

# VU Research Portal

## **Sin: against Whom or against What?**

Omta, F.F.

2019

### **document version**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

### **citation for published version (APA)**

Omta, F. F. (2019). *Sin: against Whom or against What? An assessment of Barth's and Tillich's perspectives on sin and sanctification in comparison to views of New Age authors*. KokBoekencentrum.

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

### **E-mail address:**

[vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl](mailto:vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl)

# Contents

**Preface & Acknowledgments** V

**Contents** VII - XIV

**Main Introduction** XV - XXIV

1. The root of all questions
2. Preliminary questions: The emic-etic distinction  
Commensurability
3. Motivation and general aim
4. Questions of research
5. Final and specific aim
6. Methodology and route

**PART ONE: DEMARCATION AND ARRANGEMENT** 1

**§ 1. Christian Theology.** 1

- 1.1 Augustine 2
  - 1.1.1 Cosmology
  - 1.1.2 Hamartiology 6
  - 1.1.3 Human Potential
- 1.2 Schleiermacher 12
  - 1.2.1 Cosmology
  - 1.2.2 Hamartiology 18
  - 1.2.3 Human Potential
- 1.3 Conclusions and elements for further attentio 25

**§ 2. New Age** 27

- 2.1 The New Age movement and New Age religion 28
  - 2.1.1 Actual appearance and development 29
    - a. The New Age: from a strict to a wide movement*
    - b. The New Age movement - sensu lato* 31
    - c. Field of attention*
  - 2.1.2 Historical roots and input 34
    - a. Psychology*
    - b. Oriental religion*
    - c. Western esotericism* 37
      - i. Main historical development*
      - ii. Two fundamental ideas, two consequential characteristics*
  - 2.1.3 Methodological agenda for research 43
- 2.2 Introduction of three original New Age sources
  - 2.2.1 New Age cosmologies: different types of holism 44
    - a. Generative source holism*
    - b. Universal Interrelatedness*
  - 2.2.2 Choice of primary sources 48

<i>a. Some general criteria</i>	
<i>b. The three sources</i>	
<i>i. Jane Roberts – Seth</i>	49
<i>ii. Course in Miracles</i>	
<i>iii. Matthew Fox</i>	

## **PART TWO: PRIMARY SOURCES OF NEW AGE**

§ 3. <b>Jane Roberts</b>	53
3.1 Cosmology	55
<i>a. Two ontological priorities</i>	
<i>b. Outer and inner consciousness</i>	
<i>c. Inner self and the soul</i>	
<i>d. The ultimate source “All That Is” and God</i>	58
<i>e. Divine-human relationship</i>	
3.2 Hamartiology	61
3.2.1 Beliefs, perceptions and evil	
<i>a. Spiritual ignorance and illusions</i>	
<i>b. The examples of natural and moral evil</i>	
3.2.2 Religious evil or sin	63
<i>a. Criticism of (original) sin</i>	
<i>b. Emic assessment of the ego</i>	
<i>c. Guilt and the human part of the religious relationship</i>	
<i>d. The personal God as the aggrieved object</i>	
3.3 Human potential	68
<i>a. Natural grace and the inner self</i>	
<i>b. The riddle unsolved</i>	
3.4 Inventory of findings	69
3.4.1 Four questions	
3.4.2 Four anti-apologetic benchmarks	
§ 4. <b><i>A Course in Miracles</i></b>	75
4.1 Cosmology	78
<i>a. Formal (ontological) aspect: exclusivity of the mind.</i>	
<i>b. Material ontological aspect: the holistic unity of love/the Sonship</i>	80
<i>c. One reality, many illusions</i>	
<i>d. Reality is changeless</i>	
4.2 Hamartology	83
<i>a. Natural evil and indestructible reality )</i>	
<i>i. Bodily existence;</i>	
<i>ii. Physical sickness</i>	
<i>b. Sin and the illusion of separation</i>	88
<i>c. Origin and subject of the belief in sin</i>	
<i>d. Original error</i>	
<i>e. Actual errors</i>	92
4.3 Human Potential	93
<i>a. Your development from self to Self</i>	

	<i>b. The guidance of the Holy Spirit</i>	95
	<i>c. Atonement and the miracle of forgiveness</i>	
4.4	Inventory of findings	98
4.4.1	Four Questions	
4.4.2	Four anti-apologetic benchmarks	
§ 5.	<b>Matthew Fox</b>	105
5.1	Cosmology	
	<i>a. Living Cosmology</i>	
	<i>b. The Word of God – creative energy</i>	
	<i>c. The Cosmic Christ – cosmic as predicate or as concept of being</i>	112
	<i>d. The relationship God – cosmos: pan-en-theism</i>	
	<i>e. Cosmic Christ and theological tradition</i>	
5.2	Hamartiology – Sin and Evil	119
	<i>a. Natural evil</i>	
	<i>b. Criticism on the fall/ redemption tradition</i>	
	<i>c. Criticism on original sin – the doctrine as such</i>	124
	<i>d. Sin according to Fox, original and consequential</i>	
	<i>e. Sin against who?</i>	
5.3	Human Potential	128
	<i>a. The Human potential as such – its scope</i>	
	<i>b. The effectuation of your potential</i>	
	<i>c. Fox's struggle with pan-en-theism.</i>	132
5.4	Inventory of findings	
5.4.1	Four Questions	
5.4.2	Four anti-apologetic benchmarks	135
§ 6.	<b>Taking stock (1)</b>	139
6.1	Cosmology	
6.1.1	Divine-human unity - <i>question 1</i>	
6.1.2.	Co-eternity - <i>benchmark a</i>	
6.2.	Human Potential.	140
6.2.1	Denial original sin – <i>question 2</i>	
6.2.2	Direct gnosis - <i>benchmark b</i>	
6.3	Hamartiology – <i>question 3, 4; benchmark c, d</i>	141
6.3.1	Dualistic or antagonistic opposition	
6.3.2	The human person	
	<i>a. Jane Roberts.</i>	142
	<i>b A Course in Miracles</i>	
	<i>i. logical uncertainties</i>	
	<i>ii. psychological</i>	
	<i>iii. anthropological uncertainties</i>	146
	<i>c. Matthew Fox</i>	
	<i>d. Conclusion and agenda</i>	
6.3.3	The personal God	147
	<i>a. Jane Roberts</i>	
	<i>b A Course in Miracles</i>	

c. Matthew Fox – the exception offered by him	149
i. Sin anti-divine	
ii. Sin not against personal God	
6.4 Conclusions	151

**PART THREE: TWO THEOLOGICAL HALLMARKS - twentieth century**

**§ 7. Karl Barth**

7.1 Cosmology	157
a. Eternal election, Creation and the appearance of Evil	
b. The ‘in Christ’ realism	
c. Our being in Christ and in our selves	165
d. ‘Creation from nothing’ and the two esoteric characteristics	
7.2 Hamartiology	169
7.2.1 The formal question: How bad are evil and sin	
a. The reality and the nature of Nothingness (das Nichtige).	
i. Small ontological standing	
ii. Evil anti-nature	172
iii. Nothingness in the existence of Christ	
b. The reality and the nature of Sin	
i. Limitation of ontological standing in Christ	
ii. Enlarging its evil or anti nature	176
c. The reality and the nature of ‘Natural Evil?’	
i. Sickness & death as natural	
ii. Sickness & death as evil.	
7.2.2 The material question regarding sin and sloth	181
a. Forms of Sloth	
i. Ignorance with respect to God;	
ii. Inhumanity to others	183
iii. Dissipation, indiscipline with respect to one self	
iv. Human care / anxiousness	
b. The nature and the reality of Sloth	187
i. Nature of sloth	
ii. Reality or ontological weight	
c. Sloth as act or as fate	191
i. Sloth and human bondage	
ii. Original sin and Christian Freedom	
iii. Act or fate	
7.3 Human Potential – The human self and sanctification	196
7.3.1 Two dimensions of Sanctification	
a. Sanctification <i>de iure</i>	
b. Sanctification <i>de facto</i>	200
7.3.2 The Sanctification by Christ	
a. Disturbance and limitation	
b. The call to discipleship	203
c. The awakening to conversion	
i. An/enhypostatic being of Jesus Christ	

	ii. <i>The S/subject of conversio</i>	210
	iii. <i>Two movements forming conversion</i>	
	iv. <i>Intermezzo: Directio Christi, participatio Christi         and Operatio Spiritus: genitivi subjectivi</i>	215
7.3.3	Participation by us	220
	a. <i>Works of praise</i>	
	i. <i>criteria</i>	
	ii. <i>human contribution</i>	222
	b. <i>The dignity of the Cross</i>	
7.4	Inventory of findings	229
§ 8.	<b>Paul Tillich</b>	233
8.1	Cosmology – ontology	
8.1.1	Transcendent absolutes: the Unconditional and God	
	a. <i>Religion and its subject matter as unconceivable</i>	241
	b. <i>The Unconditional as ground of religio</i>	
	c. <i>Origin of “the Unconditional” – metaphysical a priori</i>	
	d. <i>The Unconditional and God</i>	247
	e. <i>Religion speaks through symbols</i>	
	i. <i>Hermeneutic power of symbols</i>	
	ii. <i>The basic religious symbol: God</i>	250
	iii. <i>Further or secondary symbols</i>	
8.1.2	The unconditional or divine element within all being	256
	a. <i>Ultimate concern as the human reflex to the         unconditional (mystical a priori)</i>	
	i. <i>Plausibility of unconditional reality and             the argument for God</i>	260
	ii. <i>Religion as ultimate concern: universally human</i>	
	iii. <i>Religion/religious concern: whatever the content</i>	265
	b. <i>The Protestant Principle</i>	
	i. <i>The protestant principle as sola gratia</i>	267
	ii. <i>Unconditional acceptance</i>	
	iii. <i>Unconditionally critical</i>	
8.2	Hamartiology	270
8.2.1	The distinction of the essential and existential realm	
	a. <i>The Existentialist point of view</i>	
	b. <i>The Existentialist protest against essentialism</i>	273
	c. <i>The Existentialist expression</i>	
8.2.2	The transition from essence to existence: creation and fall	277
	a. <i>Creation: finite freedom and destiny</i>	
	b. <i>Fall</i>	
8.2.3	Estrangement and Sin	285
	a. <i>The term estrangement</i>	
	b. <i>Multiple use of estrangement</i>	286
	i. <i>as fact and as act, original and actual</i>	
	ii. <i>as religious interpretation of sin</i>	
8.2.4	Estrangement and evil	290

	<i>a. Nonbeing as related to being</i>	
	<i>b. The demonic and the divine/holy</i>	
	<i>c. Anxiety and nonbeing</i>	295
	<i>i. Anxiety and fear (Angst und Furcht)</i>	
	<i>ii. Anxiety and forms of nonbeing</i>	
	<i>d. Anxiety and evil</i>	298
	<i>i. The nature and the origin of evil</i>	
	<i>ii. Our having to die</i>	
	<i>iii. Two terminological adjustments</i>	
8.3	Human Potential	305
8.3.1	The new being in Christ	
	<i>a. The ontological place and status of New Being</i>	
	<i>b. The theological substance and religious content of New Being</i>	
	<i>c. New Being as a perennial quest</i>	309
8.3.2	Human potential as essentialization and as participation	
	<i>a. Human potential in an active and passive sense</i>	311
	<i>b. The passive potential of essentialization</i>	
	<i>c. Human potential as participation</i>	315
	<i>i. Unity of life</i>	
	<i>ii. Potential through participation</i>	
8.4	Inventory of findings	317
<b>§ 9.</b>	<b>Taking stock (2) - Some main concepts of personhood</b>	321
9.1	Is the twofold criticism correct?	
	<i>a. Antithesis as runway for participation (Barth)</i>	
	<i>i. Creation from nothing</i>	322
	<i>ii. Barthian actualism</i>	
	<i>b. Mediation (Tillich)</i>	
	<i>i. Divine-human relationship: unity in duality</i>	325
	<i>ii. Human potential</i>	
9.2	Some main characteristics on personhood	327
	<i>a. The threefold or Trinitarian personhood of God</i>	
	<i>b. Three classic perspectives on the human being or person</i>	
	<i>i. Plato</i>	329
	<i>ii. Locke</i>	
	<i>iii. Hume</i>	
	<i>c. Modern developments</i>	332
	<i>i. American Personalism</i>	
	<i>ii. Analytic-philosophical views</i>	333
	<i>iii. Theories of person as socio-psycho-physical composite</i>	
	<i>d. Divine and human personhood: commensurable concepts?</i>	
9.3.	The Concept of Spirit and Person by Max Scheler	337
	<i>a. Scheler's position in the anthropological field</i>	
	<i>b. The spiritual nature of person</i>	
	<i>c. Psycho-physical indifference</i>	340
	<i>d. Actuality</i>	
	<i>e. Identity of spirit</i>	

<b>PART FOUR: ASSESSMENT, CONCLUSIONS, PERSPECTIVES</b>	345
§10. <b>The three structural elements of sin</b>	346
10.1 The necessity of spiritual opposition - divine-human duality	
10.2 The necessity and relevance of identifiable human personhood	
<i>a. The outer psycho-physical person or ego</i>	350
<i>b. The human spirit-person</i>	
<i>i. Identification and taking distance</i>	
<i>ii. Inner autonomy – outer dependency</i>	352
<i>c. Personal spirit, actuality and the genesis of sin</i>	
10.3 The object of sin: divine spirit or personal God	356
<i>a. Psycho-physical aspect: God has no body or ego of his own</i>	
<i>i. Representation through symbols</i>	
<i>ii. Through inspired human agents</i>	358
<i>iii. Through the incarnation of Christ in Jesus</i>	
<i>b. Taking distance - self transcendence</i>	
<i>c. Actuality: divine potential and identity</i>	360
<i>i. Berkhof and Bonhoeffer</i>	
<i>ii. Van Genneep and Sölle ..</i>	
10.4 Application to the sources, collecting the results	364
<i>a. The human person: where the human and the divine meet</i>	
<i>b. God is Spirit, not every S/spirit is God</i>	366
<i>i. Divinity not primarily person but S/spirit</i>	
<i>from theism to en-theism</i>	
<i>ii. Identification of S/spirit</i>	368
<i>iii. Divine Spirit symbolized as God</i>	
§11. <b>Sin: a reformulation – gains and losses</b>	375
11.1 A non-theistic concept of sin	
<i>a. Spiritual self</i>	
<i>b. The ego-person</i>	377
<i>c. Denial of one's spirit-self - outer-personal laziness</i>	
11.2 Gains and losses of a non-theistic concept of sin.	382
<i>a. Gain of explaining sin without a God</i>	
<i>b. Loss or limitation of a concept without God</i>	
11.3 Clarifying some inconsistencies – sincere pretence	386
<b>Summary</b>	391
<b>Samenvatting</b>	397
<b>Zusammenfassung</b>	403
<b>Abbreviations</b>	409
<b>Bibliography</b>	410
<b>Curriculum Vitae</b>	422

