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Man in Revolt : *A Christian Anthropology*

A Survey by F. R. MONTGOMERY HITCHCOCK, D.D.

EMIL BRUNNER'S great work¹ took many years to write and takes in many topics. It begins with "The Riddle of Man." A number of the various views of man are set forth in the Introduction. The main section deals with foundations, and the presuppositions of the Christian doctrine of man. In this the Word of God is discussed as the Source of Knowledge, and the Source of Being. The latter discussion deals with the Being of God ; the Trinity ; the Will of God, the Decree of Election ; the Work of God ; Creation and Redemption. These are interesting chapters if somewhat difficult to follow. They frequently challenge contradiction. Then follows "The Origin : the Imago Dei" (c.v.). "The Word of God, which is itself the Origin, allows us to perceive that of which every human being is dimly aware ; at the same time this light shows us that our 'dim perceptions' are merely a groping in the dark. Hence the Christian doctrine of man is threefold : the doctrine of man's origin, the doctrine of contradiction, and the doctrine of the actual state of man as life in conflict between his origin and the contradiction. The Christian doctrine of man is therefore quite different from all other anthropologies, because it alone takes this conflict seriously and does not explain it away or try to neutralize it in any direction" (p. 83). Then he passes on to the scientific solution from "the parabolic expression of the Christian narrative ; namely that man has been created 'in the image of God,' and the

¹ " *Man in Revolt : A Christian Anthropology* " by Emil Brunner, translated by Olive Wyon. (Lutterworth Press) 15s.

view of Augustine," which he calls "the classical doctrine," although it was contrary to the more sensible view of a greater theologian, Irenæus, in whose opinion the protoplast or primitive man was in a childlike undeveloped condition. Whereas Augustine regarded him as a mature, highly developed being, with a soul endowed with *original righteousness*, endowed with the *liberum arbitrium*, a perfect creature. "This whole historic picture of 'the first man' has been finally and absolutely destroyed for us to-day. The conflict between the teaching of history, natural science, and palæontology, on the origins of the human race, and that of the ecclesiastical doctrine has led all along the line to the victory of the scientific view; he remarks, "Two alternatives alone do not conflict with historical research, naturalistic evolution (Darwin), and idealistic evolution (Hegel). Schleiermacher in his reformulation of Christian doctrine substituted for the Christian view an idealistic evolutionary theory with a strongly naturalistic bent." Other philosophers also, e.g. Hase, Rothe, Pfeiderer, Troeltsch consider that it is the future goal of evolution not the lost past that the *Imago Dei* refers to. Brunner abandons the historical form of the doctrine of the origin of man as a necessary purification of the Christian doctrine for its own sake. The real core of Christian doctrine, apart from its historical form, differs from both the idealistic and the naturalistic evolutionary theories. It consists in the truth that man is in conflict between his divine origin in creation, and his opposition to the latter, that is sin. This is Brunner's statement of the problem of man which he discusses with vigour and acuteness in *Man in Revolt* upon which he has been at work for many years. He tells the story of his studies in his Foreword, "More than fifteen years ago it became clear to me under the deep impression made by the anthropological work of Kierkegaard, that the distinction between modern Humanism and the Christian faith must be made at this point in the understanding of man. Acquaintance with the thought of Ebner, Gogarten and Buber helped me further along the path which I had begun to follow. Here, too, however, I learned still more from the new light thrown on the teaching of the Reformation; I learned most from Luther, for I came to see that in this question, of all the Reformers his teaching is the most Scriptural and the most profound."

He says, however, that he does not merely reaffirm the Reformation position, for in this central anthropological question of freedom versus unfreedom, in particular, the inadequacy of the Reformers was evident. "There is a great deal to learn from Augustine the thinker which escaped the notice of Luther the fighter." He says that the fundamental idea of his book is that even the unbeliever is related to God and, therefore, that he is responsible, and that this responsibility is not put out of action even by the fullest emphasis upon the generous grace of God, but, on the contrary, that God requires it. He illustrates this fundamental idea frequently through the book. In his conclusion (p. 558), he says that man can never be understood apart from his relation to God. In Christianity this relation takes the form of responsibility, the response in faith and obedience to the Word of God. Man's relation to God as such can never be lost; but the *right* relation is lost by sin. He points out how that right relation may be recovered by man and restored by God. The closing words give a clue to the author's meaning, a clue that may also serve to gather into one the many diverse threads of thought in this massive, amazing, and most confusing volume. "Man is not divine in virtue of his nature; but God has given him from the beginning the divine destiny, which if he acts against it, becomes his curse, but which is given to him once more now in faith and later in sight, now as something imperfect and later as a perfect 'being like unto Him' through Him Who is equal with God from all eternity, through the eternal Son Who restores to us our lost Sonship and perfects it." What has been said is intended to give the reader of *THE CHURCH-MAN* some idea of the reason why the book was written and of the author's purpose and intention. There are too many subjects discussed in it even to glance at a quarter of them. He has a great deal in this voluminous tome on almost every subject connected directly or indirectly with philosophy and religion. It is rather a book of reference than an essay. To fix on one subject for more detailed examination we shall take the chapter entitled "The Contradiction" (c. vi.), which means the conflict between good and evil, that ever-present problem which is fundamental in scientific anthropology, in moral philosophy, and especially in Christian doctrine. The origin of evil baffles man; but no one can deny

its existence. Evil, he says well, "is the destructive action of a responsible being." (We remember in a recent broadcast the words "that evil man"). This subject introduces us to many debatable matters—the traditional Adam, and the Fall, original sin, Pelagianism and Augustinianism, solidarity in sin, freedom, necessity, and responsibility. A very neat explanation of solidarity in sin, was given by Kierkegaard: "The Word of God shows us that the man whom God created, is always both this individual and humanity." The actual words in that writer's *Der Begriff der Angst* are: "The essential determination of human existence, that man is individual and as such is both himself and the whole race, so that the whole participates in the individual and the individual in the whole race." A corollary of this is that "the perfecting of the individual in himself, is at the same time, and in so doing, the perfect participation in the whole." At all events this conception is the presupposition of the fact that we are able to understand one another. St. Paul put this much more simply and effectively in his famous dictum about the Body: "Whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it." As one would naturally expect the Scriptures are the supreme authority for Emil Brunner. He tests his doctrine of sin by the Scriptures. He says that the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, in its narrower sense, was based upon the questionable exegesis of *eph 'ho* — in quo — in lumbis Adami. Of course, this is absolutely wrong; *eph 'ho* cannot mean *in quo* in whom, but "for that." Death passed upon all men *for that* "on the ground that" all have sinned. This is the correct rendering.

As this reviewer has stated in his book on the Atonement¹ (p. 9), which will now be switched on, "The Scriptural warrant at present of the ecclesiastical doctrine seems to be an erroneous rendering of two Greek words. For the Church professedly does not apply the Apocryphal Books to establish any doctrine. And it seems that it was in 2 Esdras iv. 30, that Augustine found it—"A grain of evil seed was sown in the heart of Adam from the beginning, and how much

¹ *The Atonement and Modern Thought* (Donnellan Lectures: 1912). See chapter "Sin and Atonement" (pp. 1-60), an exhaustive examination of the subject of Sin.

wickedness hath it brought forth unto this time." Neither do the Scriptures reveal anything of the state of original righteousness. Adam is nowhere represented as perfect in canonical or patriotic writings.

Irenæus described him as *nepios*, *infans*, and Clement of Alexandria said that he was not made perfect in respect of his constitution, but in a fit condition to receive virtue. Job xxxi. 33: "If after the manner of man (*k'adam*, not like Adam) I covered my transgression" does not refer to any such inheritance as original sin. "In sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. li. 5), has no thought of such either, but refers to a sexual relationship which many considered and still consider unclean. Eph. ii. 3: "Children of wrath by nature" refers to *actual* not *original* sin (Abbott). St. Paul in Rom. v. and 1 Cor. xv. does not say how Adam's sin is related to our sin or nature, neither is he concerned to prove the origin of human sin and death its penalty, but to illustrate our moral solidarity in the righteousness and life of Jesus Christ. While the New Testament regards all men as sinners, it throws no light on the method whereby they became such. Our Lord referred to a hostile spiritual power. "I saw Satan fall." He did not speak of a fall of man. The apostle John knew nothing of original sin in the sense of a humanity depraved and impure from birth. His summary of the Incarnation: The Word became flesh (*sarx*) is unqualified. And the doctrine of original sin as Du Bose saw, must affect the doctrine of the Incarnation, so he explained "in the likeness of the flesh of sin" as equivalent to "our identical nature" not without sin. He was "humanly without sin only because He met and overcame and abolished sin in Himself." So this doctrine of original sin requires the sacrifice of the sinless nature of Christ. The Roman Church, seeing the weakness of the position found it expedient to invent another doctrine, the Immaculate Conception, in order to save the sinless nature of Christ. Professor Caird skilfully turned the position of Augustine, whose dark and pernicious doctrines have been an incubus upon Christianity, that "in Adam we all were at that time in the idea of God and in the seed of humanity, and therefore his disordered and vitiated nature has been propagated to us" (*De Civ. xiii. 14*), by remarking "That the conception of seminal guilt, or of a sin which contains

or involves all future sins, would imply that Adam was guilty of all the sins of his descendants, rather than they of his." The justice of his criticism is evident when one considers that the blossom is not responsible for the seed or for the intermediate stages. The Manichæan studies of Augustine, who was the first to treat this subject scientifically, led him to his view of human depravity. The New Testament does not teach the Fall of Man. St. Paul speaks of a fall (*paraptoma*) of the Jews, but not of a fall of Eve. Her sin was a *parabasis* (transgression). In these days when the modern religious mind is compelled in its self-defence to test the bases of its faith, it will not allow us to build upon foundations which are liable to be destroyed by science or discredited by criticism. And science repudiates the doctrine of a Fall as untrue, while criticism regards it as unnecessary. This doctrine, which does not belong to the body of Christian truth, having no place in the creeds, has weakened the sense of responsibility for sins we have actually committed, but has, on the other hand, extended our responsibility to a state or condition of things, for which we cannot be held responsible under any ethical system, and which would render us objects of Divine compassion rather than of wrath. For if the evil that is in us can be even partially traced back to some one universal moral catastrophe, moral evil which is thus attributed to an inherited bias, is extenuated. And if the consequences of sin be thus transmitted from man to man, why should not the consequences of righteousness be so transmitted? It would be a sad thing for the human race if its moral inheritance were altogether bad. It may also be urged that the doctrine that we have inherited from Adam, whether we mean one individual or the original ancestors of the human species, a depraved or deprived nature supports pessimism, and the feeling that evil must prevail. For if one single offence could so vitiate the nature that God is represented as seeing "very good," even though it was a test case, it would augur ill for the final success of good. Again the idea of the transmission of a sin imputable to man from the earliest times and bringing down the wrath and condemnation of God even upon those who cannot possibly have sinned in thought or deed, throws sin into the external world, gives it an objectivity it has not, treats it as a thing apart from one's personality, supports

those legal and forensic views of the Atonement which sound theology and psychology alike reject. It also assumes, on the one hand, what cannot be proved, that there may be an inheritance of sinful tendencies derived from sinful acts in the reign of the spiritual personality, which is something like traducianism; and, on the other hand, makes that which is an affair of the whole personality due in a large degree to one's physical descent.

Without entering into a discussion on the transmission of acquired characters, which can only lead to useless argument, it is certain that congenital tendencies to indulge certain instincts, may, like predispositions to certain physical diseases, be handed down. In this sense the modern Christian might interpret original sin. But to assert that such tendencies can carry guilt with them, unless deliberately indulged in, is open to the objection that guilt (*Saxon, gylðan*: to pay) which originally meant liability to punishment but now moral blameworthiness, can only exist where there are conditions that make for responsibility such as freedom and knowledge. And as the individual cannot be held accountable for the condition in which he was born, or for the character of his parents, he cannot be regarded as answerable for the nature he is given, whether it be good or evil, vitiated by inherent tendencies to badness or strengthened by predispositions to virtue. "Sin" is allowed by theologians to bear a different connotation when used in the term "original sin" from that implied when actual sin is concerned. After all is said, "Sin or holiness cannot be in mere nature or condition, they can only be in what *we* are or do in the nature or the condition." On the other hand, we must reject the atomistic view of life and personality; we must not overlook the influence of sinful habit on the will. We are against Pelagianism, for we are not in the same position after as before with regard to evil. Neither are we separate units, but members of a body, so that as Schleiermacher has well said, "Sin is in each the work of all, and in all the work of each." For we are deeply, if unconsciously, connected with the past life, the present condition, and the future hope of the race. To the physical or organic unity of the race we owe our instincts, appetites and passions in stronger or weaker form. This is our universal inheritance—the material out of which the will makes good or evil,

and which are not in themselves good or evil until they have been made so by the will. Here is ground both for individual freedom and for universal sinfulness. Personality is spiritual and subjective. That which influences or injures the personality is something that the will has appropriated, and made its own, such as a maxim, a desire, an impulse. Heredity in the sense of inheritance by descent cannot be made responsible for what takes place in this sphere, if psychology and physiology are to be kept distinct. But, on the other hand, the consequences of human sin, physical and moral, are transmitted from generation to generation. There is an inheritance of trouble and trial and sorrow. Furthermore, the moral environment—that great complex of surrounding influences which is in a measure the product of inherited tendencies and previous conditions of life—has an untold influence upon the human soul. The moral history of man is largely the record of his struggle with the circumstances, surroundings and conditions of his life. For there is a social, moral, and religious atmosphere, as well as a physical one. Moreover, the human race being one organism there is a racial evil in which the race as a whole is involved and in the effects or liabilities of which it shares. This solidarity of man in sin seems to be the contradiction of personal responsibility. But these truths are reconcilable. They emphasize different aspects of human life—the solidarity of the human life in its relations to others, and the individuality, or singleness, of the human life in relation to its own soul. St. Paul emphasizes the solidarity of man in ruin in order to show how much more glorious is the solidarity of man in redemption. But neither are our very own until we have made them ours by personal identification, by an act of will. The freedom of the human will explains the apparent antinomy between personal and inherited responsibility. On the other hand, an atomistic conception of personality, which considers humanity to be divided into water-tight compartments, incapable of influencing or being influenced by each other, is opposed to the idea of an Atonement which presupposes the unity of human life and its solidarity, and accordingly a common and universal responsibility. But the doctrine of Atonement is not affected by any theory of the origin of sin. Whether we regard our present sinful state as a chaos not yet fashioned into order,

or the ruin of a once fair creation, the Atonement is an independent fact and doctrine. It is independent alike of the theory of "a mysterious seed of sin implanted in the human race" and capable like other racial characteristics of transmission (Sanday and Headlam, Romans, p. 146), and of all theories of the Fall or Evolution as explanations of our condition because it is concerned with our moral condition as it is, not with explanations of it. The existence of the universality of sin and sinful habit is sufficient basis for a Gospel of redemption, a redemption of our wills and souls, quite apart from the further question—into which the Redeemer never entered—how sinfulness arose. Thus far I have given a short summary of the argument in my own work on the Atonement (pp. 11-17) with regard to the doctrine of original sin, because it deals more fully and simply with the matter than the volume before us, and also because it serves as an introduction to a discussion of the cardinal doctrine of the Atonement, regarding which Brunner says little or nothing. A search through his book of 560 pages brings to light this solitary sentence: "The most meaningless event in world history, the death of Christ, through the divine wisdom has become the most meaningful" (p. 453). There may be other passages, but as there is no index of subjects—a great drawback to this fine book—they cannot be found. It is a remarkable fact that out of ninety-nine sections, only two short ones refer to Redemption. From one of these sections the above sentence is taken. Notice its crispness. Many such crisp and printed sentences are to be found. They are among the best things in the book. Here are a few: "Man is the only being who lives in conflict with himself" (p. 495). "The self-destroying use of freedom is that which the Bible calls sin." "Through sin man has become ec-centric, and through his eccentricity he has fallen into confusion" (p. 166). "Love which is self-imparting is the content of that Primal Word in which we have been created, and in which we have our life" (p. 495). "Neither in pantheism nor in materialism is there any responsibility left to man" (p. 431). "We are not yet living in the eternal Now; even as believers we are still living in the time-era where the past, the present and the future fall apart" (p. 495). "Man's apostasy from God is not simply something which has happened once for all, and is

over and done with ; man is doing it continually " (p. 149). " Everyone knows that we are responsible, but not everyone knows the content, the basis and the meaning of responsibility " (p. 159). " Even the cynic, or fanatic, who denies God does not escape from God, in so far as he is always forced, in some way or other to recognize the fact of responsibility " (*ibid*). Brunner deals at length with Humanism, the Greek attitude to the problems of life, viz. self-sufficiency ; and makes use of Luther's clever description of the self-centred heart—the "*Cor incurvatum in se ipsum*" (p. 272). The heart doubled-back upon itself. The work the author set out to accomplish has been well—nay, brilliantly done, although not easy reading, for the writer's knowledge is encyclopædic, and his style is corresponding. The translation has been worthy of the work.