SIN AND RECONCILIATION IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Compiled by

James T. Bretzke, S.J.
Professor of Moral Theology
Boston College School of Theology & Ministry

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N.B. For additional resources see the following published research bibliographies by James T. Bretzke, S.J.:


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Articles or Chapters on Sin and Reconciliation in Christian Ethics


"Focus" section devoted to three articles on the "Ethics of Forgiveness."


Series of articles on various aspects of this theme; same articles contained in the Spanish edition for November-December.


In reference to *Sollicitudo rei socialis* Bastianel examines the structure of sin, in both its narrow and larger senses. Individual conversion would embrace both the personal and structural (social) dimensions at the same time.


Paper given at the 1988 *Atto Academico* of the Gregorian University.


Warns against the tendency to blend Christianity, especially in the areas of sin and forgiveness, with psychology. Genuine forgiveness, as celebrated in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, will be more healing and of greater long-term value than many psychological approaches. One of several articles in this issue dealing with pastoral aspects of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Batule is a parish priest and adjunct professor at St. John’s University in Jamaica, N.Y.


This article is adapted from a section of her *Change of Heart: Justice, Mercy, and Making Peace With My Sister’s Killer.* Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.

Bishop is a public defender for Cook County in Chicago.


The article both caricatures and betrays a woefully inadequate grasp of fundamental option theory, but is useful for pointing out how this theory can be misunderstand and/or maligned.

Bonagura has an M.A. in theology from St. Joseph’s University in Dunwoodie NY where
he also serves as an adjunct professor of theology. More on Bonagura can be found at [http://www.cdu.edu/about/administration/faculty/137-david-bonagura](http://www.cdu.edu/about/administration/faculty/137-david-bonagura)


The Congress was sponsored jointly the John Paul II Pontifical Institute for the Study of Matrimony and the Family of the Lateran University (Msgr. Carlo Caffarra), and the Holy Cross (Santa Croce) Center in Rome of the University of Navarra (Opus Dei).

Boyle is professor of philosophy at St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto.


Discusses confidentiality in professional ministry, primarily in psychological counseling, though with some remarks on the sacramental seal of confession. This work though contains some serious misunderstandings regarding the seal of confession.


One of a series of articles on various aspects of this theme.


One of several articles in this issue on the Sacrament of Reconciliation.


Discusses how the reality of social sin can be used in spiritual direction and pastoral action in discerning and responding to unjust structural situations.


One of eleven essays covering aspects of the Christian tradition, contemporary pastoral practice, and the liturgies of penance. Based on some sociological type of inquiry, Butler discusses the situation in Anglican parishes.


The Congress was sponsored jointly the John Paul II Pontifical Institute for the Study of Matrimony and the Family of the Lateran University (Msgr. Carlo Caffarra), and the Holy Cross (Santa Croce) Center in Rome of the University of Navarra (Opus Dei).

Caffarra was Director of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute of Studies on Marriage and the Family in Rome and is now cardinal archbishop of Bologna.


Deals with forgiveness.


Entire issue devoted to this theme.


Entire issue devoted to this theme.


Suggests that the rite of communal reconciliation is theologically very problematic inasmuch as it counters the role of the priest who in persona Christi is to take on the sins of the penitent which are confessed in individual confession. Thus, if no sins are individually confessed the priest cannot really be a priest, and the rite of communal reconciliation logically might not require a priest at all.

Overview of the traditional teaching on original sin.


One of a series of articles on various theological aspects of sin. Cooper looks at the various ways "sin" is presented in the Hebrew Scriptures and rabbinic interpretation.

Cooper is a rabbi and psychotherapist.


A brief overview which might be helpful for an adult education audience.


Focuses on Psalm 51, and is one of several articles in this issue on the theme of "The Bible on Sin."


One of several articles in this issue on the communal rite of reconciliation. Suggests that even if communal penance and absolution were allowed and widely available, not all the problems associated with the sacrament would disappear. One still needs to confess wholly and honestly one’s sinfulness to another person in order to find real forgiveness.


14 practical helpful hints on thinking about and practicing forgiveness.


One of a series of articles on various aspects of this theme.


Writing before the new Code of Canon Law was promulgated (in 1983) Dedek outlines two kinds of irregular marriage cases: 1) the canonically legitimate “internal forum” case in which the invalidity of the marriage is morally certain but which cannot be “proven” in the external forum of the Marriage Tribunal; and 2) the so-called “pastoral hardship” case in which the first, presumably valid, marriage has irretrievably broken down and the individual(s) being in a stable second marriage would like to return to the Sacraments, but cannot expect to gain an annulment.


Compares different Christian liturgies of Penance. One of eleven essays covering aspects of the Christian tradition, contemporary pastoral practice, and the liturgies of penance.


One of eleven essays covering aspects of the Christian tradition, contemporary pastoral practice, and the liturgies of penance.


A concrete example of what can happen when the traditional principle on non-invasive questioning during confession is ignored.


*From the article’s introduction:* This article examines the notion of sin of the Jesuit philosopher and theologian, Bernard Lonergan, especially as it is expounded in his *Method in Theology* (1972). It argues that this notion of sin is firmly rooted in the epistemology of his earlier major work, *Insight* (1957), and is therefore capable of providing the necessary foundations for a critical theology of sin. Before proceeding with this examination, an attempt will be made to provide some evidence for the suggestion that an Anselmian approach to the theology of sin is inadequate in terms of engaging the more sceptical reader. To this end, there will be a review of the theologies of sin of four theologians: Bernard Häring, Richard M. Gula, Germain Grisez, and William E. May, a review which suggests that their notions of the good and moral discernment fail to provide sufficient epistemological foundations for their theologies of sin, as they presuppose a level of faith not necessarily held by their readers.

Egan writes from St Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland

Discusses the psychology of forgiveness based on a ten-year project involving weekly meetings held with students and faculty at the University of Wisconsin, focusing on what is interpersonal forgiveness, trying to devise a model to help people forgive, and exploring the psychological outcomes for those who do forgive.


Quite well-done in terms of a theoretical overview of some of the contemporary concerns and debates dealing with forgiveness, especially in relation to social sin and oppression. Particularly helpful is Farley’s exposition of the notion of “anticipatory forgiveness” in situations in which full forgiveness and reconciliation cannot be realized in the concrete at this particular moment in time, but prepares for the possibility in which “the one who is forgiven (the perpetrator) acknowledges the injury and becomes able to recognize and accept, in turn, a forgiving embrace. This is not to make anticipatory forgiveness ‘conditional’; on the contrary, anticipatory forgiveness comes closer to ‘unconditional’ forgiveness than most forms of human forgiveness. It can be truly other-centered, though until it is received by the other, it cannot as forgiveness be finally fulfilled.” (P. 167)


Flanagan, Brian P. “Reconciliation and the Church: A Response to Bruce Morrill.” Theological Studies 3/75 (September 2014): 624-634.


Entire issue devoted to this theme.


Discusses original sin in light of the treatment by Iris Murdoch.


Discusses the contemporary celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation, using a communal ritual done in a local parish in which penitents wrote letters confessing their sins, which in turn were given to an individual priest and then burned. This ritual was subsequently discontinued under the orders of the local bishop.

Gaffney is the director of religious education at St. Mary’s Parish in Lakeville, CT.

Gaskell, John. "Not as Judge but as Pastor." In Confession and Absolution, 147-159. Edited by

One of eleven essays covering aspects of the Christian tradition, contemporary pastoral practice, and the liturgies of penance.


One of several articles in this issue on the theme of "The Bible on Sin."


Good overview of some of the theological, canonical, and pastoral tensions present in the contemporary conflict regarding the use (and non-use) of the Third Rite. One of several articles in this issue on the Sacrament of Reconciliation.


One of a series of articles on various aspects of this theme.


One of eleven essays covering aspects of the Christian tradition, contemporary pastoral practice, and the liturgies of penance.


Args that the individual confession of sins in penance is dogmatically and not just disciplinarily required by the Sacrament, and thus holds that general absolute would be invalid. This view is grounded in a consideration of the nature of the Sacrament and its place in relation to the other sacraments, the role of the confessor as judge, the phenomenon of guilt, and an integral role of the human person, including his or her social nature and the communal effects of sin.

Grondelski teaches at the School of Theology at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey.


Hall, Christine. "A View from the Foothills: Some Observations on Orthodox Practice of the

One of eleven essays covering aspects of the Christian tradition, contemporary pastoral practice, and the liturgies of penance.


One of eleven essays covering aspects of the Christian tradition, contemporary pastoral practice, and the liturgies of penance.


Häring's treatment on sin in his revised manual of moral theology.

Häring, who died in 1998, was a German theologian who taught all over the world and is well-known for his efforts to update Roman Catholic moral theology in the spirit of Vatican II.


Traces briefly the manualistic heritage, the development of the theology of sin in Vatican II (especially in Gaudium et spes), the theology of fundamental option, new developments and challenges posed to a theology of sin (e.g., from Marxism and liberation theology),
then next Häring examines the 1983 Bishops' Synod on sin and the subsequent Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconcilatio et Paenitentia*, before concluding with a brief overview of shortcomings which need to be overcome in a renovated theology of sin.


First of a series of articles published in *The Tablet* during Lent, 1990. Argues for the expanded use and development of the communal rite of reconciliation. Similar content to the longer article in *New Blackfriars*.


H. maintains that a cultural shift has occurred which makes private auricular confession less normative, and argues instead for expanded use of Rite III.


One of several articles in the issue on the theme of communal reconciliation. Headley looks at biblical texts of mercy and forgiveness in Matthew and Luke and then moves to a theological consideration of sin and reconciliation, and ways in which this has been, and is being, celebrated in the Church throughout the centuries.


One of a series of articles on various aspects of this theme.

After teaching philosophy for several years at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Henrici was appointed auxiliary bishop in 1993 to the diocese of Chur, Switzerland.


Hidber is professor of theology at the Alphonsianum in Rome.


One of a series of articles on various theological aspects of sin.

Hoose is currently on the faculty of Heythrop College.


One of eleven essays covering aspects of the Christian tradition, contemporary pastoral practice, and the liturgies of penance.


Criticizes the widespread use of the communal penance service in American parishes. Often this article caricatures the communal penance service, though some of his concerns may be genuine. One of several articles on the theme related to pastoral aspects of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in this issue.

Hughes is a retired priest of the diocese of Duluth, Minnesota.


Jacoby, a conservative Jewish columnist for the Boston Globe, argues forgiveness cannot (and therefore should not) be given to murderers. Contemporary examples are used in this Op-ed piece, but Jacoby articulated a similar position in Helen Whitney's documentary "Forgiveness" in the episode that treated the 2006 Nickel Mines, PA massacre of children in an Amish community.


Claims that Augustine's anti-Donatist treatises reveal much about his developing sense of sin and evil.


Keenan, who did his doctoral work under Josef Fuchs at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, taught at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts before joining the faculty of Boston College.


Overview of the treatment of sin in the moral manuals and especially the consideration of
the linkage between sex and sinfulness, before giving a summary of post-Conciliar approaches to sin, including some consideration of social sin—with attention given to a cross-section of contemporary moral theologians.


Discusses various paradigms of sin such as "disobedience," "Person-injuring," "Heart Condition" [Fundamental Option], "Disease," "Systematic Dehumanization," "Historical-Cultural Realism," and "Anti-creational."

Kelly is a priest of the Liverpool Archdiocese and former lecturer in Christian ethics at Heythrop College.


Kelly suggests that inasmuch as the Church is made up of sinners the Church itself (e.g., the Magisterium) will also reflect sin and sinfulness. A viable Christian spirituality needs to take account of this fact.


Looks at Christian spirituality in terms of a lifelong growth-process out of being `victims of sin' and `agents of sin', while grappling with the objection that the notion of `growth out of sin' implies a too negative starting point for Christian spirituality.


Kertelge, Karl. "The Sin of Adam in the Light of Christ's Redemptive Act according to Romans

One of a series of articles on various aspects of this theme.


Reflections on the state of confession today from a psychological, spiritual, and pastoral perspectives.


Argues that forgiveness should be understood not as a supererogatory act, but integral to a person's moral being, and therefore, morally obligatory.


One of three articles devoted to articles on the "Ethics of Forgiveness."


Lori, then bishop of Bridgeport, CT, speaks about a Lenten campaign in his diocese encouraging individual confession. In his Letter he addresses the basics of the theology of the Sacrament, as well as reasons why we should confess to a priest instead of just to God alone. He became Archbishop of Baltimore in 2012.


Discusses how the preoccupation with sin in the sacrament of confession skewed the development of the discipline of moral theology.

Discovery of a sense of sin is conditioned by another more fundamental discovery, namely, the "original" love of God. The article considers certain positive aspects of the loss of the sense of personal sin, and refers to biblical revelation on sin as a refusal to say "yes" to God's original love. The article concludes with certain pastoral consequences of this discovery of sin.

Martínez de Pisón is on the Faculty of Theology at the University of Saint Paul, Ottawa.


Discusses the canonical discipline related to a procured abortion.


Pastoral letter released at the beginning of Lent, 1996. Outlines a traditional theology of the sacrament of penance. McCarrick, then Archbishop of Newark, went on to become Cardinal Archbishop of Washington, D.C.


In recent centuries individualistic and juridical models of sin have dominated Catholic moral theology, and McCormick proposes two alternative models: sin as a disease, and sinful community. The last is particularly helpful in approaching social sin.


One of a series of articles on various theological aspects of sin.

Looks at how *Alcoholics Anonymous* understands sin, and clarifies some misperceptions that *AA* only considers the alcoholic as a victim and not morally responsible for his/her drinking problems. He then turns to a consideration of *acedia* and *invidia* in Thomas Aquinas and suggests a hitherto unexplored parallel or bridge between the Thomistic thought and *AA* which might also help in contemporary theologies of sin and recovery from sin as addiction.

McDonough has his STD from the Alphonsianum in Rome and is a former priest of the Archdiocese of Minneapolis–St. Paul and currently an associate professor of theology at St. Catherine’s University in St. Paul, MN.


In the modern complex society the sacrament of reconciliation can be a resource for creatively dealing with guilt in terms of personal growth and hope.


Argues for the pastoral appropriateness of General Absolution.

McLaughlin is a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and pastor of Mary Seat of Wisdom Parish in Park Ridge, Illinois.

One of eleven essays covering aspects of the Christian tradition, contemporary pastoral practice, and the liturgies of penance.


Focuses on the cure of the paralytic in Matthew 9:2-8 to show Jesus' attitude toward sin. One of several articles in this issue on the theme of "The Bible on Sin."


Also gives a summary of the pertinent norms regarding First Confessions for children.

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``Denying Communion to Someone.” Zenit (27 March 2012).

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One of a series of articles on various theological aspects of sin.

Reflection based partially on a conference at the Paulus Academy in Zurich in 1987, attended by a majority of women who had experienced failed marriages.


Not very profound.


One of several articles in this issue on the Sacrament of Reconciliation.


See also the two responses to this article in the same issue: Joseph C. Mudd, “What Might Bernard Lonergan Say to Bruce Morrill,” pp. 613-623; and Brian P. Flanagan, “Reconciliation and the Church: A Response to Bruce Morrill, pp. 624-634.


One of three articles devoted to articles on the "Ethics of Forgiveness."


Aimed at an undergraduate or parish adult education audience this article brings a number of helpful considerations to bear in helping moral discernment not only in voting decisions, but by extension in a wide variety of other life activities.

O’Connell teaches theology at Fordham University.

One of several articles in this issue on the communal rite of reconciliation. Highlights the role of the *sensus fidelium* over the centuries in fashioning a grass-roots reception (and/or non-reception) of various approaches to the sacrament of penance. Orsy goes on to suggest various pastoral situations in which a communal celebration of penance may be a more appropriate form.


O’Shea looks at sin in a broader perspective than just focusing on a “wrong” act. His thesis is that our “sin-language” both has the capacity to distort the meaning of the Jesus event, as well as the power to convey its meaning.


One of several articles in this issue on the communal rite of reconciliation. Osborne notes that all sacraments are “communal” and the privatization of liturgical and sacramental ritual results in increasing ambiguity. Contains a good theological overview of some of the issues regarding the internal contradictions involved in secret confessions and the restrictions placed on the usage of the communal rite of reconciliation.

Osborne is professor emeritus of dogmatic theology at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, California.


Rather conservative, and very much tied to a manualistic scholastic framework, but good for an overview of the traditional teaching on sin.


One of a series of articles on various aspects of this theme.


Suggests that the Pauline notion of reconciliation, viewed in light of the contemporary socio-cultural context, is particularly relevant today.


Rahner investigates the current situation of the sacrament in light of both historical and theological perspectives.


One of a series of articles on various aspects of this theme.

Analyzes the police shooting of an unarmed Black man in Ferguson, MO and the resulting “Black Lives Matter” protest movement to illustrate the social ontology of racism as an exemplar of the Pauline notion of Powers and Principalities in play in structures of sin embedded in American culture.

Ray is the Neal F. and Ila A. Fisher Professor of Systematic Theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.


Introduction to the "Focus" section which is devoted to articles on the "Ethics of Forgiveness."


Rigali argues for an understanding of the morality of human acts in terms of "the difference between constructive and destructive ways of relating to the world. Sin then appears as destructive or alienating ways of relating to the world," and to God. In this light, "when sin is understood as alienation or destructive modes of relating ones to the world, it is apparent that the defeat of sin involves healing in oneself and in the encompassing world--individual, interpersonal, communal, social, international, global, and environmental healings." p. 328


Discusses how the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Twelve Step program deals with guilt in persons with addictive behavior, and what the Church might learn from this program in the sacrament of reconciliation.

One of eleven essays covering aspects of the Christian tradition, contemporary pastoral practice, and the liturgies of penance.


Gives a brief overview of biblical perspectives on sin, as well as some dimensions of social sin.

Sachs is associate professor of systematic theology at the Boston College School of Theology & Ministry, and published this book while assistant professor at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology.


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Sarmiento is professor of moral theology at the University of Navarra (Opus Dei).

Schaedel outlines what he considers to be the necessary components in a catechesis for young people who celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Not an especially helpful article.

Schaedel is the vicar general of the curia for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.


Edited version of the Pope Paul VI Memorial Lecture given in March 1992 in Salford Cathedral.

____. "Latin America: Place of Sin and Place of Forgiveness." *Concilium* 184 (1986).


Is a follow-up to the ongoing process of reconciliation used in Rwandan villages, utilizing a practice of collaborative community service projects called Umuganda. Some of the villagers pictured also figured in the unit on Rwandan Genocide and Reconciliation treated in the Helen Whitney documentary on "Forgiveness."


Both articles deal with some helpful insights in hearing confessions.


Conducts a "biblical search" on the doctrine of original sin. One of several articles in this issue on the theme of "The Bible on Sin."


Considers especially the prophetic teaching of sin in the aspects of idolatry, externalism and injustice. One of several articles in this issue on the theme of "The Bible on Sin."


One of a series of articles on various theological aspects of sin. Tanner critiques contemporary culture's efforts to abolish the idea of sin and contrasts this view with a consideration of sin in the Middle Ages in which there was a greater sense of personal
sin, which in turn opened one up better to the possibility and necessity of divine forgiveness.


Uwineza, a Rwandan Jesuit, reflects on the Christian response to that tragedy of genocide in light of the Christian virtue of hope and the mandate of forgiveness.

At this writing Uwineza was a doctoral student in theology at Boston College.


Bearing in mind the 1983 Roman Catholic synod on reconciliation, this article reflects on reconciliation and the Igbo (Nigerian) context. Taking off from an experience of a traditional reconciliation ritual organized by a Catholic priest, the article underlines that for Christian reconciliation to be deeply rooted in the Igbo heart there must be emphasis on community (implicated throughout the ritual process), word (killing-healing), participation (no involvement by proxy), and celebration (sharing meal shows concrete reconciliation accomplished).


One of a series of articles on various aspects of this theme; same article contained in the Spanish edition for November-December.


One of several articles in this issue on the communal rite of reconciliation. Ventura discusses the 1994 process of dialogue among Cardinal Joseph Bernardin with the priests of his archdiocese of Chicago regarding the various pastoral practices of the communal rite of reconciliation. The article reports a good range of both practical and theoretical issues connected with the communal rite of reconciliation, as well as some of the wider tensions with some bishops and the Vatican over the usage of this rite.


Looks at the work of James Alison, Alistair McFayden, Andrew Sung Park, Ted Peters, and Solomon Schimmel.

Weaver, who completed her PhD from the University of Chicago in 1999, is associate professor of theology and director of the Theology Institute at Villanova University.


Looks at the Roman Catholic theology of sin through the theology of Charles Curran and Jean Porter.


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*From the online promotional information:* “provides an intimate look into the spontaneous outpouring of forgiveness: from the Amish families for the 2006 shooting of their children in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania; the struggle of ’60s radicals to cope with the serious consequences of their violent acts of protest; the shattering of a family after the mother abandons them, only to return seeking forgiveness; the legacy and divisiveness of apartheid and the aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in South Africa; the penitential journey of a modern-day Germany, confronting the horrific acts of the Holocaust; and the riveting stories of survivors of the unimaginably, brutal Rwandan genocide.”


One of a series of articles on various aspects of this theme; same article contained in the Spanish edition for November-December.


Consider the question of the "crisis" of Penance today in the light of its history, theology and current pastoral practice.

Williamson is a priest of the Westminster Diocese and teaches moral theology at Allen Hall.

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**Books on Sin and Reconciliation in Christian Ethics**


(Edited from the promotional advertisement): What is sin? Is it simply wrongdoing? Why do its effects linger over time? Anderson shows how changing conceptions of sin and
forgiveness lay at the very heart of the biblical tradition. Sin, once conceived of as a physical burden, becomes, over time, eclipsed by economic metaphors. Transformed from a weight that an individual carried, sin becomes a debt that must be repaid in order to be redeemed in God's eyes. Anderson shows how this ancient Jewish revolution in thought shaped the way the Christian church understood the death and resurrection of Jesus and eventually led to the development of various penitential disciplines, deeds of charity, and even papal indulgences. In so doing, it reveals how these changing notions of sin provided a spur for the Protestant Reformation.


Uses personal stories to emphasize the necessity and power of forgiveness in everyday lives.


Papers from a symposium held at the University of York in March 1996.


Bishop is a public defender for Cook County in Chicago.


Short catechetical work (41 pages) suitable for workshop, RCIA usage, parents with children approaching the first celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation, etc.


Capps uses Erik Erikson's life-cycle theory, as well as biblical narratives and the Beatitudes to indicate how the so-called "deadly sins" can be combatted by cultivating
what Capps terms the "saving virtues." Capps links each of the traditional deadly sins with a particular stage of personality development, such as gluttony with infancy.

Capps is professor of pastoral theology at Princeton Theological Seminary.


Well-done psychological treatment of the obsessive-compulsive disorder and moral scruples, which can also be very helpful in pastoral counseling and confession situations. For a discussion of a pre-Vatican II nature see Vincent M. O’Flaherty, S.J., *How to Cure Scruples*, (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1966).


A somewhat densely-written and uneven work intending to outline the theology of the Sacrament of Reconciliation found in the revised Rite of Penance, the 1983 Code of Canon Law, recent Vatican legislation (especially in regards to the tight constraints placed on the use of Rite 3 [General Absolution]. The primary values of the book are found in its concise treatment of the history of the development of the Sacrament (Chapter 2) and its articulation of the theology of Sacrament in scholastic thought.
(especially Thomas Aquinas), the Council of Trent, and to a lesser extent Vatican II itself and contemporary theologians such as Rahner. Less successful is the author’s engagement with the actual practices and experiences of the faithful in the celebration of the Vatican II rites. He relies on many general assumptions, which may be partially true, but certainly do not reflect the whole range of attempts to celebrate the Sacrament faithfully in accord with both the theology and ritual of Vatican II. Surprisingly little attention is paid to the voice of Scripture and the public ministry of Jesus Christ as the norma normans (norming norm) of both the theology and practice of the Sacrament as well as engagement with the notions of social sin and structural evil, which certainly would have a key role to play in both the theology and practice of Rites Two and Three. One wonders, in fact, about the extent of Coffey’s own pastoral experience in celebrating the Vatican II rite in a variety of different milieux, as he provides virtually no personal references to his own experiences in celebrating the Sacrament, whether as priest or penitent. As the stated editorial intention of the Lex orandi series from the publisher is to “derive a theology of the seven sacraments primarily, though not exclusively, from the typical celebrations of the reformed Roman Rite” it seems at least to this reader that Coffey’s book might be faulted precisely for its weaknesses in teasing out the implications of the ancient axiom lex orandi, lex credendi (which I would render in the sense “as the Church prays so the Church believes”). In Coffey’s view it seems that lex orandi is not tied as much to lex credendi of the People of God (in the sense of a genuine lex [law] being grounded and verified in its acceptance and appropriation through the consensus fidelium [consensus of the faithful] of actual practice of the rite), as much as it primarily equated to lex in the sense of its articulation in the prescriptions of the Rite of Penance itself, the 1983 Code of Canon Law, and subsequent enforcement efforts of the Vatican to privilege Rite One (individual confession) while virtually excluding Rite Three. Thus, instead of lex orandi lex credendi, a more apt sub-title for this book might be ecclesia docens (the teaching Church) instructing the ecclesia discens (the learning Church). While Coffey’s work has its own merits, it would not supplant the earlier work of other authors on this Sacrament such as Dallen, Osborne, Häring, Gula, etc., and its mode of presentation will make it difficult for a generalized readership to follow closely.


Originally published in French as La Confession. Desclee de Brouwer et Cie, 1958.

Based on his doctoral dissertation done at the Pontifical Gregorian University.


Reviewed by James T. Bretzke for Catholic Studies: An Online Journal
http://www.adelphi.edu/cst/Reviews/


Cornwell is Director of the Science and Human Dimension Project at Jesus College, Cambridge.


Of some value to the specialist interested in developments in the theology and canon law of penance.


Studies the underlying mystery of the Church in relation to Christ and the sinner through the forms the sacrament of reconciliation has taken in the past in order to illustrate how the Church can better exercise this ministry in the present and future.


Appropriate for adult education and parish lectures, or for the average adult Catholic.


Eleven essays covering aspects of the Christian tradition, contemporary pastoral practice, and the liturgies of penance.


Discusses how the experience of sin has changed with the secularization of American society. Fenn uses the Daedalus myth as a metaphor to argue that the church frequently manipulates people for its own purposes by redirecting rather than resolving their guilt and inner conflicts.


(Edited from the promotional advertisement): Looks at early Christian concepts of sin, exploring the ways that sin came to shape ideas about God no less than about humanity, investigating how, in the four centuries between Jesus and Augustine, singular new Christian ideas about sin emerged, including the shift from the belief that sin is something one does to something that one is born into. As the original defining circumstances of their movement quickly collapsed, early Christians were left to debate the causes, manifestations, and remedies of sin.


Originally appeared in French as part of *Theologie du péché*.


Gives a historical treatment of the doctrine of sin from Augustine to contemporary thinkers. Emphasizes the role of sacraments as means for forgiveness and treats contemporary difficulties in dealing with the message of forgiveness.

Gestrich is professor of theology at Humboldt University in Berlin.


In this book, Joram Graf Haber presents the first systematic philosophical exploration of the nature and value of forgiveness, and argues convincingly that it should be elevated to a proper status among other important virtues. Haber considers those concepts with which forgiveness is related but from which it is distinct, such as condonation, pardon, and mercy. Haber argues that we ought to resent wrongdoers when they have caused us injury and that failure to do so betrays a lack of self-respect. This being so, we ought not
to forgive those who have wronged us, unless a wrongdoer has repented the wrong he has caused.


This book grew out of courses given at the Pastoral Institute in Conception, Missouri in 1964 and 1966, and at the University of San Francisco in 1966.


Translation of *La reconciliation en Église.*


(Edited from the promotional advertisement): Discusses the idea of original sin, its origins, its history, and its proponents and opponents, preparing the reader to answer the question: Are we really, all of us, bad to the bone?


Intended as an instruction in the sacrament for educated adult Catholics.


Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Sacrament of Reconciliation and its underlying theology in the Church today.


Sections on the Biblical Background (chapters 1-7), Historical Figures (chapters 8-17) and Dogmatic Issues (chapters 18-27).

Both editors are associate professors at Wheaton College.

Reviewed by James T. Bretzke, S.J. in *Theological Studies*

Forgiveness is a way of life that carries with it distinctive concepts of love, community, confession, power, repentance, justice, punishment, remembrance, and forgetfulness. In Part I, Jones first recounts Dietrich Bonhoeffer's own struggle against the temptation to make forgiveness either too easy or too difficult in his thought and, even more, in his life and death at the hands of the Nazis. Jones then considers each of these temptations, focusing on the problem of "therapeutic" forgiveness and then forgiveness's 'eclipse' by violence. Part 2 shows why a trinitarian identification of God is crucial for an adequate account of forgiveness. In Part 3 Jones describes forgiveness as a craft and analyzes the difficulty of loving enemies. He deals particularly with the problems of disparities in power, impenitent offenders, and the relations between forgiveness, accountability, and punishment.


Kelly was a well-known American moral theologian in the period immediately prior to Vatican II.

Papers from the Fifteenth Annual conference of the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy held in 1986.


Seven papers and responses from the 1995 Symposium on Reconciliation sponsored by the North American Forum on the Catechumenate.


Kidder is an ordained Presbyterian minister and presents this work from within the Protestant theological perspective. Contents include: Setting the stage: the need for confession and its biblical beginnings -- The early church and the rise of public confession -- The rise of private confession and spiritual direction -- The practice of private confession -- Private confession in the monastery and in the church -- Doing penance: its use and abuse -- The rise of spiritual direction among the laity and the role of women in confession -- Martin Luther and confession -- The priesthood of all believers and mutual confession: pietism and methodism -- Discipline and corporate confession in the Reformed tradition: Bucer, Zwingli, Calvin -- The Church of England -- Confession and spiritual direction in the Roman Catholic Church after Trent -- Ignatius of Loyola and the Jesuits -- Biblical antecedents, historical trajectories, and contemporary expressions -- The decline of confession in the church -- A contemporary theology of confession: Rahner, Bonhoeffer, Peterson, von Speyr -- The choice of a confessor -- Serving as (a good) confessor to others -- What to confess -- The nature of penance -- A litany of private confession -- Catechetical considerations.


Original version appeared in 1912.


The author argues "that there are three essential elements to an authentic spirituality: penance or conversion, contemplation or adoration, and service or response." He develops this thesis using contemporary development theories, the AA recovery program, scripture, and the writings of the church fathers and classical spirituality.


Dissertation done under Brian V. Johnstone, C.Ss.R.

Massingale is a Black priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and currently teaches moral theology at Fordham University in New York.


In this revised doctoral dissertation done at Vanderbilt’s program of history and critical theories of religion, Mayo holds that the Forgiveness Mandate in the New Testament, especially in reference to Jesus’ own dying words on the Cross have been chronically misused to command forgiveness of victims without the necessary accompanying repentance on the part of oppressors. Particular attention is given to a critique of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Post-Apartheid South Africa and pastoral
counseling of victims of domestic abuse who are entreated to forgive those who have harmed them.


An elaboration of the basic insights included in McCormick's article in *Studia Moralia*.


From Török’s review: “Focusing on the States, the author examines the reasons of the diminishment of confession in six logically built-up chapters. The first introduces the concepts and the historical context prior to 1955. The next two chapters analyze the changes in both the theologians and laity’s conceptions of sin. The fourth chapter
connects the story of sacramental penance with that of non-sacramental practices. Maria Morrow convincingly suggests that it is beneficial to view them together because they are closely related. While chapter 5 examines the changes introduced by Vatican II and, consequently, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States, chapter 6 comes to the sad conclusion that, with the best intention of renewing the sacrament of penance, all lead to its decline.”


The 20th century witnessed a vast proliferation of conceptions of sin in Christian thought. One hallmark thereof has been an increased emphasis on the non-individualistic dimensions of human sin. It is suggested here that there have been two primary types of rejections of individualism in doctrines of sin in the last half-century, the “structural sin” type and the “relational self” type. The book concludes with recommendations drawn from the preceding analyses for further understanding of the social dimensions of sin: the need for clarifying the agential status of a “social structure;” the moral culpability of a relational self; and a call to integrate the structural sin and relational self types into a future doctrine of social sin.

Derek Nelson is Assistant Professor of Religion and Co-Director of the Thiel Global Institute, Thiel College, Greenville, Pennsylvania.


Classic in the field, representing the approach taken before Vatican II when scruples were often a major pastoral problem. O’Flaherty addresses how counseling sessions should be arranged and discusses the various phases of therapeutic treatment of the problem. He also makes references to St. Ignatius and his *Spiritual Autobiography* in which Ignatius relates his own struggles with scruples. For a more modern treatment of this problem from a psychological angle see Joseph W. Ciarrocchi, *The Doubting Disease,* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1995).


Orsy is a well-known canonist who teaches at The Catholic University in Washington, D.C.


Encyclopedic-type articles covering mainly historical and manualist understandings of sin.

At the time of this book's appearance Palazzini was Secretary to the Sacred Congregation of the Second Vatican Council. He later was named cardinal.


Patton presents case studies from his pastoral counseling practice that illustrate the difficulty of forgiving and demonstrate his new solution to the problem of forgiveness. Offers practical suggestions.


Uses the work of Mircea Eliade on symbols to look at how the traditional symbols of stole, words, hands, cross and place function in the ceremony of the sacrament of reconciliation.


Peters is professor of theology at the Pacific Lutheran Theological School in Berkeley, California.


Plantinga, who writes out of the Reformed tradition, defines sin as "culpable disturbance of shalom" (16), a disruption of the harmonious order of creation in the blurring of distinctions, the rupturing of covenantal bonds, the perversion of loyalties and energies, the corruption of bodies and relationships, addictive behaviors, attacks on human life and truth, and flights from responsibility. His work includes a lot of cultural critique, but his treatment of sin is highly individualistic (very little acknowledgment of social sin and structural evil) and most of his examples speak to middle-class life experiences.


Guidebook for preparing for the Jesuit confessional examination (*Ad audiendas*), and contains some helpful material for hearing confessions, as well as some contrived case studies meant to illustrate key canonical and/or moral points. However, the book is of limited value, and shows little overall appreciation for the historical, sacramental and theological dimensions of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.


Ray is the Neal F. and Ila A. Fisher Professor of Systematic Theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Reid, Scott M.P. *General Sacramental Absolution: An Historical, Canonical and Pastoral Perspective*. St. Austin’s Press.

Argues that contemporary usage of general absolution in parishes, e.g. during Lent or Advent, is illicit if not invalid.


Computer generated and not annotated. However a code for an analytic index is provided.

Presented as the author’s dissertation in canon law at the Catholic University of America. Includes as an appendix the 1915 Instruction of the Holy Office on the seal of confession.


Contains a series of articles on various aspects of the history, dogma, and practice of sacramental reconciliation.


Studies presented at the 1995 Congress of the Thomas Institute at Utrecht.


Suchocki argues that the underlying root of "sin" is not what has been traditionally denominated as pride, but is human involvement in the triadic structure of our tendency toward aggression and violence, our sense of solidarity with each other and the world, and the social structures that mediate our consciences and consciousness. This book offers an interpretation of forgiveness as the active willing of the well-being of victim and violator. In this way, both—enmeshed in the web of contingent creation—can break the chain of violence, and thus answer the sinfulness of sin with the graciousness of Grace.


Considers how the moral concepts of merit and guilt, praise and blame, reward and punishment, atonement, forgiveness, mercy, etc. apply to human dealings. Then in the light of this discussion Swinburne discusses the traditional Christian doctrines of sin, redemption, satisfaction, heaven and hell.

Swinburne is Nolloth Professor of Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oxford.

Tierney is a priest of the Archdiocese of Sydney and professor at the Catholic Institute of Sydney.


Discusses the Sacrament of Reconciliation, arguing that the sacrament is neither well understood nor well celebrated, and that this accounts for the relatively low numbers of people who frequent the sacrament.


*From the publisher’s promotional advertisement:* Is there such a thing as "Christian Forgiveness"? Christians speak as though there is. But what would it be? How would it differ from forgiveness as a basic human enactment? And if there is a distinctive Christian forgiveness, what might it have to say to our world today? To answer these questions, the present work traverses three distinctive intellectual landscapes—continental philosophy, Anglo-American moral philosophy, and psychology—to establish a phenomenology of forgiving before turning to contemporary Christian literature. The multilayered dialogue that ensues challenges the assumptions of contemporary approaches-secular and Christian-and invites the reader to rethink the meaning of Christian forgiveness.

James K. Voiss, SJ, PhD, is a systematic theologian whose research interests have focused on the intersection of philosophy and theology, with a particular emphasis on theological method and cognitional processes. He received his PhD from the University of Notre Dame in 2000 while teaching full-time at Saint Louis University. He now serves as the assistant vice president for mission at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, his alma mater.

Centers an account of morality and the moral life in terms of the person as moral agent acting in relation to God and highlights the dimensions of sinful estrangement and gracious reconciliation in God.

Weaver, who completed her PhD from the University of Chicago in 1999, is associate professor of theology and director of the Theology Institute at Villanova University.


(Edited from the promotional advertisement): Explores the Christian origins, patristic developments and medieval interpretations of original sin, then traces the emergence of the idea of original sin, the questions the idea answered, and the development of original sin as a Christian doctrine in the early centuries of Christianity. Finally, she brings the discussion to the present with the modern scientific, historical, and philosophical challenges posed to the doctrine along with contemporary reinterpretations of it.


Deals with Penance in the Church of England.

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