

Him. We are told to find Him in the Church—and 'there rises before our imagination a figure splendid but terrible, with the light of contemplation and the fire of devoted enthusiasm in her eye,

but splashed with innocent blood, like the rider of the Apocalypse, even to the horse-bridle, the cruel oppressor of liberty, the bigoted enemy of truth.'

Mr. Tennant's Theory of the Origin of Sin.

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THE promise Mr. Tennant made two years ago, in his fresh and interesting lectures on the 'Origin and Propagation of Sin,'¹ he has just fulfilled in the larger work on the Fall story in pre-Christian or rather pre-Augustinian thought;² and the result is that we now have his theory in a complete form. In the earlier and perhaps more interesting work, Mr. Tennant was content to deal with the doctrine of Original Sin in the light of philosophy and modern science—specially the latter. He threw out the idea, however, that the doctrine, as we have it to-day, was not the outcome of a true exegesis of Scripture, but was due to 'speculation, working indeed on the lines of Scripture, but chiefly moulded by the current science and philosophy of the times.' This statement he has now tried to prove by an examination of the Fall-story, not only as it appears in the Bible, but also in all extra-canonical Jewish and early Christian literature. To say that this is done with scholarship, lucidity, and above all with fairness to the facts before him, is only to say what all previous readers of Mr. Tennant's work would expect. The book covers pretty much the same ground as Dr. Clemen's *Christian Doctrine of Sin*, but the standpoint is quite independent, and in its examination of Jewish extra-canonical writers is much fuller. On the latter subject it is, we think, a real contribution to theological science.

Nevertheless, in one point it is distinctly inferior to the German work. It lacks the severely impartial attitude of that writer. Mr. Tennant writes with a distinct bias in his mind against the whole conception of 'a Fall'; and this polemic,

though it does not interfere with his candour in giving us the facts, does very materially interfere with the scientific impartiality of the conclusions he draws from these facts.

Thus in his opening chapter on the meaning of the Fall-story, Mr. Tennant accepts what one can only call the extravagant and very slenderly supported view of Wellhausen, that the story in Gn 3 is a mere culture-myth; that there is no moral content whatever in the eating of the forbidden fruit; that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is symbolic of the advance of science, and that the reason of God's anger at Adam and Eve for eating of it was not because of their disobedience, but from a jealous fear that Adam would now become the 'lord of nature and able to use its forces for his own purposes.' As Clemen well remarks, had this been the idea in the author's mind, he would not have made the woman lead the way.³ It is contrary to the whole Oriental conception of woman that she should lead the van in the progress of knowledge. But, indeed, the whole trend of the narrative is opposed to such a view. That ethical considerations are paramount with the sacred writer is evident from the story of the crime of Cain, which immediately follows; while the origin of science forms a special section still farther on. The only reasonable ground for the interpretation of Wellhausen is the curious anthropomorphism at the close of the chapter (Gn 3²²): 'Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth,' etc.; but this verse is now almost universally regarded as forming no part of the original narrative, which knows nothing about any pos-

¹ *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*. Hulsean Lectures. By F. R. Tennant, M.A., B.Sc. Cambridge University Press, 1902.

² *The Fall and Original Sin*. By F. R. Tennant. Cambridge University Press, 1903.

³ *Die Christliche Lehre von der Sünde*, p. 154, Theil I. Von Dr. Carl Clemen. Göttingen, 1897.

sibility of escaping the doom of disobedience, namely, instant death.¹

So, too, in regard to the religious value of the Fall-story, Mr. Tennant gives an appreciation which we venture to think very few will accept. His judgment is that it is neither an allegory nor a myth, but a 'history.' It is a very peculiar history however; for its only importance lies 'not in what it tells about its subjects but its authors.' That is to say, the only value of the Fall-story is the light it throws on the religious development of those who wrote it, and as Mr. Tennant places it very late in Jewish history, this is not very great. We might point out in passing that this estimate is hardly consistent with the author's acceptance of Wellhausen's exegesis of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to mean the Tree of Science, which is surely allegory; but it is more important to remind Mr. Tennant that not only Dr. Hort, whom he quotes, but the best modern thought is entirely at variance with him in this estimate.² Whatever view we take of Gn 3, we cannot get over the fact that there is some element of symbolism there. The very name, 'Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,' is a sufficient evidence of that.

Even in what must be regarded the fairest part of the book, that on Jewish extra-canonical writers, the same bias may be traced. The author, with his usual candour, gives the uninitiated reader the materials for forming his own judgment here, and certainly the impression left with us, from reading these, is that the early Jewish writers often come marvellously near the Christian doctrine of an 'original taint' due to a primal act of sin; though they may not be very clear as to how the two are to be related together. This is specially true of Ben Sirach, whose words, 'From the woman was the beginning of sin, and through her we all die,' can have only one meaning. Mr. Tennant, as it seems to us, signally fails in trying to minimize their importance.

On the whole, the impression got from a perusal of these Jewish writings, so fully and, we must add, so skilfully brought before us by Mr. Tennant, is that of the extraordinary interest the story of the

Fall of man seemed to have in the last phase of Jewish national literature. That interest often expresses itself in fantastic forms, but it is always there; and in some, such as *Esdras*, the problem is grasped with insight and power. We may willingly agree with Mr. Tennant that Augustine was indebted to these either directly or indirectly, without at all accepting the deductions he makes from such indebtedness.

The interest of 'the Apocrypha' in the Fall-story is some compensation for what is, after all, one's chief perplexity in regard to it, namely, the comparative silence of the Old Testament on it, and may also suggest the explanation of that silence, that the tradition was not committed to writing when the majority of the Bible authors lived. At the same time the silence of One, who must have known it well and read it often, suggests another still more feasible view. Christ, it has often been remarked, says nothing about the Fall-story, and the omission has sometimes been interpreted to its disadvantage.³ But the reason is surely different. It is the same as that of the comparative silence of the Old Testament. It did not fall in with their purview. Neither Christ nor the Old Testament prophets and psalmists were dogmatic theologians. They dealt with sin as a fact, not as a doctrine. At the same time, whatever view our Lord took of the value of the details of the Fall-story (and these we think are of little importance), there can be no doubt that His conception of sin is one which is in fullest accord with the doctrine underlying the Fall-story. It is a conception of sin which roots it deep in 'the heart' of man; which sees in him a 'lost son of God,' with the image of His Maker deeply imprinted there, though sadly defaced; and which, if we accept the Johannine supplement to the synoptic teaching, holds that man is so incurably tainted by sin that nothing less than a 'second birth' can put him right again.

This is the real 'source' of the Christian doctrine of sin, not the 'Fall-story' as we have it in Gn 3; and this is our chief criticism of Mr. Tennant's book, that in his examination of Scripture and Rabbinical writers he makes far too much of the mere details of the story, or how it is to be related to man's sin, and does not see that these writers are really wrestling with two great facts of faith and experience; the universality and radical nature of

¹ So Gn 2¹⁷ 'In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die'—obviously a moral or spiritual death, as neither Adam nor Eve died *physically* on the day of disobedience.

² See Bernard's articles on 'The Fall' and 'Sin' in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*.

³ See *Origin of Sin*, p. 150.

sin and the holiness of God as man's Creator. It is out of that great antinomy that the Fall-story emerged at the first, and it is in the light of it that the Bible and Jewish literature must be studied.

The same criticism must be made on the chapter on Paul. Our author makes a great deal there, like Ritschl¹ before him, on the difficulty of interpreting Ro 5¹², 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all sinned,' and deduces from that difficulty the conclusion 'that in all probability none of the several forms of the doctrine was ever distinctly present to the apostle's mind.' Here surely the great question is not as to what form the doctrine took in Paul's mind. The great point to be noted is that *he had a doctrine of it*. How the sin of the first sinner was transmitted to the race might not be very clear to him. Personally we incline to accept Bengel's exegesis that he means to say we were all seminally present in Adam and sinned in him. We think this likely to one brought up in Rabbinical modes of thinking; though we do not believe that such a view is therefore binding on the Church, or indeed that he would have wished to bind the Church to such a view. But that is not the great point. The great thing to be emphasized here is, that *to Paul a doctrine of Original Sin was a necessity of Christian thought*. It was a deduction from what to him were the two primary axioms of faith and experience, the holiness of God, and the universal and inborn character of sin.

This brings us to look at Mr. Tennant's own theory as it is outlined in the first of the works we have referred to—the Hulsean Lectures on the Origin of Sin. In these lectures the author approaches the subject, less as a theologian or philosopher than as a Christian man of science. Not that he does not deal with original sin from both these standpoints; but his chief difficulty (as it doubtless is with us all) is to harmonize the Christian doctrine of sin with the account science gives of human origins. The doctrine of original sin may be summed up in the Preacher's statement: 'God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions.' Mr. Tennant, however, does not believe that man was originally 'upright' in any other than a physical sense. He fully accepts the Darwinian view that man originally was an anthropoid ape, moved only by the appetites of

hunger and lust, and rose by slow degrees, through promiscuity, polyandry, totemism, and so forth, up to the time when by tribal influence a rude conscience and ruder religion were evolved. Yet along with this he claims that his faith in Christianity is not in the least imperilled, nay, rather, is placed thereby on a more stable foundation.

It is the purpose of these lectures to vindicate this position; but—while we can only sympathize with the attempt to harmonize the Christian faith with the most advanced conclusions of Darwinian science—we do not think that the success of the result has been very great. Of course it must be premised that Mr. Tennant's view of Evolution is very different from that of the ordinary Christian evolutionist. According to the latter, only the physical structure of man was developed. When that was prepared, God 'breathed into man and he became a living soul,' innocent though not morally full-grown. In other words, primitive man was like Wordsworth's child, a being—

Trailing clouds of glory . . .
From God who is our home.

Such a beautiful dream Mr. Tennant cannot believe. He would say with the late Professor Drummond, 'God does not dwell in gaps.' There is no gap from the ape up to Abraham, perhaps up to Christ.

Whence, then, is the origin of sin in such a creature? Its origin, he says, takes place in the conflict which inevitably emerges between the lower nature, or the original brute, and the higher reason or spirit, which the Divine Creator slowly breathes into the ascending nature of man. God is immanent in man from the first, but His presence only gradually makes itself felt by a higher nature or reason in the ape. At first this has no civilizing result. It may rather increase his ferocity and jealousy. But though primeval man in this condition must have been a creature of savage appetites and furious passions, Mr. Tennant does not think his creation casts any discredit on His Creator, simply because as a child he did not know any better. He had no sin, because he was not conscious of any sin. 'By the law,' says Mr. Tennant, 'is the knowledge of sin,' quoting here Paul with approval. By and by, however, as the Divine Spirit gradually worked in man, a rude tribal law or conscience was evolved. Now came the conflict between the lower nature and the

¹ *Justification and Reconciliation*, English trans., p. 345.

higher law in man. At the first man was bound to yield to the lower; because the higher nature had not sufficient power to resist. But as time went on, the higher nature grew sufficiently strong to overcome the lower, and it was then that sin arose. It took place—man fell, if we may use such a term—when, knowing the higher law, he yielded to the lower. 'Sin,' says Mr. Tennant, quoting Archdeacon Wilson,—'sin is only an anachronism.' It is yielding to the lower at a time when the man should have been able to obey the higher.

But why, it may be asked, does man sin still as readily as in early days? If humanity has been progressing all those æons of years, surely by this time the spirit would have conquered the flesh? What is the explanation of the universality and apparently inborn character of sin still to-day? Mr. Tennant's answer to this is, that the ape-like nature of man being there at the first, has, so to speak, a *handicap over the spirit in the race of life*. He quotes with approval again, the words of Paul, 'First that which is natural, then that which is spiritual,' and says that in every child the story of primeval man is practically told over again. The divine spark begins only as a spark in an overwhelming mass of fleshly appetites; so that defeat is inevitable there from the first. Gradually, however, as by training and growing intelligence the child awakes to the 'law of the spirit,' it attains its ascendancy over the flesh and rises into the liberty of the children of God. At first this 'defeat' of the spirit by the flesh is natural and cannot be called sin. But as the child learns to know better, as its lower nature becomes 'moralized,' such compliance is of the nature of 'sin.' It is, however, 'a product of the ordinary course of nature, and cannot be called original sin.'¹ Thus not only a state of original righteousness and a Fall, but the whole conception of Original Sin is denied by Mr. Tennant. 'The Fall' is only coming to a knowledge of sin, and this is no true Fall, but rather a decided rise.

So far Mr. Tennant. It is curious that while freely acknowledging his debts to others, he does not see the likeness of his theory to Schleiermacher's view of the origin of sin—namely, that it arose in the conflict between the Self-consciousness, or the Flesh, and the God-consciousness, or the Spirit, in man. That great thinker found his ex-

planation of the universality of sin in the fact that man was originally an animal into which the Divine Spirit was breathed. He was thus unequally handicapped from the first, and the lost ground could only be gained by the union of flesh-weighted humanity with the perfect humanity of Christ.

The great objection the Christian consciousness must make to it, as it must still more to Mr. Tennant's form of it, is that it practically makes God the author of sin. Sin is 'natural'—inevitable from the first. The man-ape, the creature of monstrous lusts, is God's last and highest work. Mr. Tennant tries to evade this difficulty by saying that man did not then 'know any better,' and that may be granted, for sake of argument, though on other grounds we might well question his position and point to facts which show that God's law was written in man's heart as soon as he knew that he was a man. But the point here for Mr. Tennant is, if man did not know better, surely *God knew better and could do better*. Let any one picture this primitive man of modern anthropologists—'hateful and hating'—a ferocious monster of hunger, lust, and jealousy, and ask himself whether the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ can be conceived as making a being like that; still less delighting in it as the crown of creation. Certainly that was not Christ's view. When He looked out at a wrecked humanity, He did not say, 'This is natural. This is inevitable. This is man in the making.' He said, 'An enemy hath done this.'

Mr. Tennant quotes Paul's statement, 'By the law is the knowledge of sin' approvingly, but what his own theory really amounts to is, 'By the knowledge of law is sin.' Sin begins when man becomes conscious of it. But this is not Paul's view. Sin is sin, whether we know it or not. It depends on God's eternal law. Our guilt may depend on our knowledge, but not our sin. Sin itself is as absolute as God. Sin is the eternal antinomy of God.

Further, Mr. Tennant dwells on the danger of binding Christian truth to an unscientific theory of man's origin. Has he any sufficient grounds for calling the conception of primitive innocence unscientific? Many anthropologists to-day of the highest class hold such a view as at least possible. They point to the early pure faiths of India, Egypt, and Greece as proofs of the view that retrogression

¹ Hulsean Lectures, p. 114.

from innocence may go side by side with progression from ignorance.

And while science may be admitted to have proved that man is inconceivably older than our fathers dreamed, the striking fact that four thousand years ago the Semite had found God, while the Fetish-worshipper of to-day is as far from him as ever, would seem to prove that more than mere development is needed to explain the history of the human race. There is a striking confirmation of that in the account Mr. Tennant gives in his second volume of 'Fall-stories' in other religions. He is candid enough to confess that the Bible story cannot be derived from any of these, though he thinks it will yet be. That may be, but if so, it will be found that in the derivation it has been infinitely purified and elevated. Certainly, as compared with the fantastic and often filthy mythologies collected by Mr. Tennant, it stands out, not as a 'parallel,' but rather as a noble contrast.

Professor Bruce used to tell his students he found no proof of the inspiration of the true Gospels so satisfying as a perusal of the apocryphal ones. To a less extent perhaps, but as fairly, one might say that nothing will commend the Bible Fall-story more than a perusal of Mr. Tennant's 'parallels.' Even if, as he says, its only value were as a history of its authors, it would not be without value as suggesting the question: 'Whence hath this people these noble thoughts?'

It may be admitted that the doctrine of Original Sin is, as Pascal said, in some of its aspects 'an incomprehensible mystery.' It may be further admitted that, as it came from the hands of Augustine, it was far from perfect. To our thinking we are indebted to modern science for placing the doctrine on its true basis. That doctrine, as

we believe the Bible as a whole would teach it, is not one of imputed guilt. Original sin is not a crime of Adam, for which his posterity are held responsible. It is a hereditary taint which entered humanity at its dawn in some mysterious way, which we can never perhaps fully understand, save that reason and faith alike demand that it could not have been by the will of the Creator. This is the Christian doctrine of Original Sin. It may be described as a *hereditary soul-sickness*.¹ Biological science teaches us what a mighty principle heredity is in the building up of the physical structure of life. Medical science adds further the contribution that heredity is of vast importance as a means of the transmission of moral qualities from father to son. Surely it is in the line with all these teachings, when we believe that a disease so deep as sin, a disease which changes man's whole relations to God and his fellow-men, should participate in the same law of inheritance.

Mr. Tennant tries to minimize hereditary sin, but in this we think he is untrue to that very science of which he professes to be the exponent, and for our part, while mysteries remain, we venture to believe that the explanation which the Bible gives is the truest to the facts of life—facts which make us agree with the profoundest of our modern poets,² when he said of our Christian faith—

I still to believe it true
See reasons and reasons—this to begin
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
At the head of a lie, taught *Original Sin*
The corruption of man's heart.

¹ So Bernard, article 'Fall,' in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*. It was also practically the view of Zwingli and Melancthon.

² Browning, 'Gold Hair; a Story of Pornic.'

Recent Literature on the Religions of Greece and Rome.

WHAT is the meaning of the recent rush of books on the Religions of Greece and Rome? If it is the operation of the law of supply and demand, which even books and authors bow to, the question is not answered. What has raised the demand? Is it the new conception of what Religion is? With that there has certainly come a new joy in the

study of it. For since it is no longer necessary to think of God as requiring every prayer to be translated into Hebrew until Christ came; since it is possible to believe that the prayers of even the Egyptians who were drowned in the Red Sea entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, new life has flowed into the study of the Egyptian Book