because eating of the fruit will cause spiritual death, as well as render her, Adam, and all of mankind after them mortal. Bonhoeffer presents this view in his studies of the scripture. After beginning his temptation of Eve with false piety, the devil now moves into open attack. Describing the implications of the serpent's words, Bonhoeffer imagines the serpent telling Eve to "be more intelligent than your God and take what he grudges you...He has said it, indeed you are right, Eve, but he has lied. God's Word is lie...because you will not die."¹¹ In this standard interpretation, the assertion that eating the fruit will not result in death is a clear attempt at deception by the devil.

It is with his view of the serpent's words that Hahn begins to depart from traditional interpretations of the story of Adam and Eve. In fairness to Hahn, it must be stated that he does call the serpent's words a lie.¹² He notes that Adam and Eve did die spiritually with the loss of sanctifying grace, proving the serpent's words false.¹³ However, Hahn goes in a different direction with his theory as to why Adam did not intervene against the serpent as he spoke to Eve. Hahn points to the serpent's use of Hebrew second-person-plural verbs as evidence that

¹⁰ Eugene Boylan, *This Tremendous Lover* (n.p.: Catholic Way Publishing, 2013), Location 331, Amazon Kindle Edition.

¹¹ Bonhoeffer, 69.

¹² Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture* (Cincinnati: Servant Books, 1998), 67, Amazon Kindle edition.

¹³ Hahn, 68.

Adam was by Eve's side as he spoke to her.¹⁴ Hahn, operating under the assumption that Adam must have recognized that the serpent was lying, looks for an explanation for Adam's silence.

Hahn writes that the answer can be found by "going back and reading between the lines, by carefully listening again not only to what the serpent explicitly stated, but also what he meant to imply."¹⁵ The answer that Hahn finds lurking between the lines is that Adam was experiencing "fear of suffering and death."¹⁶ Hahn elaborates:

[The serpent] said, "You will not die." And that defiant contradiction hung in the air until slowly the serpent's meaning became clear: "You will not die - *if* you eat the fruit..." In other words, Satan used the form of a life-threatening serpent, with his evil stealth, to deliver what Adam rightly took to be a thinly veiled threat to his life, which it was from the outset. (Hahn 1998, 69)

Hahn is interpreting the serpent's statement about not dying as a threat that Adam and Eve will die unless they eat the fruit. Using Hahn's thinking, the serpent's meaning could even be worded as, "I will kill you unless you eat the fruit."

Hahn seems fully committed to his theory that the serpent meant to physically threaten Adam and Eve, providing multiple pieces of evidence in support of this notion. Hahn points out that the Hebrew word for serpent can have other uses aside from its most common meaning of "snake." Hahn writes that the word can also refer to "evil dragons" and "legendary sea monsters," and generally refers to a biting creature with venom.¹⁷ Hahn concludes that "at minimum, the serpent here is a life-threatening symbol. And it represents mortal danger."¹⁸

According to Hahn's interpretation, the serpent very easily could have been a terrifying creature that would have struck fear in Adam and Eve, thereby causing Adam to remain silent in the face

¹⁴ Hahn, 66-67.

¹⁵ Hahn, 68-69.

¹⁶ Hahn, 68.

¹⁷ Hahn, 65.

¹⁸ Ibid.

of its lies. Hahn also cites evidence in the original Hebrew that the serpent's opening line is a type of incomplete phrase characteristically used in the Bible as an oath or threat.¹⁹ Hahn uses this to support his claim that Adam was justified in feeling threatened by the serpent; the threat was real and not merely perceived.

The immediate question that arises in response to Hahn's interpretation is how the devil could have effectively threatened Adam and Eve when they were immortal. There seem to be only four possible solutions. First, Adam and Eve were unaware of their immortality. Second, Adam and Eve were deceived by the serpent into believing they were mortal. Third, Adam and Eve never assented to a false belief that they were mortal but still doubted and failed to sufficiently trust in God. Fourth, God did not actually create Adam and Eve as immortal.

The first two options present problems, given that, as discussed above, Adam and Eve would have possessed knowledge of profound spiritual truths, and their intellects would have been incapable of assenting to anything false. The third option, that Adam and Eve did not have sufficient trust in God's protection, leaves the most room for Hahn's interpretation. The fourth option, that Adam and Eve were actually mortal, is not a viable explanation according to Church teaching. In his explanations of St. Thomas' views on original sin, Father Henri Rondet writes, "*With the whole of tradition*, St. Thomas agrees that the first man had the gift of immortality, as a consequence of the principle of life which is grace [emphasis added]." ²⁰ In St. Thomas' view, if the first man had succeeded in maintaining the state of grace in which he had been created, he would not have died but would have eventually passed on to an even better final state.²¹ The

¹⁹ Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 21, quoted in Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture* (Cincinnati: Servant Books, 1998), Location 3923, Amazon Kindle edition.

²⁰ Rondet, 162.

²¹ Ibid.

concept that the first man was immune from physical suffering, decay, and death due to God's grace is not unique to St. Thomas; it is taught by the Church.

Hahn, in one of his footnotes, indicates that he is not arguing against the immortality of Adam and Eve. He cites the Catechism's teaching that man was free from suffering and death while in his original state, and goes on to write:

“If Adam was tested with the prospect of suffering and death, as we'll argue below, it does *not* follow that - by giving consent to the loss of all things for the love of God - Adam would have experienced suffering and death, at least as we know it (viz., disintegration, corruption). On the contrary, it would have produced the purest passion and ecstatic joy that the human soul can know, coming as it were from the fire of divine love within the heart, as witnessed in the deaths of many martyrs.” (Hahn 1998, location 3881)

Hahn is making a disclaimer here, that even if he is arguing that Adam was called to offer up his life confronting the serpent, this does not mean that Adam actually would have died. However, elsewhere in his writing and lectures, this is not so clear. Hahn uses language that could very easily leave the reader with the impression that physical death was a real possibility for Adam. Perhaps that is why Hahn qualifies his statement that Adam could not have died, adding “at least as we know it.” Hahn never explains exactly how the devil could have struck sin-inducing fear into Adam. Whether Hahn would endorse one of the four explanations above, or some alternative answer, is not clear. What is clear, however, is that Hahn's interpretation of scripture makes fear of death a central part of man's Fall.

In one passage that seems to imply that Adam really did have death to fear, Hahn states that once the serpent had made his threat, Adam “had to make a dreadful choice.”²² Adam's choice, according to Hahn, was this: “Would he stand up for his bride by engaging the diabolical serpent in moral combat? Or would he try to cling to his cherished estate in Eden, with its many

²² Hahn, 69.

delights such earthly dominion, immortality, impassability, and integrity.”²³ Because Hahn is placing combat and immortality on opposite sides of the choice, one could fairly interpret this to mean that Adam would be giving up his immortality by combating the serpent. Hahn goes on to reframe Adam’s choice in several ways, including as being between “physical suffering or physical satisfaction, physical sacrifice or self-indulgence.”²⁴ Adam, in Hahn’s view, had to decide whether he would trust in God “or fear death more than offending God.”²⁵ Hahn never writes that Adam was wrestling with a false choice based on needless fear. At least in this portion of the text, it seems that Hahn views *some form* of death as a real danger that Adam must decide how to handle. Hahn offers one clue to his thinking when he describes what would have happened if Adam had called on God for help with the threatening serpent: “Either God would have empowered his faithful servant with sufficient grace to destroy the devil, or the Father would have accepted Adam’s sacrificial offering of himself as a holy oblation, saving him from death and corruption and rewarding him with eternal glory in heaven.”²⁶ Here, it seems that Hahn is allowing for the possibility that the serpent could have physically defeated Adam in some way, ending his current form of existence. However, through God’s intervention, Adam would have been able to enter heaven without experiencing what we know as death. If this is a correct interpretation of Hahn’s meaning, and he indeed believes that another created being was capable of ending Adam’s earthly existence, his view of what it meant for Adam and Eve to be immortal would certainly diverge from the conventional view.

In one of his lectures, Hahn goes even further, suggesting that for Adam to avoid sin would have meant offering himself up to die by being literally torn apart by the serpent:

²³ Hahn, 69.

²⁴ Hahn, 69-70.

²⁵ Hahn, 70.

²⁶ Hahn, 71.

What should Adam have done? He should have basically said, “En garde, snake.” And then what would’ve happened? With one of his heads or one of his tails, we would have had Adam pieces flying all over the garden...“Smash, crush, goozhuh!”...Anyway, what would Adam have done? He takes the tree of life, he eats of the fruit, and then he gets on his knees, makes the sign of the cross, and says, “Lord, bless me. Protect me. Vindicate me. Prove me to be in the right.” And then he goes off to die. That’s what he should have done. (Hahn 1997)

This statement by Hahn does not allow for Adam to be merely mistaken or lacking in trust when he fears death. Hahn is arguing that Adam’s earthly body actually would have been destroyed by the serpent. If Hahn does indeed adhere to the teaching that Adam was immortal in his original state, then his notion of original justice’s immortality must somehow include the destruction of the body. For Hahn, the destructibility of the human body is not something caused by man’s Fall; in fact, bodily destruction was necessary to prevent the Fall. This is not compatible with the thinking of St. Thomas, who was clear in his opinion that while in his original state, through God’s grace, man’s body was completely subject to his immortal soul. Nothing could happen to the body that conflicted with or undermined the soul’s power over it, meaning that the body was entirely indissoluble and free from corruption (*S.T.* I, q. 97, a. 1). For St. Thomas, disintegration of the body, even a form of disintegration far less extreme than being torn from limb to limb, would never have been possible for the first man until he had already sinned and rejected God’s grace.

Pride or Fear

Putting aside the question of whether Adam and Eve had reason to fear death, the question still remains as to whether fear was in fact involved in the first sin. Hahn focuses on fear as the cause of the first sin more than any other factor. St. Thomas, however, is firm in his

argument that the first sin had to be primarily a sin of pride, and he does not cite fear as one of the aspects of the first sin. In fact, St. Thomas' reasoning would preclude the emotion of fear from being a contributing cause of the first sin.

St. Thomas explains why pride must have been the first sin in this way: he begins by stating that while there may be many internal and external "movements" that come together in a sin, the character of a sin attaches to the *first* inordinate movement. Inordinateness is always found first in an internal movement of the soul rather than an external action of the body, and the appetite moves toward an end before it desires anything else as means to that end. Therefore, man's first sin must have involved his appetite being directed toward an inordinate end (*S.T. II-II, q. 163, a. 1*). St. Thomas then makes the previously-discussed observation that in man's original state, the body never rebelled in any way against the soul. In other words, unruly passions did not exist. Therefore, it was impossible for the first inordinateness to come from the concupiscible appetite desiring a sensible good against reason. Rather, the first inordinateness in the human appetite would have to come from coveting a spiritual good against reason. Of course, it is not inordinate for man to desire all spiritual goods; man desiring a spiritual good according to his measure, as set by the Divine rule, would not be sinful. Therefore, St. Thomas concludes, man's first must have involved coveting a spiritual good above his measure, or in other words, pride (*S.T. II-II, q. 163, a. 1*).

St. Thomas defines pride as "inordinate desire of one's own excellence" (*S.T. II-II, q. 162, a. 2*). The vice of pride is unique in that it is possible for all other sins to arise from pride in one of two ways. In the first way, a sin of another type can be directed toward the end of one's own excellence; in the second way, pride can be involved in a sin of another type in that it causes one to feel contempt for God's law, thereby removing an obstacle to sin (*S.T. II-II, q. 162, a. 2*).

This is not to say that every sin always arises from pride, as St. Thomas notes that sin can also result from ignorance or weakness (*S.T.* II-II, q. 162, a. 2). However, St. Thomas sees it as fitting that pride would be man's first sin, because aversion to God is the formal complement of all sin and also part of the very essence of pride. Aversion to God may be present in other types of sin, but it is not part of the sin's essence. In other words, pride is fitting as the first sin because it contains in its essence a quality that is common to all sin (*S.T.* II-II, q. 162, a. 7).

If the first sin was pride, the question still remains as to how exactly Adam and Eve's pride manifested itself. St. Thomas argues that this first instance of pride consisted of an inordinate coveting of God's likeness (*S.T.* II-II, q. 163, a. 2). This coveting of God's likeness beyond man's measure was done in two ways. Man's chief sin was in desiring God's likeness regarding knowledge of good and evil. Depending on one's interpretation, this could mean either deciding for oneself what is good and evil, or possessing foreknowledge of what good and evil would befall oneself. The first man also sinned secondarily by coveting God's power of operation, wishing to be capable of obtaining happiness through his own natural power. For St. Thomas, at the root of the first sin was man's desire to rely on himself rather than live according to the order established by God (*S.T.* II-II, q. 163, a. 2). Cardinal Ratzinger echoes the same themes stressed by Aquinas when he writes that the story of Adam reveals what lies at the heart of sin:

“...the human being's denial of his creatureliness, inasmuch as he refuses to accept the standard and the limitations that are implicit in it. He does not want to be a creature, does not want to be dependent. He considers his dependence on God's creative love to be an imposition from without. But that is what slavery is, and from slavery one must free oneself. Thus the human being himself wants to be God.” (Ratzinger 1990, 87)

This inordinate desire to be like God is at the heart of the first sin and at the heart of sin itself, and the inordinate desire to be like God certainly would amount to an inordinate desiring of one's own excellence. Therefore, it can be said that pride was at the heart of the first sin.

Hahn does not deny the involvement of pride in the first sin. However, he puts fear at the root of the first sin and focuses on fear's role to such an extent that the importance of pride is inevitably minimized. For Hahn, Adam has essentially sinned even before he eats the forbidden fruit. Hahn writes that "Adam's failure was virtually complete by the time Eve took her first bite" because "he should never have allowed things to go that far."²⁷ Putting cowardice at the center of the first sin, Hahn argues, "Ultimately, we should chalk Adam's sin up to a failure of nerve."²⁸ To say that Adam's sin should "ultimately" be blamed on cowardice implies that his sin was in fact primarily one of cowardice. In another passage, describing his own scriptural interpretation of why Adam did not intervene against the serpent, Hahn writes that his answer "is based on the traditional explanation of *pride* and *disobedience*, but then it also goes beyond it."²⁹ Hahn sums up his argument this way: "In short, the reason why Adam succumbed to pride and disobedience was because of his fear of suffering and unwillingness to die, even for the love of his Father and bride."³⁰ This directly implies that if Adam had not been fearful of suffering and death, he never would have committed any sin of pride. Because Hahn argues that fear made it possible for the other sins to occur, Hahn's argument also carries the implication that inordinate fear must have occurred in Adam before he committed his sin of pride and disobedience.

Hahn's argument here is problematic in two main ways. The first problem is with Hahn's identification of suffering and death as the object of Adam's fear. As previously discussed,

²⁷ Hahn, 72.

²⁸ Hahn, 71.

²⁹ Hahn, 63.

³⁰ Ibid.

Adam was immune to suffering and death, so for Adam to be afraid of these things raises many questions. The second problem presented by Hahn's theory is that while in his original state, Adam should never have been able to experience this sort of inordinate fear in the first place. One must recall that, according to St. Thomas, the first man's sense appetite was controlled perfectly by the soul. The first sin had to involve a disordered movement of the will; a disordered movement of the sense appetite was impossible until the will had become disordered. Now, it is still possible that Adam could have experienced fear originating in his will if he were fearing a spiritual evil. However, Hahn describes Adam as being afraid of physical suffering. Going by Hahn's hypothetical description of Adam being torn to pieces and killed by the serpent, it seems that Adam's fear in his theory would be primarily physical. Another problem with Adam's sin being ultimately due to cowardice is that fear diminishes the voluntary aspect of sin. Hahn's interpretation would make man's first sin not fully voluntary. This is not compatible with traditional thought about the first sin. Stressing the enormity of the pride and disobedience of the first sin, Dom Eugene Boylan writes of Adam, "Unclouded by passion, he saw life clearly; he understood thoroughly his dependence on God and his duties toward God."³¹ Despite Adam's clear mind and full understanding, "he calmly and deliberately decided to rebel against God's express command."³² Hahn's portrayal of Adam as being driven into sin by fear could hardly be further from the Boylan's characterization of Adam as unclouded, calm, and deliberate, and it is Boylan's description that is in line with St. Thomas ideas about man's original nature and the first sin. Describing St. Thomas' thinking on Adam's sin, Father Henri Rondet writes, "[Adam] could not sin venially before he had consented to a complete and fully deliberate disorder."³³

Assuming for a moment that it were possible for Adam to have been afraid of the serpent, even if

³¹ Boylan, Location 349.

³² Ibid.

³³ Rondet, 164.

his fear had been merely a contributing factor to the first sin of pride, this would still diminish the necessary deliberate nature of the first sin.

This is not to say that pride was the only vice involved in the first sin. St. Thomas himself lists several other aspects of the first sin: disobedience, gluttony, desire for knowledge, and belief in something untrue about God. However, St. Thomas describes all these other factors as being the result of pride (*S.T.* II-II, q. 163, a. 1, ad. 1-4). St. Thomas does not mention fear as one of the additional aspects of the first sin. In fact, he explicitly states that any passion with evil as its natural object would not have existed in within the first man, and he specifically mentions fear as one of these non-existent passions (*S.T.* I, q. 95, a. 2).

Reading Between the Lines

Dr. Hahn makes it clear that he does not intend to diverge from traditional teaching with his interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve. He reaffirms the Church's teaching that Adam and Eve were immortal in their original state, and he indicates that his theory about Adam's fear is intended only to supplement, not replace, the traditional teaching that the first sin was one of pride and disobedience. However, he also admits that his interpretation goes beyond traditional explanations.³⁴ Hahn suggests that "reading between the lines" is necessary to fully understand the first sin as described in Genesis.³⁵ However, Hahn seems to have gone too far in his reading between the lines. His search for subtle clues to additional meaning has produced a theory that cannot be fully reconciled with the teachings of St. Thomas and tradition. Perhaps there is some nuance to his interpretation that makes it more compatible with St. Thomas' thought than it first

³⁴ Hahn, 63.

³⁵ Hahn, 68.

appears. However, as he describes his interpretation in *A Father Who Keeps His Promises* and his lecture on Genesis, glaring questions remain regarding the nature of the first man's immortality and the possibility of experiencing fear before the Fall. Reading between the lines can be illuminating, but it carries a risk; sometimes one can perceive meaning in the blank space that isn't truly present. It seems that Hahn has fallen victim to that danger, as evidenced by the contrast between St. Thomas' coherent explanation of the first sin and Hahn's theory, which produces more questions than it answers.

Works Cited

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. 2nd revised edition. Translated by English Dominican Fathers. Available online from New Advent: www.newadvent.org/summa. Accessed 11 May 2013.

_____. *Compendium of Theology*. Translated by Cyril Vollert. St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1947.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Creation and Fall, Temptation*. New York: Macmillan, 1974.

Boylan, Eugene. *This Tremendous Lover*. N.p.: Catholic Way Publishing, 2013. Amazon Kindle Edition.

Fox, Everett. *The Five Books of Moses*. New York: Schocken Books, 1995. Quoted in Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture*. Cincinnati: Servant Books, 1998. Amazon Kindle edition.

Hahn, Scott. 1997. *Genesis 1-22 : The Covenant as a Family Affair "Chapters 2-3."* Vol. 2. St. Joseph Communications. Audiocassette.

_____. *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture*. Cincinnati: Servant Books, 1998. Amazon Kindle edition.

Ratzinger, Joseph. *In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*. Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1990.

Rondet, Henri. *Original Sin: The Patristic and Theological Background*. Staten Island: Alba House, 1972.