

Darwinism and Original Sin: Frederick R. Tennant's analysis of the Church Fathers' understanding of Original Sin and an exegesis of St. Paul

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Abstract

Frederick R. Tennant's 1902 Hulsean lectures integrated Darwinism into a Christian synthesis, without diminishing soteriological concerns, by showing that Original Sin is better thought of as inherited natural propensities for self-survival, not as inherited guilt. Tennant followed this with *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, an exegetical and historical analysis of the development of Original Sin doctrine to provide support for his synthesis. I will discuss that work here and comment on how we might incorporate the modern synthesis of Darwinian thought into a modern doctrine of Original Sin given Tennant's work.

Abstract

Frederick R. Tennants 1902 Hulsean Vorträge integrierten Darwinismus in eine christliche Synthese, ohne soteriologische Interessen zu vermindern, indem er zeigte, dass die Erbsünde als ererbte (or angeborene) natürliche Neigungen für Selbstüberleben betrachtet werden sollte, anstatt als geerbte Schuld. Danach schrieb Tennant *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, eine exegetische und historische Analyse der Entwicklung der Lehre der Erbsünde, um seine Synthese zu befürworten. Ich bespreche diese Arbeit hier und erläutere, wie wir angesichts Tennants Arbeit die moderne Synthese des darwinischen Gedankens in eine moderne Lehre der Erbsünde enthalten könnten.

A Dichotomy of Original Sin

Tennant's Hulsean lectures¹ dispensed with Original Sin as inherited guilt using Darwinian thinking². Two years later, he provided the exegetical and historical validation for this hypothesis³. In both of these works, Tennant, like Burns after him, assumed two primary views of Original Sin – the Latin or western doctrine developed by Augustine where we all have inherited guilt (Original Sin/Inherited Guilt, OS/IG) and the Greek or eastern doctrine where we have *propensities* toward sin (once we are aware of law), but that we are untainted with sin at birth (e.g. Original Sin/Propensity for Sin, OS/PS)⁴. Representing the Greek economy are Justin Martyr, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa who saw *all beings* moving toward salvation as a result of Christ's sacrifice; the Church provides the optimal mechanism to be in Christ's presence; the integrity and continuity of natural processes are respected in a developmental salvation with its theology grounded in a good creation⁵. Latin thought is represented by Tertullian, Cyprian,

¹ Tennant, Frederick R. 1906. *The Origin and Propagation of Sin: Being the Hulsean lectures delivered before the University of Cambridge in 1901-2.* (2nd ed.) Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

² For a summary, see Brannan, Daniel K. 2007. Darwinism and Original Sin: Frederick R. Tennant's Integration of Darwinian Worldviews into Christian Thought in the Nineteenth Century. *JIRRS* 1: 187-217. This synthesis emphasized St. Paul's insistence that without knowledge of the law, there is no sin. Despite our natural tendencies, which at one time were useful for maximizing reproductive success (thus fulfilling God's blessing/command to 'be fruitful and multiply'), we are now free to knowingly choose, with the grace of Christ, whether or not we succumb to those propensities – provided we are aware of the Law. Thus, guilt can only accrue when we *knowingly* commit sin. Consequently, Original Sin is limited to inheritance of the *material* of sin but not its guilt.

³ Tennant, Frederick R. 1903/1968. *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, First Schocken ed: New York. Hereafter referred to as *Sources*.

⁴ Burns, J. Patout, SJ. 1976. The Economy of Salvation: Two Patristic Traditions. *Theological Studies* 37:598- 619.

⁵ *ibid.* Gregory of Nyssa's ideas assume the divine image is represented in humans; thus each and every individual will be saved once the generative process is completed in Christ. The generative

and Augustine who rejected Greek universalism – salvation could only be gained through the Church by fulfilling conditions for participating in Christ's redemption. Here, nature and grace are discontinuous and salvation is interventionist rather than a developing process⁶.

process occurs through procreation but requires subjugating the passions to reason; it is the passions (without reason to guide them) that are associated with the fallen state. The Fall was foreseen, but it was part of the process of bringing all things into oneness with God. Passions becoming vices would lead to desiring earthly things to mar the divine image. Salvation involves purification and growth toward union with God. Physical death purifies our soul from our body; so, death is also a step toward salvation. Christ's death and resurrection illustrate this purification step. Full purification requires our cooperation and effort that we perform voluntarily in our quest for Him. After the resurrection, those souls still needing purification will be cleansed by fire. Thus, the soul seeking out God is progressive rather than static, continuous rather than discontinuous (the exception being Christ's intervention). The original order of creation is restored by Christ to purify humanity in a continuous and developmental fashion. The Church serves a normative function in moving us toward purification. So, the Greek tradition grounds the economy of salvation in Divine creative will. Christ restores that original order; the Church's role is to encourage the process.

⁶ *ibid.* Augustine's emphasis is the debilitating consequences of the fall – the entrance of mortality into humanity and a residual ability, if any, for humans to overcome fleshly desires. The perfect image of God in Adam and Eve was destroyed by their disobedience and rejection of divine goodness. Latin theology begins with Christ providing salvation to correct the discontinuity of the Fall and requires the Church's sacraments (e.g. baptism and communion) for salvation of a few (e.g. enough to fill up the places in heaven vacated by the Fall of the angels). These exclusivist claims allow Augustine to develop the doctrine of original guilt leading to eternal condemnation of all who are not joined in faith and baptism. Any good that might be done outside of those thus joined is merely a result of the universal operation of the Holy Spirit (e.g. theory of anonymous Christianity). Those who choose salvation in Christ only do so under the influence of the Holy Spirit in divine mercy . . . never a result of human autonomy. The child of Adam follows fleshly desires adding to his guilt by personal sin. Reason and awareness of law lead him to Christ to free him from guilt and allowing the Spirit to strengthen his will to do good works and merit the charity of eternal life. The Church's constitutive role is to preach the gospel, provide baptism,

Burns focuses mainly on Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine to illustrate these two economies. Gregory asserts that all human and angelic persons will be saved based on his understanding of the Creator's purpose; Augustine denies salvation except for a few. Modern theologians deny Augustine's conclusion but do not assert Gregory's (e.g. Barth and Rahner). Gregory claims that only Christians in this world have that opportunity but that *all* will have it in the eschaton; Augustine limits salvation to those few who remain in communion with the Church in this world⁷.

For the most part, a purely interventionist scheme is independent of human spiritual growth regardless of the environment. It substitutes divine operation for human effort. Consequently, there is little ultimate value in human striving toward the Divine and it severely limits the role of the Church in the process of salvation. In the purely developmental scheme, the religious significance of the individual and the Church's role are enhanced. Divine grace co-operates with human effort in a mutual striving toward salvation.

The Greek scheme, which seems preferred, enhances the Church's normative role in inspiring its adherents and providing assistance in the developmental process. Burns also sees this scheme as supporting the evolutionary development of humanity and increasing the resources for individual progress. Finally, it allows for those without the opportunities for development to continue in what Burns calls an eschatological affirmative-action program – God provides remedial assistance in the eschaton for those who were unable to reach salvation. In evaluating these two traditions, Burns could have benefitted from Tennant's work on the historical development of Original Sin doctrine. Very few authors writing

and communion to those who respond. The focus is on discontinuous and interventionist processes to provide salvation; elements of continuous and developmental processes from human response are dispensable.

⁷ *ibid.* Even though Augustine and Gregory did not have *pure* forms of interventionist or developmental ideas, separating them into these artificial camps allows Burns to evaluate the two salvation schemes and their relationship to theories of Original Sin as guilt or as propensity for sin.

on Original Sin, even those attempting a synthesis with Darwinian views, rely on Tennant's work⁸. Hopefully the present effort and the previous one provide a correction to this omission. Tennant first turns to the Church Fathers and then to St. Paul to adjudicate the matter.

Church Fathers' views regarding the Fall and Original Sin

There is no single, monolithic stance about the nature of Adam, the first sin, its results, or other concerns related to 'original sin' in the early Fathers⁹. Differences of opinion between the Church Fathers existed regarding sin's consequences and nature, its universality, and the historicity of Adam including speculation on a pre-Adamic state. There was agreement that there was a first sin; however, who committed it was debated. Tennant emphasized that second temple Jewish speculations "were not taken over by the earliest ecclesiastical writers, save in so far as these results were indefinitely and incompletely summarized in St. Paul's brief statements about the connexion between man's sinfulness and Adam's sin"¹⁰.

⁸ Patricia Williams. 2001. *Doing Without Adam and Eve: Sociobiology and Original Sin*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis. Patricia Williams is an exception but even her reliance on Tennant is brief.

⁹ Gschwandtner, Christina M. "Threads of Fallenness According to the Fathers of the First Four Centuries," *European Explorations in Christian Holiness*, 2001 Summer:19-40.

¹⁰ *Sources*, p. 273-4. The constructors of Fall doctrine before Augustine, Irenaeus, Origen and Tertullian, each developed their ideas "from reflection on texts, doctrines, speculations or institutions, of which some could not have been . . . sources of such similar conclusions as had previously been reached by Jewish thought." Tennant qualifies this statement by pointing out that "a detail of quite subsidiary importance may have been borrowed here and there from Jewish thought." For example, he claims that Tertullian and Origen may have "derived their ideas of the race having been 'poisoned' by the Serpent, from the Jewish legend of the *inquinamentum*" which is ultimately an Iranian story (*Sources*, p. 158). In the story, the serpent is the instrument of Satan (Samael) who seduces Eve and pollutes her with a poison of menstrual impurity. Some of these stories also include the idea that Cain was begotten of Eve by Satan. Thus, sexual impurity was

In the Greek tradition, Irenaeus maintained that Adam was essentially in an undeveloped child-like state when he was deceived by Satan and, therefore, not responsible for disobedience to God's command; Adam was not capable of reasoning right from wrong¹¹. The deception allowed Adam to become aware; it was part of his development into a moral being¹². Irenaeus also distinguished between image (rationality and freedom of will which gives us the potential for participation in the divine) and likeness of God (an operation of the Spirit that allows us to realize the potential). He suggested that, in addition to mortality, the ability to attain the likeness of God was damaged in the first couple as a result of their disobedience. Even though the ability of attaining the likeness is damaged by disobedience, we retain the image; attaining the likeness is the goal of our existence – the function of salvation's process, becoming like God¹³. Christ supplies the

considered the original temptation in some of the early rabbinical literature.

¹¹ *Sources*, pp. 282-4. Tennant shows that the Greek apologists provided a foundation for Irenaeus' thought which is far more systematic. Tatian apparently influences Irenaeus by his teaching that "the higher spiritual principle in man is not part of his nature, but the indwelling Holy Spirit or a divine effluence, and the loss of this at the Fall was the cause of man's mortality." Irenaeus also uses an idea from Theophilus of Antioch that man's initial state was not perfection but one from which perfection could be acquired during further development. Like Theophilus, "he describes Adam, at the time of his sin, as an 'infant.'" Tennant offers two reasons for the advance in Irenaeus' theology: a) the need for "refuting the dualistic solution of the problem of evil attempted in the Gnostic systems" which could not account "for human sinfulness without ascribing the direct authorship of evil either to God or to a malevolent demiurge;" and b) the epistles of Paul that were now "accepted as Scripture, and therefore as a guide to doctrine..."

¹² *Op cit.*, 8. At Satan's deception, Adam had no free choice and therefore did not sin. The consequences of disobedience in terms of being fooled by Satan's deception (enslavement to sin and death) still had to be paid. But it was Cain, not Adam, who was the first to actually commit sin by murdering his brother.

¹³ *Sources*, pp. 285-6. However, Tennant claims that Irenaeus is inconsistent in what he considers image versus likeness. In one passage, he even identifies "man's rationality and freedom of will with the 'likeness' . . . [as endowments] belonging to man's original and

grace for us to attain becoming like God through obedience rather than shortcutting the process via disobedience as represented by Adam.

There are actually two main lines of Irenaeus' teachings: a) apologetic and moralistic where man was originally created imperfect and incapable of apprehending perfection since that "is the destination, not the original endowment of mankind;"¹⁴ and b) his Doctrine of Recapitulation where Christ "summed up in Himself all that belonged to human nature as it was destined to be and become"¹⁵. Within the first of these

inalienable nature" rather than the operation of the Spirit within us. In some passages we find him claiming that man was initially made after both image and likeness of God which were lost through Adam's disobedience; in others, they were both absent initially but to be attained via development; still in others, the image was given but the likeness was attained separately through the Spirit and only this was lost to Adam as a consequence of his disobedience. The *potential* for recovery of either image or likeness of God in each person is never lost in this understanding of Irenaeus. However, it cannot be done without a development that relies on Christ's grace.

¹⁴ *Sources*, p. 285-6. Tennant quotes, in a footnote, the English translation by Clark from iv.38.1-2 *Ante-Nicene Library* of Irenaeus: "If, however, any one say, 'What then, could not God have exhibited man as perfect from the beginning?' let him know that, inasmuch as God is indeed always the same and unbegotten as respects Himself, all things are possible to Him. But created things must be inferior to Him who created them, from the very fact of their later origin; for it was not possible for things recently created to have been uncreated . . . [and] for this reason do they come short of the perfect. . . . so are they infantile . . . and unexercised in perfect discipline. For as it certainly is in the power of a mother to give strong food to her infant [but does not], as the child is not yet able to receive more substantial nourishment; so also it was possible for God Himself to have made man perfect from the first, but man could not receive this [perfection], being as yet an infant. God had the power at the beginning to grant perfection to man; but as the latter was only recently created, he could not possibly have received it, could he have contained it; or containing it, could he have retained it."

¹⁵ *Sources*, p. 285; 288-90. The Doctrine of Recapitulation, from Ephesians 1:10, "teaches that our Lord summed up in Himself all that belonged to human nature as it was destined to be and become." It is also sometimes interwoven with the implication that Christ "repeated what was at the beginning, and restored humanity to what it originally

teachings, Irenaeus saw the likeness of God (ὁμοίωσις) being realized only by the union of man's soul with the Spirit. Thus, only when humans possess the Spirit do we have fellowship with God. But this process is "subject to growth, and was not possessed by Adam at the first, save only in the germ"¹⁶. The likeness of God is conceived as an endowment to be gradually attained by humans through Christ's grace.

Consistent with this anthropology, Irenaeus' teaches that either the fall of Adam would concern only Adam or "at most that it *retarded the development* of the ὁμοίωσις in subsequent generations"¹⁷. When thinking of sin, rather than death, it seems as if Irenaeus adopts the former view, according to Tennant. Consequently, Irenaeus "does not regard the race as having been in any degree deprived of communion with God except through each individual's own choice of evil"¹⁸. Consequently, the Fall for Irenaeus is a blessing in disguise. It makes us grateful for Christ's free gift enabling our striving toward the likeness of God even as we cope with our own

was." But if Christ *restored* us to what we were originally, then we must have been perfect at first. This is an issue only if the Doctrine of Recapitulation *requires* making the second implication; it does not. Does Irenaeus teach such a doctrine? Irenaeus apparently accepts the Pauline doctrine of the solidarity of the race in Adam. However, he implies that this solidarity is in the process by which we share mortality: *death* seems to be inherited; Adam's sin is not. Tennant argues that Irenaeus rejected the idea that Adam's act was "the productive cause of an ingrained and inherited bias to sinfulness. . . . The mode of production of sin amongst mankind is left an open question . . . sin is always traced to the will." Baptismal regeneration is needed by Irenaeus, "but not in connexion with any inborn taint of sin" generated from the Fall. It does not seem that Irenaeus "conceive(s) of the race as existing seminally in Adam, nor as one with Adam in the sense of philosophical realism." Rather, the union is mystical as it "figuratively and pregnantly expresses a fact in its ideality but does not concern itself with describing the means by which the fact is made an actuality." Instead, Adam's disobedience for Irenaeus seems to be "the collective deed of the race." The mode of transmission is undefined and mysterious. *In light of Darwin, this transmission becomes less mysterious.*

¹⁶ *Sources*, p. 286.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

mortality in hopes of eternally being one with the Spirit¹⁹.

Tennant shows that Irenaeus provided the first connection between the sinful race and its first parent by his doctrine of Recapitulation; he used the Romans 5:12 ff passage to confirm his view but did not use it as a starting point. Shortly thereafter, we have “two definite theories [to explain] the hereditary taint and the mode of its propagation, and also [an account] for the virtual participation of the race in Adam’s sin”²⁰. Tertullian in the West provides his traducianism from Stoic philosophy without which he would never have derived a solid conception. Origen in the East does not begin with Paul’s epistles or from Irenaeus. He used the tradition of infant baptism in the church at the time and Old Testament passages relating to the impurity attributed by the Law to human birth; these items suggested to him the idea of hereditary taint of sin. In “casting about for an explanation of this, he would seem to have come upon the truth of racial solidarity as expressed by St. Paul, and to have proceeded to formulate that solidarity in terms of the notion of mankind’s potential (seminal) existence in their first father, just as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews regarded Levi as existing, and paying tithes, in Abraham”²¹.

Tertullian points out that even Christ received his fleshly corpus from Adam giving us the right to claim that the same

¹⁹ *Sources*, p. 287, 291. Irenaeus insists on each person’s unimpaired freedom to respond to Christ in the process of recovering the image and likeness of Christ; our original destination is not nullified by Adam’s disobedience. But to say that Irenaeus taught that the Fall had a teleological significance is doubtful, according to Tennant. Irenaeus saw Adam’s disobedience as an opportunity for God to accomplish His desires for us . . . *not* as an expected contingency. Sin is universal. We are all in a state of sin but “there is no reference even to solidarity, much less to the precise mode of it specified in the theory of transmitted depravity of nature.” Irenaeus “does not emphasise the subjective aspect of sin as an inherent disease . . . is silent about ‘evil concupiscence’ . . . is not impelled to seek in the Fall an explanation of human infirmity.” Therefore, he “stops short altogether of a doctrine of inherited corruption.”

²⁰ *Sources*, p.344.

²¹ *Ibid.*

flesh in which man is sinful has been abolished – because in Christ the same flesh was kept without sin, even though in man it was not²². With Christ making the human qualities of corporeality his own, the flesh in and of itself is not guilty of sin but still has natural propensities toward sin, once aware of the Law²³. Baptism allows us to be born into the sinless body of Christ to enter a holy life²⁴.

²² *Sources*, pp. 329-31. Tertullian believed that *somehow* the soul is rooted in Adam and propagated in human progeny. Tertullian uses language “embodying the bluntest physical realism,” to further develop Irenaeus who thought of Adam as “in some mystic sense representing and including all his children.” Tennant demonstrates that Tertullian taught the “corporeality of all existences . . . he held that the soul, and even God Himself [as the incarnate Christ], are corporeal.” Tertullian borrows from Stoic ontology to claim that the soul bears an attenuated materiality. Tertullian even quotes Cleanthes’ claim that familial likenesses in body and in soul pass on from parent to child; he cites Zeno’s definition of the soul as a spirit generated with the body. He believed that the “soul is produced, like the body, by the union of the parents. It does not enter the body after birth, but is conceived, formed, perfected and born *simultaneously* with it.”

²³ *Sources*, p. 332. Tertullian used corporeality of the soul to “support and explain the doctrine of the race’s unity with, and inclusion in, its first parent.” Irenaeus claimed Adam summed up the whole human race in a mystical sense; Tertullian attempted the first realistic meaning of this doctrine using philosophy of the day resulting in the Church’s first “definite theory of inherited corruption of nature.” Tennant quotes from Tertullian using Neander’s *Church History* ed. Bohn, vol. II. pp.346-7: *tradux animae tradux peccati* “Our first parent contained within himself the undeveloped germ of all mankind, and his soul was the fountain-head of all souls; all varieties of individual human nature are but different modifications of that one spiritual substance. Therefore the whole of nature became corrupt in the original father of the race, and sinfulness is propagated together with souls.” Still, Tertullian did not claim that this corruption was guilt or was so complete that no goodness at all is possible within the soul . . . nor are we constrained by that corruption to be unable to resist it (e.g. “freedom of the will”) through the grace of Christ.

²⁴ See *Sources*, p.333. Tennant quotes from Clark’s translation of Tertullian’s *De Anima*, “Every soul, then, by reason of its birth, has its nature in Adam until it is born again in Christ; moreover it is unclean all the while that it remains without this regeneration; and because unclean, it is actively sinful, and suffuses even the flesh . . . with its own shame.” Preceding this statement is a reference to baptism quoting John 3:5 and implying that the propensity of human nature is to be “actively

Instead of condemnation, Tertullian offers hope²⁵. Tertullian does not develop an idea of original guilt²⁶. In fact, Tertullian resists infant baptism since he does not consider their “uncleanness as sinfulness to which guilt attaches”²⁷. Tennant places this perspective in the light of other Fathers like Clement and Gregory of Nazianzus who rejected Original Sin by implying that baptism only removes actual sin; its purpose was not to remove “pollution attaching to human nature . . . or in consequence of descent from sinful Adam”²⁸.

sinful because of possessing Adam’s nature.” Tertullian traces the cause to Satan as a corrupting force who “beguiled [man] into breaking the commandment of God, and on that account being given over to death, thenceforth made the whole race, infected with his seed, transmitters also of his condemnation.” Tertullian also addresses the corruption of nature: “There is, then, besides the evil which supervenes on the soul from the intervention of the evil spirit, an antecedent, and in a certain sense natural, evil which arises from its corrupt origin.” This position is not, however, a claim for original *guilt* from Adam; rather it is the *propensity* to follow fleshly desires.

²⁵ *Sources*, p. 334. From *De Anima* “Still there is a portion of good in the soul . . . which is its proper nature. For that which is derived from God is rather obscured than extinguished.”

²⁶ *Sources* p.334. Tennant states, “though Adam’s punishments are represented as shared by his descendants and their souls were potentially in his when he sinned, Tertullian does not explicitly draw out the consequence . . . that the race shares the responsibility and guilt of its first father’s sin.”

²⁷ *Sources* p. 334. Tennant reminds us of Tertullian’s discouragement of the practice in *De Baptismo* 18 (from Clark’s English translation): “And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children.”

²⁸ *Sources* p.335. Instead, the rigorous “application of the consequences of the doctrine of Original Sin to the case of infants was only made late in the development of this doctrine [by] the work of S. Augustine.” Tennant concludes that Tertullian, more than any other Father, “prepared the way for S. Augustine . . . the first to formulate the idea of inherited sin or corruption of nature, and [the first] to explain the process by which such corruption is handed on from generation to generation.” Even though this last claim was not adopted by S. Augustine, it provided a form for the development of the doctrine of hereditary sin.

Likewise, Cyprian argues that everyone is responsible for his own sins and cannot become guilty for another's²⁹. Yet one reference in Cyprian (a letter to Fidus), is cherry-picked to assert *something* like Augustinian OS/IG; it is universally quoted in support of the doctrine³⁰. After Augustine, this passage was used frequently as support for OS/IG. But it is an isolated reference in Cyprian's own writings, most of which advocate free will and assert the innocence of children without the guilt of sin³¹. Consequently, considering the selective and questionable nature of this one instance, Cyprian seems in opposition to Augustinian OS/IG.

With Origen, free will develops to give us the capacity of sinning only when we have the ability to distinguish between good and evil. He goes so far as to say even the demons are capable of re-learning praiseworthy behavior and that the Fall occurred prior to creation with all creatures choosing to be angels or demons; humans are suspended halfway to decide which side to go toward and virtue and vice are entirely a matter of choice. Origen treats the Genesis stories as allegory and representative of the human experience with *Adam* standing for what is common to all³².

²⁹ *Sources*, p. 336. Tennant claims that Cyprian spoke only of "first man's endowment with the Holy Spirit, and the loss of the divine image through sin."

³⁰ Letter 64, §2.1 *Ancient Christian Writers* vol 3, "Letters of St Cyprian". Available at http://books.google.com/books?id=7lZZBPSo9t4C&pg=PA109&dq=%22letter+to+Fidus%22+Cyprian&hl=en&ei=bjN3TIn9CMOB8gbXzsmRBw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22letter%20to%20Fidus%22%20Cyprian&f=false Accessed 14 December, 2010.

³¹ *Sources*, p. 337. Tennant notes that Cyprian never requires infants to be baptized but sees no reason for them to be debarred from it. Cyprian shows that there is no reason why infants should *not* be baptized; not because they are guilty, but because they do not deserve the sin they have had remitted to them via descent.

³² *Sources*, p. 297. Tennant demonstrates that Origen, in his *De Principiis* taught that souls were "fallen celestial spirits . . . estranged from God . . . [and] banished to earth and appointed to a corporeal life for their purification and restoration . . . each human being bring[ing] with him, when born into this world, a sinfulness resulting from abuse of free-will in a previous existence." Consequently, such ideas, which

Some claim that Origen held two contradictory opinions about sin due to an Alexandrian and Caesarean period and that his encounter with infant baptism in Caesarea led to his affirmation of a pre-Augustinian version of Original Sin. This claim was first made by Charles Bigg in his 1886 Bampton Lectures, *Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, and referenced by Tennant³³. Tennant, contrary to Bigg, believed that Origen derived his doctrine of 'hereditary taint' primarily from Job 14:4-5 and Psalms 51:5 "taken in connexion with the [Levitical] Law of Purification on the one hand, and the 'apostolic' custom of infant baptism on the other." But he did not necessarily derive it from *universal* ecclesiastical tradition or from his exegesis of Paul³⁴.

Tennant sees Methodius as being "indefinite in his conception of inherent sinfulness and its cause." Tennant represents Methodius as teaching that disobedience allowed sin to "establish its seat in him [and], deprived of the divine breath, we have since that time been at the mercy of the passions which the serpent put in us". This rather vague "doctrine of inherited taint derived from fallen Adam . . . describes an ethical state without specifying anything as to the derivation or mode of diffusion of the state". Thus, Tennant does not believe there is a link that Methodius would supply between Origen and Augustine with respect to theories of

kept creeping into Christian theology, were imported not from prior Church fathers or ecclesiastical teaching or upon proper exegesis of Paul's epistle to the Romans; the source was rather from Platonism current in the schools of Alexandria. In this same work, *De Principiis*, Origen declared the Fall-story to be allegorical and its meaning mystical.

³³ *Sources*, p. 299. Even though the theory of a Caesarian encounter with infant baptism leading to the first glimmers of OS/IG seems widely accepted, it is questionable since Origen claimed that infant baptism was a *universal* practice of the Church. If he encountered it first in Caesarea after teaching in Alexandria, why would he call it *universal*? The argument that seeks to make infant baptism a starting point for Origen to develop a pre-Augustinian notion of Original Sin (OS/IG) is strained at best.

³⁴ *Sources*, p. 300.

Original Sin³⁵.

For Athanasius, humans were destined for superadded divine gifts by grace; but as natural beings, we are unable to maintain the relation to God to achieve them. Only by virtue of being in the divine image (εἰκὼν), do we have that ability. Tennant understands that the Fall, as conceived by Athanasius, is a lapse of mankind to the 'natural state' and a loss of the supernatural endowments³⁶. As a result of this first transgression, humankind has always given in to the 'natural state' rather than achieve the superadded gift of grace. It was to this 'natural state' that Adam fell, and to which all subsequent generations are born. Still, Tennant does not see Athanasius as claiming a universal Fall can be blamed on the

³⁵ *Sources* p. 310. We really cannot be too critical of the language of the early Father as lacking the imprecise language of science where today we can claim that our genes, selected in the environment of evolutionary adaptiveness cause us to have basic (even reptilian or "serpent-like") desires ("sins") for survival and proliferation.

³⁶ *Sources* p. 311. Modern anthropology would not claim that humans ever had such super-natural abilities except in a natural form of consciousness which enables individuals to envision ideals of behavior. It is this capacity to idealize unselfish behavior that would be the spark of the divine image. Such ideals require that we set aside self-survival mechanisms to achieve the completely self-less image of God. The catch is that refusing to engage in selfishness, assuming that complete selfless behavior is genetically-linked, removes such genes from the population. The one engaging in complete self-sacrifice would not proliferate (reproduction is a biologically selfish action). Perhaps one might claim that procreation helps spread such genes and is therefore an unselfish motivation; but, by biological definition, proliferation involves no individual genetic self-sacrifice. Other options are that such behavior is a pleiotropic effect where the genes for selflessness are tied to behaviors of engaging more often in sexual activity as a form of expressing love and devotion to others and thus proliferation of the gene would still occur. Alternatively, one might claim such genes are tied to evolution where, in an earlier stage, the genes that develop selfless behavior today were initially linked to increased sexual behavior in the past. These rationales, however, tie behavioral outcomes with motivation for those outcomes and make significant reductionist assumptions by claiming that genes directly cause behavior; rather, they simply code for proteins which may or may not be expressed in a complex set of environmental and developmental processes to result in complex human behavior.

one sin of Adam to the point that we are pre-destined to always be sinners independent of our own sins: “the fallen state of the race as a whole [was] brought about gradually”³⁷.

Adam’s transgression, therefore, does not seem to be a dividing moment in history for Athanasius. He even indicates that some individuals have existed who were free from sin. But he is no Pelagian. It is difficult, with his imprecise language, to determine exactly *how* he thought sin was propagated, or how the race was related to Adam and his sin. But Tennant feels he did teach that, in some sense, “Adam’s sin passed over to us . . . that Christ’s sacrifice was offered [to] . . . make all men upright and free from the old transgression . . . that Adam’s sin was made to spread over all by the devil”³⁸. Tennant concludes that the mode of spread suggested by Athanasius was by ordinary inheritance by means of physical descent. Thus, Tennant concludes that “Athanasius held some of the more important ideas essential to the doctrine of Original Sin derived from Adam, but in relatively un-developed form . . . [which] differs from that later formulated by Augustine”³⁹.

The Cappadocians focus primarily on the Fall’s negative effect on the image of God in humanity. Some of the Cappadocian Fathers pick up on Methodius’ thinking – Gregory of Nyssa, for example, saw human procreation, passion, and even women as consequences of the Fall. Tennant considers Gregory of Nyssa the best representative of Cappadocian theology. He clearly borrows from Origen when he refers to the coats of skins provided by God after Adam and Eve’s transgression as “denoting mortality, or the bodily

³⁷ *Sources* p. 312. Tennant quotes Robertson’s translation of Athanasius from *Library of Nicene and p. Nicene Fathers*: “For God . . . gave us freely, by the grace of the Word, a life in correspondence with God. But men, having rejected things eternal, and, by the counsel of the devil, turned to the things of corruption, became the cause of their own corruption in death, being . . . by nature corruptible, but destined, by the grace following from partaking of the Word, to have escaped their natural state, had they remained good.” Once this process begins, we proceed to the point of inventing new evils to become insatiable in the perversions we imagine.

³⁸ *Sources* p. 313.

³⁹ *Sources* p. 314.

consequences of the Fall"⁴⁰.

Gregory of Nyssa, according to Tennant, also represents humans as originally immortal, even angelic in nature; the Fall bestowed upon us all a character of irrationality that we share with all other creatures. Gregory of Nyssa held that human procreation was a result of the Fall in order to uphold the dignity of virginity; he even claimed that, had there been no Fall, we would have been fruitful and multiplied "after the manner of angels" although no explanation that would be acceptable to us today is offered⁴¹. Gregory, however, rejects Origen's idea of a pre-existent state or "the entrance of human souls into this world in consequence of their defection from good in another world"⁴². Instead, Gregory sees "the paradisaic state of our first parents as in some sense heavenly . . . though he stop[s] short of Origen's belief that the human race enjoyed this heaven-like life in another and higher world than this"⁴³.

Tennant is relatively certain that Gregory of Nyssa "taught that the Fall introduced death into the world for all, and that, in consequence of that catastrophe, the nature of man's body was changed and concupiscence arose"⁴⁴. When we consider further the manner that Gregory of Nyssa perceived man's solidarity with Adam, we find his thought heavily molded by Origen and Hellenic speculation: he often uses 'Adam' as equivalent to 'the race' or at least human nature common to the race. This conception, Tennant believes, "supplies a link between Origen's conception of mankind's physical existence

⁴⁰ *Sources* p. 320. We cannot blame this interpretation of the coats of skins entirely on Origen. It is found in Clement of Alexandria and used as well by the Gnostics, Tennant informs us. Indeed, its source seems to be rabbinical but Origen used it as part of his Platonic doctrines of pre-existence and the Fall of the souls.

⁴¹ *Sources* p. 320.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ *Sources* p. 321. In light of today's evolutionary anthropology, we could characterize this state as one of blissful ignorance of our own mortality before consciousness develops (in some hominid ancestor), and therefore, as well, an unawareness of the consequences of our natural desires for survival and proliferation as being "sinful."

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

in Adam and the Augustinian realism”⁴⁵. Thus, Gregory of Nyssa has the clearest conception of Original Sin in the subjective sense: the “hereditary moral taint traceable to the Fall and its cause”⁴⁶. Gregory thus speaks of our *nature* as having fallen into sin, not just us as individuals but as a collective species. When this Father speaks of ‘inborn sin’ or sin ‘belonging to our nature as it now is,’ Tennant believes he “presuppose[s] the doctrine of the Fall” and that “inborn sin is removed by baptism”⁴⁷.

Consequently, Gregory’s doctrine of the original state is that concupiscence is “necessarily a consequence of the Fall . . . Our whole nature has also been weakened, and our understanding darkened”⁴⁸. This Father thus represents, according to Tennant, the closest that the Eastern Church came to an Augustinian theory of Original Sin: an inclusion in Adam of the human race, and a ‘corrupted’ nature as derived from physical descent from Adam. Thus, what Origen taught tentatively about a hereditary corruption, Gregory of Nyssa taught clearly and firmly, according to Tennant. He may not

⁴⁵ *Sources* p. 322. Gregory of Nyssa is so clear in this presentation that Tennant represents Gregory of Nyssa as teaching that “God did not first create a single man, but the whole race which collectively composed only one nature. They were really *one* man divided into a multiplicity. Adam – that means all. In God’s prescience the whole of humanity was comprised in the first preparation.”

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Sources* p. 323. In today’s understanding of anthropology, man would have always had concupiscence as a result of the blessing/command to be fruitful and multiply but the ‘Fall’ would have been an event where consciousness makes us aware of our natural desires and develops a sense of our selfish desires for survival and proliferation; further, the ability to recognize ideals of behavior that are unattainable, but desirable in an ethical sense, would lead us to recognize how difficult, if not impossible, it is to attain such ideals. This recognition is what leads us into an awareness of what we call the evil nature of man. Another interpretation of this becoming aware of concupiscence might include the refractory period experienced after sex which could be interpreted negatively that sex is sinful; additionally, the exchange of bodily fluids would be interpreted negatively especially if it is associated with disease.

have clearly articulated the consequences of such thinking in terms of what later became orthodox doctrine of Augustine, but it was a beginning.

In these Church Fathers, the mystery of our inclusion into Adam was unfathomable. Today, the mystery of how 'selfish genes' are propagated is resolved by modern Darwinian thought and genetics – Darwin's 'gift' to theology. Along with 'selfish genes' we also inherit the genetics for cooperative and communal behavior. Thus we not only inherit a nature that has the propensity for sin (but not a 'sinful nature'), we also inherit a nature which has the ability to follow the example of Christ. The only 'taint' from Adam (e.g. ancestral hominids) is both our ability to behave selfishly *and* our ability to behave cooperatively . . . even altruistically. Being sinful *or* good can only accrue via our actions, *not* our nature⁴⁹.

Augustine . . . Does Saint Paul Really Teach OS/IG?

Despite its ecclesiastical roots, some theologians consider the Fall and its associated concept of inherited sin and guilt unscriptural⁵⁰. OS/IG is not found in Judaism or the Eastern church⁵¹. Augustine's doctrinal proposal was a creative

⁴⁹ Brannan, D. K. and C. Gillet. 2005. Evolutionary Explanation and the Ideal of Altruism: the Incommensurability of the Christian Love Command. *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 1:11-25.

⁵⁰ See Barr, J. 1993. *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis; and Westermann, C. 1984. *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*. Trans. John J. Scullion. SPCK: London, p. 276-78. Cited in Williams, P. 2001. *Doing Without Adam and Eve: Sociobiology and Original Sin*. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, p. 38.

⁵¹ Shults, LeRon. 2003. *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality*. Wm. B. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, p. 192. Shults notes primary sources as: Sheridan, S. 1994. "Judaism" in *Human Nature and Destiny* (ed. J. Holm) Pinter: London. p. 125-6; Tambasco, A.J. 1991. *A Theology of Atonement and Paul's Vision of Christianity*. Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN. p. 39ff. From these, Shults observes that the Genesis record does not emphasize a relation of causality between the acts of the first couple and their descendents. Only later in the Jewish tradition, do we get a vague connection in one reference (4 Ezra 7:48/118; aka 2 Esdras in Apocrypha) and a clear vindication against inherited guilt in another (2 Baruch 54:15-19 in

theoretical model to synthesize his own experiences of human failure with what he perceived the biblical text to say. In synthesizing his proposal, Augustine articulated OS/IG from previous theologians' ideas and his own intuitions while in the midst of exegetical and philosophical debates with those whom he perceived as endangering church unity. Most first century theologians, as do the writers of the New Testament itself, emphasized the redemption to be found in Jesus Christ; *why* we were sinful was of less interest to them⁵².

One might claim that St. Paul had the beginnings of a doctrine of OS/IG (in Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 5:21-22; 45-49; I Tim. 2:13-15) but this needs to be understood in the context of the audience who would have come from a pagan background and who would be searching for a first cause⁵³. Even here, the focus is not specific enough to develop the full doctrine of OS/IG. The emphasis is instead on salvation in Christ, not an Adamic "first cause" or the origin and propagation of sin. Tennant does not even see the Genesis narratives as directly teaching that Adam became mortal due to his transgression; it certainly does not imply that a first sin made all men sinners. From this perspective, and the demonstration that physical and spiritual death being attributed to Adam's sin occurred only in second temple Jewish literature (e.g. apocryphal, Rabbinical, Pseudepigraphical) but not directly in the Old

Apocrypha). Death was considered to have entered but not inherited guilt for the sins of an ancestor.

⁵² Shults 2003, p. 192-193. The primary source for this claim is Henri Rondet, S.J. 1972. *Original Sin: The Patristic and Theological Background*. (Trans. Cajetan Finegan, OP) Alba House: New York, p.27. Shults also points out that the Gospels all focus on the salvation through Jesus Christ without mention of sin's origin. Atonement is described without reference to OS/IG in the *Letter of Barnabas*. Ignatius of Antioch has no language of a Fall in his theology of salvation. The only places where the Apologists of the first century speculate on origins is in dialogue with pagan philosophers; but they speculate more on Satan as the cause than first parents. Justin Martyr, for example, alludes to Adam to Eve in *Dialogue with Trypho*.

⁵³ *Sources*, p. 250. St. Paul's writings here are also more reflective of the rabbinical speculation of Jewish schools at the time than they are of Old Testament theology.

Testament canon, Tennant concludes that it is from this Jewish literature, not Scripture, that Paul derives the loose connection between Adam and all of humanity regarding sin and death (e.g. in Romans 5:12-21)⁵⁴.

This single passage is the most important of the few that bear directly on the Fall of Adam and its consequences for all of humanity. The key point of the passage, however, is to contrast the redemptive work of Christ with the relation of Adam's sin to the race, rather than developing a castigation of Adam. We see this purpose more clearly when we realize that the nature of the first Adam is contrasted with that of the last Adam (Christ) in I Corinthians 15:45 ff. Its context is unconcerned with the problem of sin's origin. Rather, it demonstrates the immanence of sin in 'the flesh' as does Rom 7:7-25 and in Romans 8 and Galatians 5. These passages together are more concerned with the psychological issues associated with the origin of sin rather than the historical issues.

The phrase 'by nature children of wrath' in Ephesians 2:3 is also considered by Tennant. At most, these scriptures all emphasize the universality of sin but do not provide a doctrine of the absoluteness of such universality or its origin. The nature of man, his inherent sinfulness, the historical entrance of sin – all these are incidental to the claim that Christ provides the redemption from sin, whatever its cause or origin. They are used primarily to demonstrate that claim; Paul is *not* attempting to supply a thorough or systematic theological anthropology. No dogma is put forward regarding the exact nature or cause of human sinfulness. Instead, where sin and the Fall are referred to, it is *only* to demonstrate the greater doctrine of justification that is in Christ. Any doctrine of human nature, sin, or the Fall is incompletely developed by Paul, as Tennant sees it⁵⁵.

It is not until the second century that the theologian Irenaeus of Lyons makes a comparison of the first Adam and Eve who fail to obey God and the 'second' Adam and Eve (Christ and Mary, the mother of God) who succeed. Still,

⁵⁴ *Sources*, p. 251.

⁵⁵ *Sources*, p. 252.

Irenaeus does not add that the world was created 'perfect' (implying a deathless world) as does Augustine. He sees the first humans as unfinished but on their way toward becoming perfect.⁵⁶ Perhaps Augustine's idea for an 'inherited' sin comes from meager references in Tertullian and Origen⁵⁷. Ambrose, as well, referred to all of humanity being 'in Adam' and a type of hereditary sin being washed away at baptism; but he did not develop a theory of how guilt was inherited⁵⁸. This type of thinking, if coupled to modern genetics, might develop into OS/PS by postulating 'selfish genes' but it does not get us to Augustine's OS/IG⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ Shults 2003, p. 193. Cites Farrow, D. 1995. St. Irenaeus of Lyons: The Church and the World. *Pro Ecclesia* 4:333-355.

⁵⁷ Shults 2003, p. 194 with primary sources from Tertullian's *Treatise on the Soul*, Chap. 40 Ante-Nicene Fathers 3:220; Origen's *Homilies on Leviticus* 12:3 and *Homilies on Luke* 14:5-6. A type of traducianism (more akin to generationism), where the soul inherits 'unclean substances' from its parents is found in Tertullian; Origen sees the transmission of sin occurring via 'impure blood.' Augustine's view of Original Sin prefers generationism which has been rejected by most theologians. For more on traducianism, and its sub-variety generationism, for the origin of the soul, see <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15014a.htm>.

⁵⁸ Shults 2003, p. 194. See *On the Mysteries*, Chap 6 of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers part 2, 10:321.

From *Sources* p. 338: With Ambrose, we have a step toward the Augustinian doctrines by claiming that Adam was exalted in his original state. Of course this exaltation is a borrowing from Jewish haggada p.339 where the claim of living in Paradise came with celestial privileges. Even the Cappadocian Fathers were led to their conception, probably by Origen's allegorical interpretation of the Fall-story, where he supported his speculations of a previous celestial life of human souls. Such a tendency to regard the unfallen Adam as an almost heavenly being is obvious in the writings of those Fathers and from Ambrose. Ambrose made the claim that the Fall involved the *loss* of the divine image; Ambrose borrows heavily from Philo and sees the Fall as a seduction of reason by means of sensuousness.

⁵⁹ Richard Dawkins. 1979. *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford University Press: Oxford. Dawkins attributes a degree of evil to genes by calling them 'selfish,' an odd value-laden term for a chunk of nucleic acid. Such 'selfish' gene behaviors cannot be seen as 'sinful' since, if not performed, would lead to extinction.

At most, Adam's sin confers upon his progeny natural concupiscence which Ambrose divorces from actual sin⁶⁰. In doing so, he is in agreement with Origen, Tertullian, and other early Fathers . . . but not Augustine. However, with respect to solidarity of the race with Adam, we seem to find agreement toward Augustine: Ambrose teaches that "we all were Adam, and in Adam, and sinned in Adam." This could *imply* we share in Adam's guilt but it is not proof that we do. According to Tennant, Ambrose has the idea that "Adam's sin is ours because it was not merely the sin of himself as an individual man, but because of our shared human nature, and therefore the first transgression of the first man was the sin of human nature in general"⁶¹. This concept dominates Christian thought throughout the middle ages.

In the end, we have to realize that Augustine may have borrowed ideas from other Church Fathers but he developed his theory of OS/IG independently in reaction to three issues: the Pelagian and Manichean controversies and a desire to defend the practice of infant baptism in the Christian church which had become *de rigueur*, at least to Augustine's experience base. This latter issue, since baptism was only for the remission of sins in Augustine's mind, required that infants must be guilty of sin despite not having committed actual sin. In Augustine's formulation, the 'substance' of the infant's soul inherited a blemish and a penalty from Adam as a result of his rebellion which created a weakened human nature: concupiscence or inordinate desire. This faulty nature (inordinate desire) was passed on from the parents *along with* the guilt of the penalty for rebellion (eternal damnation). Baptism removed the penalty but not the faulty nature. Infants dying without baptism were eternally punished⁶².

⁶⁰ We could relate this concept to evolutionary tendencies in a population of hominids which allow for personal survival. However, these tendencies are not necessarily sin until sanctioned by law in a populational context.

⁶¹ Sources p. 342.

⁶² Shults 2003, 195. Cites Augustine's *On the Merits and Remission of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants* 2.4; Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Part 1, 5:45.

Tennant analyses how Pelagius and Augustine argued at cross purposes. According to Tennant, Pelagius used ethical terms in the objective sense while Augustine used them in the subjective sense. Pelagius held that responsibility does not attach to disposition since disposition is not under the control of the will. Augustine asserted that good and evil are attached to disposition and that a good disposition precedes a good volition. "Whenever 'sin' is correlated with 'guilt' (as per Augustine) it is used solely in the subjective sense," Tennant notes⁶³. Tennant then brings in St. Paul to illustrate the objective conception of sin: "For where no law is there is no transgression," "but sin is not imputed when there is no law"; "For without the law sin was dead"⁶⁴.

Even Augustine realized the unfair nature of his proposal but he was also fighting against Pelagianism and Manicheanism. To resolve both problems simultaneously, he had to keep his formulation regarding baptism. The Pelagians, possibly not truly representing Pelagius, developed an anthropology basically claiming humans were born *tabula rasa* and potentially inherently good. On the other side of the debate, the Manichaeans claimed the evil side of man was the result of an evil god on Earth. Faced with both problems at the same time, what was Augustine to do⁶⁵? Christ's grace seemed to be denied by the Pelagians. It even seemed to some that they taught we might achieve 'salvation' without Christ's sacrifice – if they were only good enough⁶⁶. For Augustine, this

⁶³ Frederick R. Tennant. 1906. *The Origin and Propagation of Sin: Being the Hulsean lectures delivered before the University of Cambridge in 1901-2.* (2nd ed.) Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. p. 165.

⁶⁴ *ibid.* quoting from KJV Romans 4:15; 5:13b; 7:8b; In Young's literal translation: "15for the law doth work wrath; for where law is not, neither [is] transgression. 13bsin is not reckoned when there is not law; 8bfor apart from law sin is dead." Taken together, Canon demonstrates that only until there is a law sanctioning the behavior is that behavior imputed as sin. Behaviors in and of themselves cannot be subjectively considered sinful without the objectification of law.

⁶⁵ Shults 2003, 195.

⁶⁶ Shults 2003, 195-7. Pelagius' apparent claim that several biblical characters (Enoch and Elijah, for example) avoided sin was used to support the idea that the human will has neither virtue or vice; sin is

provided too much room for pride in ones' own accomplishments; besides, sin had already corrupted the very 'substance' of newborn souls *including* their intellect and will. Therefore, avoiding sin was impossible for any human, whether infant or adult. However, one now had to deal with the proclamation of all things as 'good' requiring, according to Augustine, Adam and Eve to be originally holy and immortal. Thus, Augustine used 'inherited guilt' to fight the Pelagians and 'original righteousness' to fight the Manicheans.

In summary, Tennant offers that Judaism, in the earliest Christian centuries, possessed definite theories of Original Sin but these were not taken over by the Fathers of the Church. Instead, the "doctrine of the Fall, as a whole, was deduced afresh." Saint Paul was the link between Jewish and Christian teaching on this point, according to Tennant; for example, Paul's doctrine of Adam was derived from Jewish schools and served to mold the subsequent thought of the Fathers. Still, however, "the ecclesiastical doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin were not *deduced* from S. Paul's brief statements on these subjects"⁶⁷. Tennant's most important conclusion is that the origins of OS/IG as per Augustine "was less the outcome of strict exegesis than due to the exercise of speculation: speculation working, indeed, on the lines laid down in Scripture, but applied to such material as current science and philosophy were able to afford"⁶⁸.

voluntary and only emerges as an act of the will. Thus, a divinely created human will, with each newborn child, has an opportunity to express itself, choosing good over evil. In the case of Augustine's fight against the Manichaeans regarding the origin of evil, he had to defend the goodness of God's creation. The Gnostic philosophy of Mani, radical metaphysical dualism, claimed that matter was evil (darkness) and spirit good (light). Adam and Eve were created by demons who imprisoned a bit of divine light inside their bodies. Salvation could be obtained by releasing the light. To proclaim that 'all things' were 'good,' Augustine had to present Adam and Eve as being created perfect and Earth in a state of Paradise. This idea fails a coherence test. If Adam and Eve were 'perfect,' why did they sin? Does not this make God the author of sin since he created them in such a manner to sin? Knowing that their free will would be abused, why did God create them in such a manner?

⁶⁷ *Sources*, p.343.

⁶⁸ *Sources*, p.345.

Modern Reactions to Augustine's OS/IG

Western Christianity generally held onto this Augustinian interpretation of OS/IG and Anselm's use of it to provide a theory of atonement⁶⁹. Anselm believed in sin's transmission from Adam throughout humanity and required a sufficient sacrifice of Christ to atone for such a great sin⁷⁰. This idea continued through the canons of Orange, Aquinas, Council of Trent, and to post-Vatican II. The teaching is still 'official' though more and more Catholic theologians are rejecting the hereditary guilt portion⁷¹. Protestant tradition is similarly rejecting traditional formulations, although one would never have predicted mollification based on the total depravity doctrine of Calvin and Luther⁷². The rejection of Augustinian

⁶⁹ There are at least three atonement theories. The *ransom theory* is the oldest claiming Christ saves us from sin by paying a ransom for our sin. In *moral influence theory*, Christ saves us from sin, by awakening our gratitude via the example of sacrifice on the cross. The ransom theory, focuses on victory over evil; moral influence rests on our love for God increasing from gratitude. The dominant theory is the *satisfaction theory of atonement* found in Anselm (and Calvin).

⁷⁰ *Sources*, p.345. Anselm asks why we need to be saved. He answers, that being born in sin turns us from love of God to love of self. With such a devotional loss, we dishonor God and destroy the order of creation. We must not only pay back an honor to restore order, we must pay a penalty too. The just punishment is death, and the just satisfaction is a sinless death. The only one who could pay this satisfaction is God incarnate. Humans cannot. Only one who is of God (sinless) and who is completely human as well can meet the need. The God-man Jesus Christ (defined at the Council of Chalcedon), can pay. Christ pays a noncompulsory death on the cross to satisfy God for our sin. There is incoherence here as well. Why does God *need* to be satisfied? And without an Adam and Eve as historical figures, but as metaphors for humanity, what modifications are needed?

⁷¹ von Balthasar, H.U. 1967. *A Theological Anthropology*. Sheed and Ward: New York. Edwards, D. 1999. *The God of Evolution: A Trinitarian Theology*. Paulist: New York. Korsmeyer, J.D. 1998. *Evolution and Eden: Balancing Original Sin and Contemporary Science*. Paulist Press: New York.

⁷² Shults 2003, 198-201. For a thorough treatment of Federal theology, Shults refers to Jonathan Edwards, the "Agnostic School," and the "Realistic School" . . . and their issues with Original Sin.

OS/IG today is based on an exegesis of Genesis that was impossible for Augustine given the texts available to him at the time⁷³. These discussions claim that a 'fall' from a state of original perfection by a primordial couple is not even present in Genesis. Westermann, for example, argues that the main theological point of Genesis 1-11 is to show that even divinely-created man has imperfections. The Hebrew stories alone do not support an originally righteous or immortal Adam⁷⁴.

The Genesis story is part of that genre of literature that the Greeks would call *mythos* in the sense that it is trying to express a deeper or more basic truth (essentially a mystery) using allegory or parable. Such stories go beyond a mere historical presentation of facts. Often, they are modified in favor of more satisfactory interpretations. Other times their basic meaning is distorted. Baker claims such a misinterpretation occurred when the Church formulated the Adam and Eve story into the Fall doctrine⁷⁵. Patricia Williams,

⁷³ Shults 2003, p. 202. Cites Williams, N.P. 1927. *The Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin*. Longmans: London; also see Towner, W.S. 1984. "Interpretations and Reinterpretations of the Fall," in *Modern Biblical Scholarship*. (ed. F.A. Eigo, OSA). Villanova University Press: Villanova. pp. 53-85.

⁷⁴ Shults 2003, p. 202. Cites Westermann, C. 1974. *Creation* (trans. J.J. Scullion) Fortress: Philadelphia. p. 26, 89 ff.

⁷⁵ Baker, J. 1981. The Myth of Man's 'Fall' – A Reappraisal. *Expository Times* 92:235-7. The two Genesis narratives are not meant to be complementary with one summarizing the key points of the other. Instead, they are from two different sources and therefore show considerable differences. In the first story, plants and animal precede the creation of humans. In the other, Adam is made first followed by plants and animals and then followed by Eve in a garden seemingly set off from the rest of the world. The content and structure of the second story will not give us Augustinianism. It is only after the first couple eats from the tree that their eyes are opened and "they have become like one of us, knowing good and evil" (3:22). How could they choose between good and evil (as Augustine would claim) when, only *after* eating of the tree, do they achieve that ability? How can they even be responsible for the choosing when their eyes are opened only *after* the choice and eating? No immortality is implied since they were removed from the garden so they would not eat from the tree of life and live forever. Was the only way they could achieve it by *continually* eating of it? Why would it be there if Adam and Eve were immortal to begin with? Such

one of the few writers to cite Tennant, shows how St. Paul used Rabbinical teachings from the inter-Testamental period to communicate how Christ by analogy takes away the sins of man, not to show Adam as the originator of sin as guilt. She goes further reminding us of Augustine's use of a Latin text that encouraged a *mis-appropriation* of the analogy resulted in the doctrine of Original Sin as Inherited Guilt (OS/IG)⁷⁶.

Shults also sees Augustine's formulation is supported by: a) a peculiar interpretation of a Latin mistranslation of Romans 5:12ff and b) the traducian view of the origin of souls. The mistranslation of Romans 5:12 renders the Greek *eph' hō* to Latin *in quo*. The Latin implied to Augustine "*in [Adam] all sinned*" while the Greek refers to causality as in "*because all sinned.*" Augustine presupposed all infants were born 'in Adam' and therefore all of humanity is present when he eats of the fruit. Consequently, all are guilty of Adam's sin; even infants are born guilty (not just neutral or innocent)⁷⁷. Because of this critical exegetical failure, modern scholars have rejected Augustine's appeal to Romans for the support of OS/IG⁷⁸.

But we need not rely on modern scholarship alone to reject the idea. Some of the patristic theologians do so as well. Cyril of Alexandria rejects the idea of OS/IG resulting from

questions are rhetorical to indicate the mythic nature of a story which is not expected to be scientifically or rationally explained. Doing so would destroy the authors' original intent.

⁷⁶ Williams, P. 2001. *Doing away with Adam and Eve: Sociobiology and Original Sin*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis. p. 41, 43, 181-2.

⁷⁷ Shults 2003, p. 203

⁷⁸ Shults 2003, p. 204. For example, in order to save Paul's formulation but still reject Augustine's interpretation, Blocher claims that Paul is merely talking about the universal propensity of sin that affects us all (1997, *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle*. Eerdmans:Grand Rapids). Others point out that the key issue is that Paul is talking more about salvation being 'in Christ' rather than sin 'being in' one person. The analogy to Adam is done to communicate Rabbinic teachings to which a few pagans might have been aware but with the intent to emphasize salvation in the one person of Christ; if the people happened to be aware of the Greek concept of sin having been caused by a sinful individual, the contrast to Christ would have been helpful in their seeing the advantage of Christian thinking.

Adam's transgression. The human race merely copied his sin. Theodore of Mopsuestia argued that it was only the nature which could be inherited, not the sin. Theodoret of Cyrus stated that it was not from the sin of Adam but from the personal sin of each that causes death to reign individually. Many of the patristic theologians believed mortality was inherited . . . but not guilt or sin⁷⁹.

The broader context of Romans 5:12ff is not that Paul wanted to validate the story of Adam and the beginning of mortality, but to point to the abundance of grace for those who share in the victory of Christ over sin. The key is to be saved from a spiritual death of living in sin. In fact, later on in 5:14, Paul includes Moses in the argument as well. The point is a three-fold comparison: the fullness of a life of righteousness does not come by controlling our passions (as Adam should have), or by obeying the law (represented by Moses); it is only in Jesus Christ that we have both righteousness and life (5:21)⁸⁰.

Augustine's traducianism was supported by what was then a 'scientific' anthropological theory based on Aristotelian thought of 'substance.' The 'substance' of the soul was passed on via procreation. The competing idea was 'creationism' (not to be confused with that term in today's sense). Here, the soul is instantly created by God and implanted into the embryo at conception or during gestation into the fetus or even upon taking a first breath at birth⁸¹. Most theologians after Augustine rejected traducianism including Aquinas. Augustine accepted it because he could not have God creating souls that were contaminated with sin and evil and thus be directly

⁷⁹ Shults 2003, 204-5.

⁸⁰ Shults 2003, 205.

⁸¹ *Sources*, p.340. Augustine later cites Ambrose as an upholder of hereditary sin as a result of concupiscence and generation. More than any other Father, "Ambrose emphasizes the sinful condition of mankind and regards sin rather as a state than an act." Thus he prepares the way for Augustine's profound sense of the depravity of human nature. However, Ambrose is no traducianist, but inclines toward the creationist theory of the origin of souls. Instead of a soul-body created together and with inherent sin, he sees the soul as created separate from the body. Still, his language also refers to an inherited taint as in Origen.

responsible for the evil in the world⁸². Augustine may have held to the idea of traducianism because the Pelagian and Manichean heresies forced this thinking⁸³.

Original Sin in Light of Darwin

With today's understanding of human origins and human nature, we would claim 'the flesh' becomes 'sinful' when an individual's physical appetites for self-preservation are in conflict with overall group solidarity and flourishing. This action by an individual at the expense of the group is not just a social construction – especially when we see that, in the environment of evolutionary adaptation, such cooperation within a group means survival for all the individuals in the group. Unfortunately, groupishness is typically at the expense of those in other groups⁸⁴.

Modern human biology would suggest that depravity brought upon us by a disobedient act of a single human is a myth. However, an accusation of depravity brought upon our species as a result of a human nature that struggles for survival and to maximize reproductive success (expanded to group survival by kin selection and reciprocity) is much more understandable. Far from eliminating 'Original Sin,' evolutionary psychology has revived it in an almost Augustinian way of total depravity that is seminally passed on: our genes have the self-preserving behaviors ingrained within them.

⁸² Shults 2003, 206. In *Sources*, p.341, Tennant shows that Ambrose was referring to a pollution resulting from the process of birth itself, as if conception were an unclean thing; in its most gracious reading the Father could be said to claim that "no act of conception and birth are free from sin because the parents are not free from sin." Even though Ambrose excludes traducianism to account for the transmission of sinful taint, he still "regards heredity as the means of its propagation." Ambrose, Tennant tells us, regards the inborn taint as distinct from sin to which guilt attaches; this inborn taint is not removed by baptism as is personal or actual sin. Instead, the inborn taint is Adam's sin, not ours; further, it is "something for which we need fear no punishment."

⁸³ Shults 2003, 207.

⁸⁴ David S. Wilson. 2003. *Darwin's Cathedral: Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society*. University Of Chicago Press: Chicago

In today's anthropology, and without a literal Adam, we will need to claim an ingrained human nature was derived from a Pleistocene population intent on surviving and reproducing as they become conscious of mortality. This selfish striving to overcome death via accumulation of material goods and producing progeny is the "Original Sin" passed on from generation to generation⁸⁵. But it is not recognized as sin until laws are promulgated to inhibit such natural desires within the context of a society.

All forms of "sin" stem from this desire but we are unaware of it as sin until we culturally sanction the action with the establishment of law in order to live as a cooperative society. While this claim destroys the Paradise myth, it at least provides a better conception of Original Sin being ingrained in human nature than does a simple mistake of one couple hungry for a new type of fruit or wishing to become knowledgeable. It also supports the mystical realism idea which Tennant represents as Paul's teachings. Even though this idea eliminates Adam as a historical figure, it allows to regain a better conception of Original Sin being a sinful nature (as evidenced by the law, but not without it) . . . a nature that we can struggle against but never overcome without the sacrifice of Christ on the cross to show us how to truly be free from our self-survival actions. This is the example of grace shown to us by God-incarnate.

It would seem that God, recognizing our inability to overcome a human nature which developed over evolutionary time via survival-struggling mechanisms, decides to intervene via grace to help us become aware of our natural tendencies from which we experience so much guilt. He shows us that even in fleshly form we can overcome our natural sense of self-survival. We therefore participate in a "populational Adamic sin" via the inheritance of genes for behaviors that are geared toward self-survival and reproductive success. But we also can participate in a "Christ-centered" sacrifice when we nail our own tendencies toward that survival to the cross.

⁸⁵ Collins, Robin. 2003. "Evolution and Original Sin," in *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation* ed. Keith B. Miller. Wm. B. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MN, pp.469-501.

Consequently, this nature itself is not sinful – God has not implanted within us an evil inclination – but rather, it allows for our survival and proliferation and an ultimate ‘Fall forward’ to recognize the numinous. However, those same behaviors, once convicted by the law of living within a larger group, are what we call sin which includes the guilt we experience for fear of being discovered.

Christ’s teachings, and of the New Testament as a whole, is that individual survival behavior and groupish behavior – the behavior dictated by the very genes that allowed us to survive and even develop in the first place – nevertheless, has to be eliminated. This is the discontinuity expected of truly Christ-like behavior: the incommensurability of the Christian love command to include even enemies within the group. Inclusion goes even further in the passage in Romans 8:18 ff which suggests that inclusion into salvation will extend to allow for all of creation (not just humans) to flourish once we participate in setting it “. . . free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God” even if it entails limiting our own reproductive success.

With the coming of Christ, grace covers the guilt and we can no longer live in fear but we can now recognize that we constantly have a new struggle to contend with: a struggle that transcends the physical by forsaking self-preservation in exchange for a spiritual existence where a sense of self ceases entirely. Once achieved, we are no longer consumed with our own mortality but can envision a union with the immortal spiritual ground in whom we live and move and have our very being. Whether or not such an experience can be called “real” in the sense of a physical experience is dependent on the absurdity of belief in a physical resurrection to participate in a Kingdom of God that represents Paradise⁸⁶. This is Paradise achieved – a Paradise which was never really lost except in each generation that chooses to act in accordance with selfish desires.

⁸⁶ a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to Gentiles (I Corinthians 1:23) the crucified and risen Christ (I Corinthians 15:14)

What about talking over oceandepth

“Or, they are like darkness upon a deep sea covered with a wave above which is another wave, above which are clouds, darkness piled one upon the other; when he stretches out his hand he can scarcely see it. Indeed, to whomsoever Allah assigns no light, he shall have no light. (24:40)”. The deep ocean floor covers over 50% of the surface of the earth. It is often said that we know more about the surface of the moon than we do about the deep ocean floor and the water column above it. While this is not strictly true, we do know remarkably little (Paul Tailor 2003, 1). A certain amount of incoming light is reflected away when it reaches the ocean surface, depending upon the state of the water itself (Gross Grant 1982, 23). If it is calm and smooth, less light will be reflected. If it is turbulent, with many waves, more light will be reflected. The light that penetrates the surface is refracted due to the fact that light travels faster in air than in water. Once it is within the water, light may be scattered or absorbed by solid particles. Its now well established that most of the visible light spectrum is absorbed within 10 meters of the water's surface, and almost no light penetrates below 1000 meters of water depth by which the darkness described by Qur'an is brought out (Richard Davis 1991, 13). By reexamining the verse quoted above, a wave above which is another wave, may notify the uppermost, sunlit layer of the ocean called the euphotic zone and the disphotic zone which is dimly lit.

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