

Human Nature

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This survey in Christian anthropology was made as a result of the conviction that an intensive study in this field is not only profitable but mandatory, if one is to understand the world of selves in which he lives. The ancient cry of the Hebrew Psalmist, "What is man?" is contemporary with every age, for a working theory of human nature is the prerequisite foundation upon which one's entire philosophy concerning man and his relationships depends. "The accepted psychology of an age writes the history of that age, for from man's understanding or misunderstanding of himself flows his ethics, economics, politics, and religion."¹

This paper embodies a preliminary statement of the writer's personal view. It should be explained that in the course of future thought and study, the author will probably find it necessary to make many additions, subtractions, and revisions. It follows that the thesis here developed is essentially exploratory in character. Let it be said that this exploration follows the paths blazed by many others, and that it seeks to evaluate critically and so far as possible sympathetically the work that is being done in this field today.

I. THE ORIGIN OF MAN

The first principle of the position resulting from this investigation is the acceptance of the Biblical account of man's origin as the most accurate and satisfactory explanation for Christian anthropology. Such a principle cannot be scientifically defended, for it must be admitted that there is no *absolute* evidence, empirically speaking, concerning the origin of man. What-

¹Leslie R. Marston, *Youth Speaks!* Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1939. p. 137.

ever view is held, it must be accepted by faith—"the evidence of things not seen."

Lecomte du Noüy traces the two pathways which eventually lead to a comprehension of man: (1) the direct road of revelation, which is independent of rational thought, and (2) the strictly rational and scientific method.² He indicates that it is only a fortunate few who are able to accept the first method, whereas the second is in widespread vogue. The scientific method, however, requires that the universe be described as it is perceived and conceived by the human mind. In a word, it results in a subjective idea of the universe dependent upon rational interpretation of sensorial data and observations. du Noüy significantly states that there

. . . are gaps in the continuity of our mental images of the universe which force us to admit that the beautiful unity we are striving to demonstrate in nature is nothing more, at the present time, than a philosophical, one might almost say sentimental, conviction. Should we ever be able to demonstrate the reality of this unity, it would only prove that our human, intuitive concepts had reached truth directly, before our rational methods had reached truth directly. . . .³

He then proceeds to admit that, on the basis of man's present knowledge, namely, by using the methods which have proved useful in the interpretation of the inanimate world, it is impossible to account for not only the birth of life but also the appearance of the basic substances required for the building of life—highly dissymmetrical molecules. Thus, while science demands respect, it is a mistake to reverence its almightiness.⁴ It can therefore be repeated with emphasis that there is no ab-

²Pierre Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny*. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1948. p. 3.

³*Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴*Loc. cit. et seq.*

solute evidence, empirically speaking, concerning the origin of man.

Why is it more difficult to accept the Genesis record of creation than to attempt to trace man's history through the ages until the quest finally stops either through the sheer exhaustion of attempting to reconstruct the past eternities *ad infinitum*, or by eventually postulating a Creative Principle or God behind the process? It is significant to find the biologist, du Noüy, subscribing to a finalistic point of view. He says, ". . . we shall use, as a leading light, a teleological hypothesis, that is, a finalism with a very ultimate goal, a 'telefinalism,' if we may be allowed to coin a new word."⁶ "An explanation of the evolution of life by chance alone is untenable today."⁸

Edwin Lewis makes a theological application from a similar point of view. The Christian view of man contradicts the older naturalistic idea that man is merely the product of the world system. According to Christianity, the world exists for man, and the creative activity of God was inspired by the ultimate aim of securing man and bringing him to completion. Thus, man is more than a mere derivation of impersonal mechanisms. "It is the philosophy which holds that without the mind of man to appreciate and interpret it, the universe remains an incomplete fragment."⁷ Lewis feels that this view is not out of harmony with the prevailing scientific theory of the process whereby man originated, but, he explains, it interprets the process as instrumental, not as self-explaining.⁹

The serious efforts of du Noüy and Lewis to harmonize the Christian estimate of man with modern scientific hypotheses of evolution are not to be dismissed as frivolous. du Noüy, in expressing the view of the scientist, admits that there is an inexplicable discontinuity between inorganic matter and organic matter; between

matter and man with a conscience and freedom.

Just as there seems to be an intellectually impassable gap between the reversible "evolution" of electrons and that of atoms (built of electrons); between the irreversible evolution of atoms and that of life (built of atoms); so there seems to be an intellectually impassable gap between the evolution of life and that of man, as such. Man is still an animal by his very structure. . . . Nevertheless he has also brought into the world, from an unknown source, other instincts and ideas specifically human which have become overwhelmingly important although contradicting the first, and it is the development of these ideas, these new characters which constitutes the present phase of evolution.⁹

Hence, he finds that his newly coined term, telefinalism, which postulates the intervention of Idea, Will, supreme Intelligence, or God, throws a little light on this difficulty of the transformations which must occur in the uninterrupted line of man's development.¹⁰

Since the views of both Lewis and du Noüy are predicated upon some concept of God working in the process, why is it not just as tenable to accept the creation story of Genesis? It certainly should be no more difficult for God to create man *instanter* than for him to initiate a process in order to obtain and develop man. An acceptance of the Biblical account as historical might bring the accusation of an unrealistic resort to the principle of parsimony, or to the fallacy of causal simplicity; nevertheless, no more credulity is required to accept it than to accept the evolutionary view. It lends greater dignity to man's place in the universe; it better explains man's relationship to God; and it adequately explains how man came to be a rational and immortal being whose life includes moral and spiritual elements.

II. ADAM: THE ESSENCE OF HUMAN NATURE

The second principle of the position resulting from this investigation is that Adam was created "good," which means

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁸ Edwin Lewis, *The Faith We Declare*. Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1939, p. 34.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 32f.

⁹ du Noüy, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

he was: sinless or holy; integrated or organized; capable of a personal communication and relationship with his Creator; made in the image of God, with full capacity for rational and moral development; self-transcending; self-conscious; and self-determining. Human nature is neither a dualism nor a monism; it is a *gestalt*.

The acceptance of the historicity of the Genesis account of creation demands a logical adherence to the further implications of that story. After the six creative "days" had passed, it is said that God reviewed his handiwork and saw that it "was very good."¹¹ No one except a radical determinist considers that God is directly responsible for evil; therefore, the original creation, including man, could not be other than good.

James Orr warns against putting more into the original state of man than the Biblical narrative warrants. Aside from the implications that Adam named the various animals and efficiently executed his dominion over the lower creation, there is no proof in Genesis that he was a being of advanced intellectual attainments, or that he possessed any intuitive knowledge of the arts and sciences. Such a view does not contradict the position, however, that Adam had an uncorrupted capacity for knowledge which has never since been equalled. If it cannot be said that he was a savage, neither can it be said that he was highly civilized.

It is presumed that man had high and noble faculties, a pure and harmonious nature, rectitude of will, capability of understanding his Creator's instructions, and power to obey them. Beyond that we need not go.¹²

What was the imago Dei? A further assertion of the Genesis record is that man was created in the image and likeness of God. This statement at once separates Adam from all of the prior creation, and places him on a distinctive level. Niebuhr is probably correct by assuming that man's

self-transcendence and self-consciousness are integral to the *imago Dei*.¹³ "Christian anthropology rests on the conviction that man is an animal made in the image of God, which means that he is not an animal at all."¹⁴ In this connection, Brunner points out that man is in contrast to all the rest of creation, not because he was created by and through God, but because he was created in and for God.¹⁵ Hence he can only be understood and can only understand himself in God. It was because he bore the image of God that he was thus lifted above all other earthly creatures, and because he was made in that *imago*, he was conscious of the fact. Brunner terms this responsible awareness man's *Ansprechbarkeit*—addressability or answerability.¹⁶

Man is the creaturely counterpart of God's Self-existence, posited by God Himself; . . . the being created by God to stand 'over-against' Him, who can reply to God, and who in this answer alone fulfills—or destroys—the purpose of God's creation.¹⁷

Stanley R. Hopper maintains that the doctrine of the image must be regarded in a personalistic manner or its true meaning is lost. The person who views reason alone as the seat of the *imago* is shortsighted, for "we are created like God by virtue of our being created as persons, endowed with a capacity for good and evil."¹⁸ But even more than this is involved in the image; the climax of the doctrine consists in the fact that man, as a creature, stands in a unique relationship of response and responsibility to God.¹⁹ Such a personal relationship would be impossible unless there were some common point of contact; unless

¹¹ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), I, 162.

¹² John S. Whale, *Christian Doctrine* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 12.

¹³ H. Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1939), p. 92.

¹⁴ Whale, *op cit.*, p. 44.

¹⁵ Brunner, *op cit.*, p. 98.

¹⁶ Stanley Romaine Hopper, *The Crisis of Faith* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944), p. 225.

¹⁷ *Loc. cit.*

¹¹ Genesis 1:31.

¹² James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), p. 186.

man was created with a "moral personality like God himself."²⁰

What about human freedom? Man's choices cannot possibly be wholly spontaneous, for it is difficult to think of moral responsibility for uncaused choices. On the other hand, it is just as absurd to speak of responsibility under a rigid causality. But it is not impossible to think of something as causally determined by factors within itself. Thus, Spinoza pointed out, "freedom of man consists not in his being undetermined, but in his being determined by forces and conditions arising from his own nature and within himself, as contrasted with his being determined by something that coerces him."²¹ Hence human freedom is a determinism of a kind—a self-determinism. This is man's distinctive dignity; this makes him responsible for his voluntary acts. Adam, possessing original freedom in an uncorrupted and undisrupted state, possessed the maximum power of self-determination.

But simply to say that man is self-determining does not completely answer the question concerning human freedom. What factors make him self-determining? At one time it was held that man's intelligence or reason wholly governed his purposive activity, and that the "will" was the mental "faculty" largely responsible for man's choices. The act of willing or making voluntary choices, however, is a function of the entire human *gestalt*. It is true that the volition is largely a complex mental factor; nevertheless, it is related to the entire personality. Even physical states, such as bodily fatigue, hunger, or desire, play an important role in volitional activity.

The *a priori* of human freedom is man's self-transcendence. It is through this self-transcendental quality of his nature that man stands above himself, makes an object of himself, and has the power of relating himself. "This power to relate himself is

man's initial freedom."²² It is inevitable, therefore, that the self should seek to relate itself to some center about which to organize. In his self-transcendence, man discovers that he cannot adequately measure himself by himself, nor can he measure himself by the world around him. If he seeks to establish his center in the world, he finds that his freedom is sapped by causality. If he tries to make himself the center, he converts all values into egoism and finds that his relationships are fatally introverted. There is but one alternative left, relating the self to an other—an Other of eternal significance.²³ The fact of original sin cannot be understood apart from the *a priori* fact of original freedom. Adam, by virtue of this initial freedom, could either love and obey God, or he could rebel. Hopper significantly indicates that original freedom and original sin are therefore the positive and negative aspects of one and the same principle — man's essential dignity under God.²⁴ Adam could never have sinned were it not that he bore this distinctively human mark—the image of God.

Is human nature a dualism, a monism, or a gestalt? The *gestalt* postulate, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, is applicable to the Christian view of human life. The parts in this case are the body and soul, the material and metaphysical aspects of human nature. There is a unity of personality in man, however, which is not explicable merely on the basis of an analysis of these parts. The life of the soul is not one thing, and the life of the body something altogether different. The *life* of man is not a *mere sum*, "in which each item is independent of the others and simply counts for one in making up the sum."²⁵ Both the life of the soul and the life of the body "are one and the same, i.e., the life of man as man."²⁶ Man is an organized whole, a configuration, a unity, a person.

²² Hopper, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 300f.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁵ Robert S. Woolworth, *Contemporary Schools of Psychology* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1931), p. 98.

²⁶ Hopper, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

²⁰ Olin Alfred Curtis, *The Christian Faith* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1905), p. 193.

²¹ John Herman Randall, Jr., and Justus Bechler, *Philosophy: An Introduction* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1942), p. 236.

Man is not . . . spirit temporarily imprisoned in flesh, soul miserably tethered to a body, but a single unitary, body-spirit person made wholly for God, and therefore finding his wholeness only in God. It is because that fundamental central relationship to God has broken down that the unity of spirit and body has also broken down.²⁷

Thus Orr is right when he contends that God never intended that there ever should be a separation of the parts.²⁸ Death is an unnatural intrusion into the complex wholeness of human life as the result of sin. The Christian concept of eternal life can only be postulated upon the fact of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection not only sealed the hope of salvation of the soul, but it also gave promise to the ultimate redemption of man as a *gestalt*—soul and body combined in one personality. Thus the mere immortality—pure survival—of the soul does not satisfy a true Christian conception of man.

III. ADAM: THE FALL AND ORIGINAL SIN

The third principle of the position arising from this investigation is the acceptance of the Biblical account of Adam, his fall, and original sin, as historical. This postulate does not mean that the Biblical account is necessarily literal in every detail, but it does mean that the account in Genesis is historically factual.

A critical examination of the dominant contemporary view. A great deal has been written in recent years concerning man's "fallen" and sinful state. Especially is this true of the Dialectical theologians.²⁹ The one characteristic of this group of writers which differs from that of historical orthodoxy is the fact that the outstanding present day treatments of the Fall and Original Sin discard the historical elements of Adam's Primal Sin, and emphasize

²⁷ Herbert H. Farmer, *God and Men* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), p. 90.

²⁸ James Orr, *Sidelights on Christian Doctrine* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1909), p. 84.

²⁹ Cf., Brunner, *op. cit.*, pp. 129ff, 145ff, 171f; Hopper, *op. cit.*, pp. 54f; Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-280.

solely the present "fall" of each person individually.

Since the universality of sin is undeniable; since mere environmental influence is insufficient to account for this universality; there must be something intrinsic to the human situation which gives rise to the "original sin" of each individual. Paul S. Rees has succinctly summarized Niebuhr's essential position in this regard as follows: It is not a sin to be finite, but to be finite is to be a sinner.³⁰ As was shown in a previous chapter, Niebuhr feels that the very anxiety of the human situation—man's ability to transcend his immediate situation, whereby he sees its ultimate meaning; yet his inevitable involvement in that situation—necessarily predetermines the "fall" of each person. Creature that he is, man attempts to construct his own world-meaning and sets his selfish will against the will of God; he attempts to transform his dependence into independence; his will lacks the trust necessary to subject itself to the will of God.³¹ Thus, sin inevitably arises from his creaturehood.

Such a view calls for a reinterpretation of the Biblical narratives. Hence Paul S. Minear calls attention to the mythopoeical character of the Fall accounts as follows:

Some of the apocalyptic myths stress the fall of Adam and Eve from their paradise; some describe the fall of the angels from their heavenly paradise. . . . the myth gives existential witness to the consciousness that 'before God, man is always in the wrong.' As objective explanations of precisely how sin entered into the world, these tales are patently inadequate. As expressions of the consciousness that sin has entered, that it actually infects *all* creation, that sin enters *only by sin*, and that it can be overcome *only by God's act*—these myths had profound meanings in their original settings.³²

Eden is said, therefore, to fit no geographical location; Adam's fall cannot be marked by any historical calendar. The Fall does not fit any "aboriginal calamity,"

³⁰ Paul S. Rees, "Our Wesleyan Heritage After Two Centuries," *The Asbury Seminarian*, III, (Spring, 1948), p. 9.

³¹ Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, pp. 250ff.

³² Paul Sevier Minear, *Eyes of Faith* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 245.

but is a dimension of present human experience. Each person is his own "Adam," as are all men solidarily "Adam." "Thus Paradise before the Fall is not a period of history, but our 'memory' of a divinely intended quality of life, given to us along with our consciousness of guilt."³³

It might be questioned, however, whether or not this view of the "pre-fall consciousness," the "fall," and "original sin" does justice to both God and the dignity of man. If the hypothetical "first Man" was created for fellowship with God but could not help repudiating it; if he had a "memory" of a divinely intended quality of life, but existentially could be conscious only of a sense of guilt; can the God who originally created him in this pathetically polarized fashion be said to be good, holy, or just? Is it not a contradiction to say that God created man for a certain purpose, but that existentially that creation defeated its intent, not through a miscarriage of the original potentiality, but intrinsically and inevitably? Except on the basis of a limited atonement or of universalism, this view of the human situation is incompatible with the Christian view of God.

It might be argued that the revelation of God through Christ, and the mediation and reconciliation Christ provided is the way of escape for man; that the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" is co-existent with creation. What about those multitudes who never have and never will hear of Christ? Are they to be damned *merely* because they were *intended* to be human beings involved in an inevitable situation of rebellion against God? Does not such a view contradict the very concept of human freedom? If some semblance of human freedom is not admitted, the *a priori* of self-transcendence disappears; and if self-transcendence is denied, man is merely an animal, not a man. Hopper maintains that "the notion of original sin must be understood against a prior fact—the fact of original freedom which it implies."³⁴ If original freedom means, as Hopper defines

it, an initial freedom of each man to love and obey God or to rebel, the human situation does not necessarily pre-condition or pre-determine man to sin. But if sin is inevitable and universal as experience, historical orthodoxy, and many leading contemporary theologians attest, hence validating the "notion" of original sin; if the facts of the case point to the "inexplicable certainty that all men have fallen short of the glory of God;"³⁵ it must be admitted that man no longer possesses the full use of original freedom whereby he is free to choose otherwise than to rebel. He is not responsible, therefore, for an individual "fall," involving an existential and personal "original sin." His sinfulness must be contingent upon something prior to his present existence and person; it must be *causally* determined. This is exactly the position to which an historical treatment of the Fall and Original Sin as found in Genesis leads.

Original Sin—the perversion of a virtue. In treating original sin as an historical act of Adam, Hopper's statement is appropriate—"the notion of original sin must be understood against a prior fact—the fact of original freedom which it implies," the initial freedom to be obedient or disobedient to God; to love him or fear him. Thus, original sin can truly be said to be a negative assertion of the essential dignity of man under God. It may be said, therefore, that evil in the human situation is to a large extent *perverted good, not the privation of good.* In a word, original sin represents the *negative assertion*, not a mere lack of realization, of that principle in human nature—freedom—which is intrinsic to man's dignity under God.

Man was created a free moral agent. This is the necessary *a priori* of his self-transcendence and essential personality. Such a view is necessary to a proper understanding of the *imago Dei*. Hence, no one can deny that man's freedom was not only absolutely essential, but also a virtue. It was at this point, however, that virtue became a vice, a perverted good. Man used his

³³ Whale, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

³⁴ Hopper, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

³⁵ *Loc. cit.*

freedom to digress from the will of God and to sever that personal relationship with God for which he was created. Hence, Curtis, Niebuhr, Brunner, and a host of other theologians maintain that personal sin is basically selfishness and pride—self-will *versus* God's will. The original sin was the misuse of a virtue; it was self-determination perverted.

The only adequate explanation of the Primal Sin is that Adam and Eve intentionally violated God's law by following self-interest instead of God's mandates. Curtis supports the contention that evil in the human situation is misused or perverted good by pointing out that this first disobedience came out of four motives: (1) physical desire—the fruit was good to eat, (2) cosmic curiosity—to eat was to become as wise as God, (3) the personal spring toward self-assertion—a disobedience to God's command that the tree be left alone, and (4) social influence as manifested by Eve giving of the forbidden fruit to Adam. Each of these motives is not only good but absolutely essential to man, but all four can become evil if and when they urge a moral person to disobey God.³⁷

IV. THE PERSONAL AND RACIAL CONSEQUENCES OF ORIGINAL SIN

Fourth conclusion: The Fall constituted a personal sin for Adam, and as such had severe personal consequences, but in addition, this Primal Sin had racial consequences which have rendered the whole race alien from God.

The true effects of the Fall cannot be fully appreciated aside from some understanding of both man's constitution and that of the world in which he lives in relation to God's will. E. Stanley Jones maintains that not only is the true way of life to be found in the Holy Scriptures, even though these are of primary importance, but the nature of reality supports the Christian way of life. God proposed to redeem the world through Christ, but it should also be remembered that the world was created through Christ. "Through

him all existence came into being, no existence came into being apart from him."³⁷ "For it was by him that all things were created both in heaven and on earth, both the seen and the unseen. . . ."³⁸ Thus the Kingdom of God is not only manifest through special revelation, but in a very real sense, all things have the stamp of Christ upon them, or at least the signature of God.³⁹ Christ, therefore, came not only to reveal God and the purpose of redemption for the soul, but he also came to manifest true humanity; the way men were created to live.

In man's very constitution and nature—physically, mentally, and spiritually—he was made by God to be in a personal relationship of dependence upon Him; and being so constituted, he cannot properly live or find rest outside of God. Augustine voiced this same opinion when he said, "Thou hast made us for thyself, and we are restless until we rest in Thee." The will of God is not something other than, or opposed to your real nature. It is your real nature."⁴⁰ Brunner agrees that God leaves the imprint of his nature upon whatever he does; the creation of the world must be considered a revelation and self-communication of God.⁴¹ Thus logic compels a modification of Barth's *animus* against Natural Theology.

The doctrine of predestination—that some are predestined to heaven and some to hell—has been rightly thrown out of the window. But does it now come back again through the door of manifest fact? Is there a destiny written into the nature of reality, written into our blood, nerves, tis-

³⁷ *The New Testament: A New Translation* by James Moffatt. (New edition, revised; New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1935), John 1:3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Colossians 1:16.

³⁹ E. Stanley Jones, *The Way* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941), p. 7.

⁴⁰ E. Stanley Jones, *Is the Kingdom of God Realism?* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1940), p. 73.

⁴¹ Heinrich Emil Brunner, *Nature and Grace*. (English translation of *Natur und Gnade: Zum Gespräch mit Karl Barth* with the reply, *Nein!* by Karl Barth appearing in the one volume entitled, *Natural Theology*. London: Geoffrey Bles, Ltd., The Centenary Press, 1946), p. 25.

³⁷ Curtis, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

sues, relationships—into everything? Are we predestined by the very nature of things to be Christian? And is that destiny not merely written in the Bible, but written in us, in the very make-up of our being?⁴²

The point to be made here is not that Adam sinned against nature; he sinned against God and reversed his proper relationship to God; nevertheless, in so doing he also transgressed the laws of his being. As a *gestalt* not one part of his essential constitution was left unaffected. Mention has already been made that death—the unnatural separation of his essential being into its component parts—was one result of sin. But not only was death an unnatural effect; all sin was contrary to his constitution and thus unnatural. In this sense, when a man sins he not only affects his relationship to God or his fellows, but he really militates against himself, for he was designed for conformity to God's law. This is but another way of stating that sin is its own punishment. Adam broke himself upon the law of God, just as has every sinner since.

The consequence of Adam's sin, therefore, was total—that is, it extended to his total life, and more than that, to the world over which he had been given dominion. When he chose to have his wilful way in preference to the design of God, he disrupted the whole of his relationships. Man is a person who stands at all times in some relationship to God. Belief or non-belief, obedience or rebellion may condition that relationship, but man's relationship to God never ceases. To the very core and essence of his being man is related to God, "for when God creates a man, he creates that relationship by the same act—without the relationship there would be no man."⁴³ But man and his total relationships were wholly designed for alignment with God's will, and when man rebelled, the relationship became a source of oppression. Rather than an inward fulfillment, the negative relationship produced a sense of being ill at ease, estranged, inwardly outraged, and guilty.

Thus rebellion at once brought condemnation upon Adam. Sin began to be its own punishment, for he alienated himself not only from God, but also from the way he was made to live. Hence, not only was the central relationship of his life—his relationship to God — distorted, but he was caught in a vicious circle—he himself was undone. He chose to "save his life," and, behold he had "lost it!"

The result of sin was a tragic blindness. Adam lost his vision and perspective. No longer could he see the truth concerning himself, nor could he discern the true meaning of his life. He could no longer know God's will for himself, but was left a wanderer, out of sorts with God and with himself.

The . . . reason why sin blinds has to do . . . with the fact that God's claim upon man is written into the very constitution of his being—or, . . . though man can refuse it, he cannot escape it. He can no more escape it than he can escape being a man. The claim of God is upon him and in him all the time—because he is a man. What is the result? For the sake of his own peace of mind there begins in the sinner's mind a process of disguising from himself the real nature of his self-centered desires, his refusal of the claim of God . . . rationalization"⁴⁴

Had all of this been limited to himself the result would have been tragic, but the consequences of Adam's sin were not merely personal, they were racial. Some doctrine of solidarity, based upon the headship of the race in Adam, is necessary to understand adequately the transmission of depravity arising from the original sin. Such is the view of Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Wesley. The consequence upon the race was individually and racially inherited depravity, which is far from meaning that each individual is held culpable for original sin. Original sin as guilt cannot be transmitted! The Original Sin was committed once and for all by the representative of the race—Adam—and the result is not that each person is guilty of that sin or inherits that sin, rather, he inherits the result of that sin—alienation and inherited depravity. For the purposes of this

⁴² Jones, *The Way*, *loc. cit.*

⁴³ Farmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 79f.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

conclusion, this distinction between original sin and depravity should be borne in mind. Original sin was the personal sinful act of Adam, whereas the racial consequences are expressed in terms of inherited depravity, which originated in original sin to be sure, but is not identical with it. It is just as absurd to talk about the transmission of original sin as it is to refer to the atonement—the act of the New Adam—as transmissible to each believer. The act of the atonement was completed once and for all. It is not transmissible from person to person; it is the benefit, the result of that completed act, which is bestowed upon the New Israel.

When Adam sinned his communion with God was severed. It is true that as a man his relationship to God could not be severed, but it became a relationship of rebellion. The place that God should have occupied in man's life was replaced by egocentricity. Hence, the Spirit of God was forced to withdraw from man's life. Much as he might be sorry for his plight, therefore, man no longer had the power to live in the state of his original righteousness. For, as has been pointed out, man was constituted within his very nature to live according to God's will, and in communion with him. As Curtis puts it, "man needs to have for organization the motive of moral love."⁴⁶ When man replaced this motive of moral love with a motive of self-love, his life lost its center and organizing principle. His natural tendencies were no longer united and aligned with God's will, but were left to their own caprices. Man's original tendency toward good became a tendency toward evil, for in this disrupted state, without God's fellowship as the integrative factor, he was helpless. He could never bring order out of chaos for he himself was that chaos.

It is common to refer to various aspects of Adam's nature as having been lost. Thus it is said that Adam lost his freedom, he lost his rational powers, he lost his moral sense, all involved in the loss of the image of God. The use of this word "lost"

may carry with it unfortunate materialistic overtones. Adam did not lose any of these essential elements of his humanity. They simply lost their original potency because his nature became disrupted and disintegrated. They lost "stature" simply because they served an unworthy purpose—that of egocentric living. The loss of the *imago* was a defacement, not a destruction. The basic loss, therefore, was that of fellowship and communion with God; the loss of the Holy Spirit as the true organizing principle of his nature. The cause of this loss, his egocentricity, was found to be entirely insufficient as a replacement, for it was contrary to his constitutional design.

Adam's broken fellowship was extended to the whole of the race. Every human being is born with this transcendental relationship to God so distorted by virtue of Adam's original sin, that aside from redemption, the true integrative principle of his life—the Spirit of God—is inaccessible. In this sense, depravity may be said to be inherited, for it inevitably results from man's position under God as an alien. *Why* God thus chose to make Adam representative of the race is in the last analysis inexplicable, but *that* he did is the clear testimony of both the Bible and historic orthodoxy.

How is depravity transmitted? Sangster objects to the conception of depravity as a *thing*.⁴⁶ Paul S. Rees aptly summarizes the objections of several contemporary writers. These theologians charge traditional orthodoxy, especially Wesleyan Arminianism, with erring by thinking of man's depravity as a "*thing, a quantum, an entity in itself, which can be removed like a cancer or a bad tooth.*"⁴⁷ Modern research in heredity has exploded the myth of inherited acquired characteristics. Were depravity an entity, a "something" positive in the human nature, its transmission would be out of the question.

Curtis explains depravity on the basis of the unorganized character of the individual

⁴⁶ W. E. Sangster, *The Path to Perfection* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 187.

⁴⁷ Rees, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁴⁶ Curtis, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

life. Man possesses all of the native elements of human nature, but they are a cluster of unrelated items. Man is born into the world in this inorganic condition. It was originally intended that man should be a fully organized individual through a life of constant personal intimacy with God; "to have his moral life perfectly saturated with that blessed holy fellowship."⁴⁸ Thus it was intended that man should be at home with God; but this personal vision and intimacy with God was intercepted and perverted by the racial representative. The best organizing principle upon which man can now build his moral person is conscience, which is altogether inadequate. Hence, instead of the moral love and fellowship which are necessary for man to become wholly organized, he lives under moral fear, realizing his creatureliness and dependence, yet severed from the source of life. "No wonder he is afraid all alone out there under that vast, ever-growing, absolutely pitiless moral demand."⁴⁹

In this manner the whole race, solidarily in Adam, was involved in the negation of the fellowship with God. Hence to be born a human being means to be born depraved, for simply to be born a member of the race is to be born under the negation of communion with God, and thus to be disorganized. No acquired characteristics foreign to original human nature are involved. Since Adam's descendants are born under the curse which deprives human nature of the Spirit of God as its integrating factor, hereditary depravity "is only the law of natural heredity, but that law operating under the . . . consequence of Adam's sin."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Curtis, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁹ *Loc. cit. et seq.*

⁵⁰ H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1941), II, p. 125.

Why was God thus forced to withdraw from communion with the race? If the descendants of Adam are not born actually sinful; if the guilt of the original sin is not imputed to them; why should God's Spirit be withdrawn from them? This question involves the holiness, justice, and love of God, and is related principally to the doctrine of God and soteriology rather than to the specific discussion of Christian anthropology. Curtis finds no other explanation for the recession of the divine personal companionship from the race than the realistic fact of God's hatred for sin. This hatred is not sentimentality, nor is it impersonal or arbitrary; it arises from the very holiness of his being.

. . . we are to think . . . of the law of God's holiness as plunging eternally into his absolutely exhaustive self-consciousness, and there furnishing motive for an active, personal hatred of all sin as a violation of that fundamental holiness. Thus, God not only hates sin, but *he means to hate it.*⁵¹

Universal sinning is a fact of experience which cannot be denied. It merely attests the fact that the fellowship between God and the race is broken, but does not explain why. But God did effect a means of reconciliation, as will be indicated later. Mankind, through Adam, had broken that fellowship, and man had to restore it. Yet man in his helpless condition without that necessary fellowship was caught in a maelstrom from which extrication was impossible. Hence God alone was able to provide the means of restoration. The only answer was the God-man, Christ Jesus. The fact still stands, however, that racially this communion is severed, and to be born into the race is to be dependent upon God yet in a negative relationship to him.

(To be continued)

⁵¹ Curtis, *op. cit.*, p. 204.