INTRODUCTION TO HAMARTIOLOGY

There is a justification for the fact that the two great doctrines—sin and redemption—go hand in hand. It is sin that has drawn out redemption from the heart of God, and redemption is the only cure for sin. These two realities, in turn, become measurements of each other. Where sin is minimized, redemption is automatically impoverished since its necessity is by so much decreased. The worthy approach to the doctrine of sin is to discover all that is revealed about the sinfulness of sin and then to recognize that God’s provided Savior is equal to every demand which sin imposes. It is one of Satan’s most effective methods of attack upon the saving work of Christ to soften the voice which is set to proclaim the evil character and effect of sin. Apparently not all who are known as teachers of God’s truth are awake to this satanic strategy. It is too often assumed that it is wiser to leave this loathsome monster called sin to lurk in the dark, and to dwell on the more attractive virtues of human life. Sin is what God says it is, and here human opinion and philosophy must bend to the testimony of the Word of God in which He declares the true nature of sin. Opinions of self-flattering men are of little value in a matter which can be determined only by revelation.

Sin is likewise to be seen as opposed to holiness. The essential facts related to all distinctions between holiness and sin are supermundane in their character. There is nothing which in itself is more restricted to, or more grounded in, the very nature of God than holiness, and its opposite—evil—derives all its properties from the one and only fact that it is unholy. There is a legitimate field of research which contemplates sin in the light of its experimental, philosophical, and sociological effects; but the fundamental traits of evil, like its counterpart—holiness—are discovered only as they are given form and substance by virtue of their relation to the Person of God. What God is and what God says are the material out of which all moral and spiritual values are derived. Since God is revealed adequately only in the Scriptures of truth, there can be little apprehension of the true character of either good or evil apart from that which it has pleased God to disclose in the Bible. Every approach to this vast theme which is extra-biblical must be speculative and therefore of little abiding value.

At the opening of his treatise on *The Christian Doctrine of Sin*, Dr. Julius Muller writes the following on the dark character of sin in this human sphere and the importance of knowing the revelation God has made:

It requires no special profundity of reflection but only a moderate degree of moral earnestness to prompt us thoughtfully to pause before ONE GREAT PHENOMENON of human life, and ever and anon to turn towards it a scrutinizing look. I refer to the phenomenon of EVIL: the presence of an element of disturbance and discord in a sphere where the demand for harmony and unity is felt with peculiar emphasis. It meets us at every turn as the history of the human race in the course of its development passes before us; it betrays its presence in manifold forms when we fix our eyes upon the closest relationships of society; and we cannot hide from ourselves its reality when we look into our own hearts. It is a dark and dismal nightshade, casting a gloom over every department of human life, and continually pervading its fairest and brightest forms.
They, indeed, make very light of their philosophical perceptions who fancy they can dismiss the greatest riddle of the world, the existence of evil, simply by forbidding it serious thought. They speak of the disagreeableness of reflections so studiously directed towards the dark side of life; they find that it is only “according to nature,” that the more steadily you fix your eyes upon the darkness, the more immeasurable does it appear; and they advise us for our own sakes to turn away from the question of evil, because our troubling ourselves about it will be no avail save to plunge us into gloomy melancholy. How gladly should we follow this advice if only Novalis were right in his bold promise,-which expresses the mind of Carpocrates the Gnostic, and that perhaps of Fichte also,-that, “if a man suddenly and thoroughly persuaded himself that he was moral, he would really be so.” Were it true, that is a man with firm resolve shook off “that old and grievous delusion of sin,” as a wild and empty dream, he would be free from sin, who would not in so easy a manner be released? But as the well-known device of the ostrich does not save it from the weapon of the hunter, so the mere shutting of our eyes to the reality of evil does not make it vanish, but delivers us only the more surely into its power. In order to be conquered, the enemy must first of all be known; and the very complaints of the disagreeableness of such reflections strongly witness how dangerous it is to shrink from them.-I, 28-29.

In the investigation of the subject of sin, two general modes of procedure have been employed, namely, the exegetical and the speculative. The exegetical method is an attempt, by an induction from the Biblical testimony, to formulate the complete doctrine as set forth in the Scriptures. The speculative method is characterized by its attention to human philosophy and experience. The exegetical method is without question justified, and yet, even when attempting to formulate the doctrine from the Scriptures, it is essential to recognize the practical working of each Bible truth as it appears in human lives.

How vast is the sum total of the spiritual shadows of this universe—those in heaven and those on earth! The extent and character of the shadows will be computed only when He whose standards and valuations are infinite shall have completed all that He has decreed. These issues are immeasurable-immeasurable with respect to the quantity indeed, but even more immeasurable with respect to their hideous character—for sin is credited with having caused infinite tragedy both in heaven and on earth. But, beyond all this, sin must be identified as that which occasioned the greatest divine sacrifice and necessitated the payment of a ransom on no less terms than the lifeblood of the Son of God. Any human attempts to contemplate a theme so boundless will be restricted, on the one hand, to the only source of authoritative information—the Word of God—and expanded, on the other hand, by so much as it may please God to enlighten the mind. At best, man will but feebly react to the divine estimation of sin, and yet more hopeless must he be in his appreciation of the problem when he considers its presence in the universe, which universe is designed, created, executed, and consummated according to the free and sovereign will of the One who acts ever and only in the sphere of that which is infinitely holy.
The problem which sin creates is more than a mere conflict between good and evil in human conduct; it involves the measureless and timeless issues in the conflict between that holiness which is the substance of God’s character and all that is opposed to it. It contemplates more than the loss and injury sustained by the one who sins. It intrudes into the sphere of the divine rights which, by the Creator’s ownership, are vested in the creature of His hand. The ultimate triumph of righteousness over unrighteousness is assured and secured in the very nature and being of God, for an unqualified promise is made of an on-coming new heaven and new earth in which righteousness shall dwell. That long-anticipated hour will bring in the final banishments of all evil and demonstrate the rectitude of God both in His permission of sin in the universe and in every aspect of His dealing with it from its inception to its consummation.

There are fundamental features of the doctrine of sin which, in their outreach, extend beyond the range of the usual treatment of this theme. The evangelist rightly assumes that all men are ruined in the tragedy of sin and, without recognition of more extended issues, proceeds to proclaim the gospel of the saving grace of God. Of the theologian it is required that he shall penetrate into the deeper problems of the origin and essential character of sin and deal with this doctrine not alone in its relation to man, but with its beginning and ending, in its relation to angels, and specifically in its relation to God. Though but briefly stated by way of introduction and yet to be considered more exhaustively, some of the deeper aspects of this doctrine are:

I. THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF SIN

The holy character of God is the final and only standard by which moral values may be accurately judged. To the one who disregards God, there are no moral standards other than social custom, or the dictates of an uncertain and perverted conscience. And even these, it will be observed, though indirect, failing, and feeble, are, nevertheless, reflections of the standards of God. Sin is sinful because it is unlike God. The Larger Catechism (Westminster) declares: “Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature.” However, inasmuch as the law of God may not incorporate all that God’s character, is and inasmuch as anything will be sinful which contradicts God’s character, whether expressed in His law or not, this definition is strengthened when the word character is substituted for the word law. It is true that disobedience of God’s law is sin, but it does not follow that sin is restricted to disobedience of law. Similarly, selfishness is sin, but sin is not always selfishness; and the love of money is a root of all evil, but all evil is not represented in the love money. So, also, unbelief is sin, but sin is more than unbelief. Whether sin be viewed as the individual’s share in Adam’s sun, the sin-nature, the estate “under sin,” or personal sin with all its varied features, it still draws its essential character of sinfulness from the fact that it is unlike God.

Divine record is given of three major demonstrations of the exceeding sinfulness of sin: (1) The first demonstration is the first sin in heaven, which caused the highest of all the angels to fall form his estate and with him a vast number of lesser angels to fall from his
estate and with him a vast number of lesser angels to follow in his rebellion against God. This highest of angels became Satan the resister, the god of this world, and the prince of the power of the air. The lesser angels became the demons over whom Satan continues his determining influence, and these—Satan and his hosts—are doomed without remedy to the lake of fire forever. Against what inconceivable light these beings sinned is not revealed, but there is provided no redemption for them; and, while Satan and the demons cease not to sin, their tragic fall in heaven and all that has followed both in heaven and on earth is due to the first sin committed in heaven. (2) The first sin of man is the second demonstration of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. This sin caused the natural head to fall and the race which he represented to fall in him. Directly or indirectly, this one sin has caused the immeasurable suffering, sorrow, and death of the race, and will be consummated in the eternal woes of all who are lost. (3) In His death on the cross, Christ bore the sin of the world, and the character of sin was there finally measured and its sinfulness revealed to angels and men. In the light of the forensic character of Christ’s death, it is evident that had there been but one sinner in the world who had committed but one sin, the same divine requirements would have been imposed upon the One who took the sinner’s place. Had God chosen to terminate sin in the world immediately after Adam’s first sin and there to have provided a righteous ground for divine forgiveness and justification for that one sinner, the same awful burden would necessarily have been laid upon the only Substitute who could take Adam’s place as was laid upon Him when He bore the sin of the world. This solemn fact is typically set forth in the shedding of blood that Adam might be clothed.

That God is Himself transparent holiness and in Him is no darkness at all is a fact which at once guarantees that, though in His Inscrutable purpose He has permitted sin in the universe, He is no way involved in its guilt. God is righteous in the absolute sense, the judge of all that is evil, and the executor of the penalty which His righteous judgments must impose. It may thus be restated that God is Himself the standard of holiness and His character is that which determines the sinfulness of sin.

II. THE DERIVATION OF SIN

The terms evil and sin represent somewhat different ideas. Evil may refer to that which, though latent or not expressed, is ever conceivable as the opposite of that which is good, while sin is that which is concrete and actively opposed to the character of God. It is difficult for the human mind to depict a time when there was not an opposite to good even though, for want of beings who were capable of sinning, it could have had no opportunity of expression. But since God cannot err, sin could not come into existence until another form of being was created; and, apparently, following upon God’s creative act, the highest of angels sinned, as did also the first man.

Since the conception of evil as a creatable thins is so difficult for the mind to grasp, the problem of its derivation is not easily solved. Indeed, little is revealed concerning the derivation
of evil; however, the origin of sin, if reference be made to the first actual disobedience to the
divine ideal, is recorded in the Scriptures and its guilt is there distinctly attributed to the one who
sinned. Though both good and evil acquire their distinctive character from the essential and
immutable perfection of God, He, being infinitely holy, could not create evil, though He might,
for worthy reasons, permit its manifestations.

III. THE DIVINE PERMISSION OF SIN

The presence of sin in the universe is due to the fact that God permits it. It must serve some
justifiable purpose attainable in no other way else God would not have permitted it, or, having
permitted it, He would now terminate it without delay. The divine purpose relative to sin has not
been revealed, and doubtless, the human mind could not comprehend all that is involved. Devout
souls will continue to believe that, though no manifestation of sin is possible outside the
permissive will of God, He is Himself ever free from the slightest complicity with the evil which
He permits. When contending with Jehovah about Job, Satan recognized the sovereign
permission of God with respect to evil when he said to Jehovah, “Put forth thine hand now, and
touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.” In response to this challenge, Jehovah
said to Satan, “All that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand.” Thus
under sovereign restrictions Job passed from the hand of God to the hand of Satan. But when the
calamity fell on Job, by the declaration, “Thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without
cause,” Jehovah disclaimed any responsibility for the evil.

God has not been overtaken with unexpected disaster in respect to His holy purposes, nor is
He now seeking to salvage something out of an unforeseen wreckage. There is immeasurable
evil in the world, but, without the slightest mitigation or sanctification of it, it is the part of faith
to believe that somehow and somewhere it fulfills a necessary part of the ultimate purpose of
Him who will with absolute certainly achieve those ends which are infinitely perfect. If the
imagination of man could penetrate the past and picture God as confronted with ten thousand
possible blueprints of which the plan for the present universe with all its lights and shadows, its
triumphs and tragedies, its satisfactions and sufferings, its gains and losses, was but one, the
voice of faith would say that the present universe as planned and as it is being executed and will
be executed to the end, is the best plan and purpose that could be devised by infinite wisdom,
executed by infinite power, and will be the fullest possible satisfaction to infinite love. God
could not devise anything more worthy of Himself than that which is now in process. For want of
perspective and understanding, the finite mind, in the midst of and observing the surrounding
spiritual darkness, would eliminate every shadow from the picture; but the issues are greater than
the sphere of human observation and the ultimate triumph which is yet to be will glorify God
with a glory otherwise unattainable, and in this glory others will share. On the other hand, God
permitted sin in spite of His holy hatred of it, and in spite of His own anticipation of the fact that
it would not only bring untold suffering and eternal ruin to His creatures whom He would love,
and in spite of the fact that it would cost Him the sacrifice of His own Son. Beyond the present tragedy of sin is the final triumph of good.

The devout mind cannot but contemplate the problem of the divine permission of sin, though the sum total of all its reasonings is inadequate to form a final answer to the question. The problem, it should be remembered, extends to the angelic spheres and makes inquiry as much about why the defection among heavenly beings should have been permitted as it does about why the fall should have come to the earthly creation. There is, however, a redemptive purpose with its unsurpassed glories developed through the sin of man; yet the Scriptures reveal no redemption for the fallen angels. They are said to be consigned without hope to the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10); and, as the Word of God is silent on the problem of the reason for permission of sin in angelic spheres, that aspect of the subject offers no field for discussion. In all contemplation of the question of the divine permission of sin in the earth, there are two facts which abide, and to these the mind must cling without wavering: (1) sin is everywhere and always exceedingly sinful, and God’s condemnation of it is never diminished for He cannot be lenient toward sin; and (2) God is Himself holy and perfect in all His ways. “In him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). “God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:13).

The following are some of the reasons which have been advanced for the divine permission of sin:

1. **THE DIVINE RECOGNITION OF THE CREATURE’S FREE CHOICE.** It is evidently the purpose of God to secure a company of beings for His eternal glory who are possessed of that virtue which is the result of a free-choice victory over evil. Indeed, He will have wrought in them by His own power both to will and to do of His good pleasure; but as certainly as the choice of evil on man’s part becomes the ground of guilt and judgment which God does not share, so certainly the choice of good on the part of those who are saved is ever the ground of God’s commendation and reward, and they will stand before Him eternally identified as those who by their own choice elected to walk with Him. But it should be observed, man cannot make choice between good and evil unless evil exists.

2. **THE SPECIFIC VALUE OF REDEEMED BEINGS.** According to the Scriptures, God is not revealed as One who seeks to avoid the issues which arise because of the presence of sin in the universe. He could have created innocent, unfallen beings possessing no capacity to err; but if He desires redeemed souls purified by sacrificial blood and purchased at infinite cost, the expression of such love and the exercise of such sacrifice are possible only when sin is present in the world.

3. **THE ACQUISITION OF DIVINE KNOWLEDGE.** The creatures of God’s hand must, by a process of learning, attain to that knowledge which God has possessed eternally. They can
learn only by experience and revelation. Even Christ, on the human side, was made perfect through suffering, and though He were a son, yet learned He obedience through the things which he endured. There is no intimation in any of these Scriptures that there was the slightest taint of evil in Him, or that He needed to learn the deep reality of sin. On the other hand, man must learn concerning both good and evil. He must realize the sinfulness of sin if he is to attain in any degree to the knowledge God possesses; but he cannot attain to such knowledge unless sin exists as a living reality which is ever demonstrating its sinful character.

At this point it is reasonable to inquire, How far in the experience of sin and its consequences must humanity go in order that the knowledge of sin may be attained? The answer to this question is not easily formed. It is evident that man learns the reality of sin both from the suffering which it inflicts and from the revelation concerning the judgments God imposes upon those who sin. If man is to learn his lesson well, the suffering cannot be diminished or the judgments of God be reduced. We conclude, therefore, that if man it to attain to the knowledge of good and evil, there must be evil in the world with all its tragic effects as well as the prospect of divine judgment for sin.

4. **THE INSTRUCTION OF ANGELS.** From certain Scriptures (cf. Eph. 3:10; I Pet. 1:12) it is possible to conclude that angels are observing men on the earth and learning important facts through the present experience of human beings. It would be as necessary for angels to learn the truth regarding that which is evil as it is for them to learn the truth regarding that which is good, but the acquiring of the knowledge of evil through human experience must be denied the angels unless evil is permitted as an active principle in the universe.

5. **THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE DIVINE HATRED OF EVIL.** It is evidently of measureless importance for God to demonstrate His hatred of evil. The Apostle declares that God was “willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known” (Rom. 9:22); but no judgment, wrath, or power in relation to sin could be disclosed apart from the permitted presence of active sin in the world.

6. **THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS OF ALL EVIL.** Far beyond the mere details of the expression of sin is the essential fact of the principle of evil which, if it is to be judged by God, must, evidently, be brought out into an open demonstration of its actual character. Such a demonstration could not be secured with sin existing as a hypothetical issue. It had to become concrete and prove its unlikeness to God. As has been observed under satanology, the creature’s proposal must always be put to an experimental test; and Satan’s purpose to construct a cosmos, such as now exists, is being tested to the end that it may be judged in all its veritable wickedness. What the judgment and complete disposition of every form of evil will mean to the absolute tranquility of yet future eternal ages, is but partially declared in the Word of God. That reality which was anticipated in the divine mind in eternal ages past and that has wrought such ruin in
its experimental demonstration in time, by righteous judgments will have been outlawed from God’s presence and from His creation forever.

7. **THE MANIFESTATION AND EXERCISE OF DIVINE GRACE.** Finally, and of the greatest import, there was that in God which no created being had ever seen. The angelic hosts had seen His wisdom, His power, and His glory, but they had never seen His grace. They had no conception of the goodness of God to the underserving. They may have been something of His love, but love, but love and grace are not the same. God might love sinners upon whom, for want of redeeming, reconciling, and propitiatory sacrifice, He was in no way righteously free to bestow His benefits. By one marvelous act of mercy in the gift of His son as a sacrifice for sinners, He opened the way for the exercise of His grace toward those who, because of their sin, deserved only His wrath. But there could be no exercise of divine grace toward the sinful and underserving until there were sinful and underserving beings in the world. Thus it is declared that the revelation of divine grace in the ages to come with all its marvelous import (Eph. 2:7) demanded that there should be objects of grace, and this, in turn, demanded the permission of sin in the world. This same truth is presented again in a slightly different form and from the human side by Christ. He, when speaking to Simeon concerning the woman who had bathed His feet with her tears, said, “Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Luke 7:47).

Thus, though it is impossible for a creature to understand how a holy God could permit sin, either in heaven or on earth, it is evident that the realization of His greatest purposes necessitates its permission. The entire problem is illustrated to a limited extent in the experience of a Christian who has sinned. He first admits that God, who could have hindered the sin, did nevertheless permit it. He likewise recognizes that he has profited in the ways of understanding and experience by the sin; and, finally, he admits that God, though permitting the sin, is in no way complicated with its guilt and wickedness.

**PREPARATORY REMARKS**

In approaching an investigation of the doctrine of sin as now contemplated, certain unusual features of this treatment should be mentioned:

(a) The usual treatment of the doctrine of sin, as set forth in theological treatises generally, is to restrict the discussion to the one aspect-personal sin-though some have given attention to the fact of a sin nature. This thesis will undertake a sevenfold investigation, covering what is believed to be the complete Biblical revelation.

(b) It will be observed that while the origin of sin is usually traced no further than the first sin of man, in the Garden of Eden, this work traces it back to the initial sin in angelic spheres.
(c) A clear distinction is drawn in this treatment if the doctrine between the *transmitted sin nature*, which is spiritual death, and *imputed sin*, which is the cause of physical death.

(d) The entire division entitled *Man’s Estate under Sin* (Chapter XXXI) represents a line of truth which is quite foreign to theological discussions. The importance of this aspect of the truth regarding sin will be seen only in the light of a right understanding of the dispensational feature of the doctrine of grace.

(e) It is admittedly unusual to introduce into the discussion of the doctrine of sin the cure which God had provided. Discourse on the cure of sin belongs to the field of Soteriology and under that head these salvation truths must yet have a fuller treatment.

(f) The order in which these main divisions of the doctrine of sin are taken up is with consideration of certain reasons why they should appear under a different arrangement. It is obvious that, since the two realities—the sin nature and imputed sin—are each derived from the one original sin of Adam, they should be examined in succession, but the order between the treatment of the sin nature and personal sin is debatable, inasmuch as in the experience of humanity (excepting One) since the fall, all have sinned personally as a natural fruit of their inborn sin nature. Over against this, is the more primitive truth that the sin nature is itself the result of one personal sin. This primary fact determines the order which is to be followed in this thesis.

(g) If in published systems of theology any worthy attempt has been made heretofore to distinguish the crucial distinctions which arise between the divine method of dealing with the Christian’s sins and the divine dealing with the sins of the unregenerate, such writings have not been discovered. Had due attention been assigned to these distinctions, many of the misconceived and misleading Arminian notions would have faded into oblivion. By the exigencies of the case, certain truths which are germane to hamartiology will reappear under a different treatment when Soteriology determines the order of discussion.

The general sevenfold division and arrangement of the doctrine of sin to be pursued is:

(a) Personal sin and its remedy,
(b) The transmitted sin nature and its remedy,
(c) Imputed sin and its remedy,
(d) Man’s estate “under sin” and his relation to Satan,
(e) The Christian’s sin and its remedy,
(f) Punishment,
(g) The final triumph over all sin.
CHAPTER XVIII

PERSONAL SIN

BY THE TERM personal sin is indicated that form of sin which originates with, or is committed by, a person. The designation includes the sins of angels as well as human beings. Under this division of the whole doctrine, that aspect of sin is contemplated which, because of human consciousness and experience, seems to men to be the one and only ground of divine condemnation of humanity. It is too often assumed that if personal sin is forgiven there is nothing more to be desired, whereas it is both reasonable and Scriptural to conclude that to deal with the root or tree is more important than to deal with the fruit; for so long as the root and tree are undealt with, the undesirable fruit must appear, and in the case of a sin nature, assuredly does appear. Nevertheless, the doctrine of personal sin is of great importance, occupying, as it does, by far a larger portion of the Scriptures than all other phases of the sin question combined. This is the theme which contemplates all immediate human experience, and stains the pages of history with tears and blood. Again, the importance of this aspect of sin is seen when it is recognized that the first sin from which all other forms of sin are derived was itself a personal sin. From their personal sins, men must be saved, and according to their evil works men will be judged and condemned forever.

This division of hamartiology permits an eightfold analysis: (a) the origin of sin, (b) the sinful nature of sin, (c) general definitions, (d) general terms and classifications, (e) the divine remedy for personal sin, (f) original sin, (g) guilt, (h) the universality of personal sin.

I. THE ORIGIN OF SIN

The familiar classification among theologians of the theories respecting the origin of sin includes the following: (a) that of necessity, (b) that of the Manichaean philosophy of duality, (c) that God is the Author of sin, and (d) that sin arises from the abuse of moral freedom. The theory of necessity proposes that sin is something over which God has no authority, and is without foundation. The Manichaean doctrine—advanced by Mani who was born about 215 A.D.—
gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou was created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so; thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (Ezek. 28:11-15).

The person here addressed as “the king of Tyre” is evidently of the angelic, or superhuman, order. This fact is abundantly disclosed in the text. It is possible that in a secondary sense this address applied to a human king in Tyre, but as almost everything ascribed to this being is supernatural, none but one of the angelic creation could be first in view; and of the angels this peculiar description could apply to none but one to him who by his sin became Satan. This the highest of angelic beings appears in the Bible under about forty different titles, all of which are, like all titles in the Scriptures, revealing with respect to the person and character of the one designated.

Since Satan’s crowning effort in the sphere of his relation to humanity in its present situation in the earth is the setting forth of the man of sin, it is significant that this passage is, in its context, preceded by ten verses which convey a divine message to “the prince of Tyre,” whose twofold blasphemous assumption is that he claims to be God, and that he sits in the seat of God. There is a clear identification here which relates this prince of Tyre to Satan’s superman, the man of sin, who is yet to appear, and of whom the Apostle prophesied saying: “And that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:3-4; Matt. 24:15; Rev. 13:5-8). That this “wicked one” has not yet appeared is evident from the fact that his brief career, when experienced, will be terminated, we are told, by the “brightness” of Christ’s coming, and by “the spirit of his mouth” (2 Thes. 2:8). As a prince is related to a king, so this blasphemous person described in the first instance (Ezek. 28:1-10) is related to the one who is set forth in the text under consideration (Ezek. 28:11-15).

It is of greatest importance to note that it is Jehovah who addresses this mighty being as “the king of Tyre,” and who describes this one in all his supernatural characteristics. It is Jehovah also who is here pictured as lamenting over this great angel. The thought expressed by the word lamentation is that of extreme anguish accompanied by the beating of the breast. Such, indeed, is the attitude of Jehovah toward this fallen angel. There is infinite pathos in every word which describes the measureless exaltation and honor conferred on this angel in view of his subsequent repudiation of Jehovah. A feeble illustration of this lamentation on the part of Jehovah over this angel is to be seen in David’s lamentation over Absalom: “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2 Sam. 18:33).

Similarly, Jehovah declares this great angel to be the “sum,” being “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty,” and that he has “been in Eden the garden of God,” and that every precious
stone was his covering. Though Satan did appear in the Eden described in Genesis (and this no king of Tyre ever did) it is probable, considering the details set forth in this passage, that reference here is to the primal Edenic glory of the earth before it became “without form and void.” Continuing this description, Jehovah states that his being was created with marvelous capacities, and, by the use of specific imagery, implies that he was a diadem of praise to his creator. He is also said to belong to the order of the cherubim, which company of the angels seem charged with the protection of the holy presence of God (cf. Gen. 3:24; Ex. 25:18-22; 2 Sam. 6:2); but of this being it is revealed that he was, as protector, or cherub, placed upon the “holy mountain of God,” which, according to Old Testament symbolism, refers to the seat or throne of God’s government in the earth (cf. Isa. 2:1-4). The climax of this important Scripture is reached when the declaration is made that this being was perfect in all his ways from the day he was created until iniquity was uncovered in him. This passage thus discloses the exalted character of a heavenly being and indicates that fact of his sin. The context goes on to add some light concerning the sin itself and the judgment of God that must eventually follow.

The identification of this being may be thus restated: he was the sum, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. He had been in Eden the Garden of God. His covering was that of precious stones. Tabrets and pipes were in him from his creation. He was of the Cherubim and appointed of God as guardian over His holy mountain. He had walked up and down midst the stones of fire. He was perfect in his ways from the day of his creation. Thus the most exalted and heavenly among created beings is described, and of him it is also revealed that iniquity was found, or uncovered, in him. The proof that this has reference to Satan, the highest of angelic beings, is disclosed in the fact that, so far as revelation goes, this description could apply to no other.

b. THE NATURE OF THE FIRST SIN. The Prophet Isaiah sets forth by the Spirit of God the precise nature and detailed features of Satan’s sin. We read: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isa. 14:12-14).

Again the identification is not difficult. The address is to one who is here designated as Lucifer, son of the morning, which title relates him to the highest of the angels and the greatness of his power is disclosed in the context. There he is said to be the one “which didst weaken the nations, that made the world a wilderness, that destroyed the cities thereof,” and “that opened not the house of his prisoners” (cf. Isa. 61:1). That Isaiah is viewing these stupendous achievements of this being from the end of that career and that he is seeing the full and final outworking of all divinely permitted evil, is indicated by the fact that Lucifer is, in this passage, declared to be “fallen from heaven” and “cut down to the ground,” which judgment is yet future in the experience of Satan (Ezek. 28:16; Job 1:6; Luke 10:18; Eph. 6:11-12, R.V.; Rev. 12:7-9). It is
equally clear that to this hour Satan’s permitted program of evil in the world is not yet fully accomplished.

The sin which Lucifer committed includes five particulars and these are expressed under five assertions of his proposed independence of God. He used the impious phrase *I will* in each declaration. The peculiar evil character of the words *I will* under these circumstances is disclosed in the fact that these words belong primarily to sovereignty. This is demonstrated in the great unconditional covenants God has made with men. The phrase *I will* is, more than any other which language can exhibit, the sole prerogative and solemn right of Deity. When uttered by God the phrase *I will* is in no way abnormal. However, there is a secondary use of this phrase which may be sanctioned—even on the lips of a creature. Having yielded to the will of God, it is becoming of him to say, *I will* do the will of God. Such a use of these words only emphasizes the truth that God’s will is supreme; but as these words of sovereign intent fell from the lips of the first sinning angel, there was no element of submission expressed or intended. They represented an assumed independence wholly unbecoming to a creature. Though it be a small creature with a small purpose—as is true in the case of each and all of those who comprise the mass of humanity—if he be opposed to or independent of God, the very basis of all sin is manifest. These words, coming from Lucifer, were more ominous since, by the greatness of his position, he purposed no less than the production of what has come to be the *cosmos* world system. These five uses of the phrase *I will*, which appear in Isaiah 14:12-14, must be carefully considered.

An extended exposition of these verses has been presented earlier in the work under Angelology. The present treatment of these vital statements will, therefore, be brief.

“I will ascend into heaven.” This bold purpose expressed in these words will be understood only in the light of the truth that there are three heavens. The angels have their rightful abode in the second heaven. Lucifer’s responsibility as guard to the throne of God required him to do service in that higher realm where God dwells. The ambition of Lucifer is thus seen to be a most impious and willful attempt to a residence above the sphere allotted to him.

“I will exalt my throne above the stars of God,” which phrase expresses the purpose on Lucifer’s part to secure a dominion in angelic spheres. Little may be known of the issue involved or of the extent of this purpose. The intention has been realized under divine permission since Satan is now at the head of a kingdom of evil spirits (Matt. 12:26).

“I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.” This assertion is somewhat obscure. However, the understanding of three words used seems to lend some light. The *mount* is the throne of God, the *congregation* is Israel, and the sides of the north may be reference to the crucifixion which occurred on the north of Jerusalem and to the earthly authority over Israel which belongs to Christ as Redeemer and King. In such an interpretation it
may be seen that there was a purpose in Lucifer to secure an earthly throne. That such a throne
now exists is declared in Revelation 2:13 (note that here the word seat should be throne).

“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.” In this declaration there is an attempt in
view to secure some of the divine glory which is symbolized so constantly through the Bible by
the clouds.

“I will be like the most High” is the consummation of all that has gone before. This is
Lucifer’s supreme purpose concerning which the other I will’s are but particulars. In this
assertion the whole essence of sin lies concealed. It is independence action outside of, and
opposed to, the purpose of God. Of Satan Christ said that he “abode not in the truth” (John
8:44). and by so much implied that to depart from the will of God is to enact a lie. Over against
this, the truth consisted in that divine purpose and appointment for this being, immeasurable in
its privilege, eternal value, and glory. Lucifer chose his own course of independent action
evidently determined to move into the third heaven, to gain authority on earth, to usurp the
divine glory, and to be like the most High. Later Scripture revelation discloses this satanic
ambition to be- so far as earth is concerned the present cosmos world system, over which Satan
is now prince (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and, in this age, its god ( 2 Cor. 4:4). God has
evidently permitted the purpose of Satan to be put to an experimental test to the end that it may
be judged more perfectly. What Lucifer was, and could have been, in the will of God constituted
the truth in which he abode not. What he has wrought is the lie, and Satan is the author of it. That
lie was hid in his heart from the beginning. The future judgments that will fall on the cosmos
world are clearly predicted in the Word of God, as also the tragic end of Satan, and all associated
with him, in the lake of fire. With all these revelations in view, it is as puerile to talk of a
converted cosmos world as it would be to talk of a converted devil. Each reaches its determined
end with all the certainty of infinity.

Too much importance cannot be attached to the truth that Lucifer’s first sin-a willful ambition
against God which proposed the cosmos world system-is the norm or pattern of all sin. All
human beings acting independently who are not concerned to fulfill the divine purpose for them
are re-enacting this same sin, and their destiny is that of the devil and his angels (Rev. 20:10-15),
unless they come under the saving grace of God.

3. THE FIRST CONCRETE ENACTMENT OF SIN BY A HUMAN BEING ON EARTH.

Should an error be adopted as the major premise in a sequence of closely related themes, there
is little hope that the entire succession of thought would not be characterized by deviation from,
if not contradiction of, the truth. There is scarcely another phase of divine revelation which is
more germane to the right understanding of all doctrine than that of sin. Practically all heretical
systems of thought base themselves upon misconceptions of sin, and these must, therefore, of
necessity be saturated with error. An attempt to enumerate in full these misconceptions would be
inconsistent with the purpose of this thesis. However, in this connection it may be observed that
to underestimate the true character of sin is (1) to disregard the explicit terms employed in the Bible to set forth the exceeding sinfulness of sin, thus causing God to seem to be untruthful; (2) to contradict, to a greater or less degree, the holy character of God; (3) to vitiate even the right conception of human guilt; (4) to disregard the sanctity and authority of the Word of God; (5) to cause the unavoidable divine reprobation of sin to seem to be extreme and unwarrantable judgment; (6) to render the great facts of redemption, reconciliation, and propitiation to appear to be uncalled for; and (7) to dismiss from consideration the only sufficient reason for the death of Christ.

It is true, as before stated, that sin is sinful because of the fact that it is unlike God, and that a thing which is evil will be demonstrated to be such when compared with the holy character of God. It is equally true that sin calls for judgment because it is an outrage against the Person and law of God; and, since God is infinite and His goodness unbounded, sin is infinite and its evil character is beyond all human computation. Sin inflicts not only an immeasurable injury upon the one who sins, but is more specifically characterized by the injury it inflicts upon God, the Creator’s rights being disregarded, His holy law broken, and His property being damaged through sin.

The far-reaching effect of the first human sin is to be discovered in its movement along two widely different channels—the sin nature, and imputed sin, which subjects are to be attended in their proper place and order. Discussion now centers upon the first human sin itself. The record of the first human sin is found in Genesis 3:1-19. Having specifically prohibited the eating of the fruit of one tree and having given warning that the penalty for disobedience would be death, God thus placed Adam and Eve on probation. The issue was fully comprehended by them and apparently they, when left to themselves, did abstain from eating of the fruit which was prohibited. It was when the tempter appeared that they were induced to disregard God. The details of this sin and the influences leading up to it have been recited in a previous section of Anthropology. The essential fact, which cannot be restated too often, is that, in his temptation, Satan proposed to the first parents that they adopt the precise course he had himself espoused and pursued, which was to assume independence of God by departing from His will and purpose. Short-slighted ambition doubly blinded by unholy pride was willing to exchange the perfection of estate and destiny which the infinite love, wisdom, and power of the Creator had designed, for the wretched warfare of a self-centered life with its eternal agonizing experience in death. Evidently the whole truth was not displayed before these human beings. They were told that they would be like Elohim (Gen. 3:5), but only in one respect—their eyes would be open and they would know good and evil. They were as created, experiencing the good; as fallen they would experience the evil. They had nothing to gain but rather everything to lose. The creature, whether angel or human, is by creation not only the property of the Creator by rights more vital than any other, but, as created, the creature is wholly dependent on the Creator. This relationship was blessed indeed before the fall and engendered no offense. By repudiating God through disobedience, Adam and Eve embarked upon a tempest-tossed, shoreless sea without compass,
rudder, or helm. Such a course could only lead to ignominious failure and to the final judgments of the One whom they had rejected and abjured. The truth that sin is insanity is thus fully demonstrated.

In the last analysis, there are but two philosophies of life. One is to be conformed to the will of God which is the original divine arrangement, the other is to forsake the Creator and renounce His authority and purpose. In respect to the latter philosophy, it may be said that there is probably no pride so despicable as that which resents the authority of the Creator and which presumes to devise a program of life and achievement which is a substitute for the original plan and purpose of God. One philosophy is satanic, and this hideous fact is not changed even though the whole human race has embraced the satanic ideal. Appearing in the Garden, Satan brought no great volume elucidating his philosophy. Having led up to his ignoble proposition with such strategy as only Satan can command—he appealed to natural desires, he belittled sin, he attacked the character of God by intimating that God is untrustworthy and unloving—he proposed a likeness to Elohim. The translation “Be as gods” is most misleading. The original text says, “Be as Elohim.” The satanic philosophy is expressed perfectly in these brief words and it leads on, regardless of a moment of satisfaction of self and pride, to the lake of fire, and the same end is announced for all, angels or human beings, who adopt and pursue this course to its bitter end.

Satan’s purpose did not consist merely in rejecting God; he was designing a vast cosmos world system in which he proposed to utilize and misappropriate the elements which belong to God’s creation, which, in themselves, are good. Satan creates nothing. No step in the satanic cosmos project was more essential than that he should secure the allegiance of humanity. The issues at stake in the Garden of Eden were, in respect to Satan’s career, such as would determine his realization of his whole undertaking. He must gain supremacy over man or fail completely. Little did Adam and Eve realize that, so far from attaining independence, they were becoming bondslaves to sin and Satan. From that time forth Satan was to energize them and their children to do his will (Eph. 2:1-2; Col. 1:13; I John 5:19). From such an estate only the regenerating power of God, made possible through the Redeemer, could rescue. As long as Satan is permitted to rule as the prince of the cosmos, it is probable that humanity will experience some sense of cohesion and security—something vague indeed—but when Satan is banished and his authority at an end the isolation and segregation of unregenerate human beings will result in terror and anguish for all eternity to come.

No extended investigation of the Scriptures is required to prove that sin originated in heavenly spheres and that man became the avenue or way by which sin gained entrance into the world (Rom. 5:12). It is also to be concluded that, though human sin may manifest its character in various ways, it is from one root and consists in a departure from the living God. It is this departure which precipitated the fall of man, and the same spirit of independence lives on to curse the race.
II. THE SINFUL NATURE OF SIN

In its fundamental character, sin is a restless unwillingness on the part of the creature to abide in the sphere and limitation in which the Creator, guided by infinite wisdom, had placed him. This unwillingness may be expressed in many ways, and these are sometimes thought to be the real nature of sin. In the general field of manifestation of sin, the fact is that it is a want of conformity to the character of God. The first sin of man was a personal sin, and, as before stated, resulted in a sin nature. In this the order in human experience is reversed, since, in the case of each of Adam’s posterity, there is first a fallen nature and this engenders personal sin. Thus, as already pointed out, the sin nature and personal sin may each in turn be seen to be cause or effect.

The widest possible difference exists—amounting to no less than a contrast between things infinite and things finite—when God’s estimate of sin is compared with man’s estimate of sin; yet to an extent which is all but universal, sin is judged by men quite apart from revelation and on the basis of the natural human evaluation.

Since sin is negative to the extent that it has no standards of its own, but must derive its measurements from that which is positive or good, and since the holy character of God is the standard of that which is good, it follows that sin is as evil as it appears to be when viewed from the vantage point of the holiness of God. No fallen human beings can ever attain to an understanding of the holiness of God, and, to the same degree, no fallen human being can attain to the right conception of the sinful nature of sin. When it is discovered that divine judgments for sin reach to eternity, as indeed they do, it ill becomes finite, fallen man to call these judgments into question.

III. THREE MAJOR PROOFS OF THE EXCEEDING SINFULNESS OF PERSONAL SIN

1. THE ANGELIC PROOF. One of the angelic hosts committed one sin, which sin in their own sphere men deem most commendable, namely unholy ambition, and, as a result of that sin, that angel fell and became the eternal enemy of God and drew after him a vast company of the heavenly hosts, some of whom are bound in chains of darkness, and for whom there is no ray of hope through all eternity.

2. THE HUMAN PROOF. One individual, the first of the human creation, committed one sin and that sin being apparently so innocuous men are prone to ridicule the thought that God would notice it all; yet that one sin is, according to divine estimation, sufficiently evil to cause the degeneracy and depravity of the unfallen person who committed the sin, and to cause uncounted millions of his posterity to suffer in the flesh and die, and the vast majority of them to spend eternity in the realms of woe.

3. THE DIVINE PROOF. The Son of God suffered to an infinite degree and died on the cross because of sin. There was no other way whereby redemption could be secured. However, had
there never been but one sin committed in this world, the same depths as a righteous ground for divine forgiveness of that one sin and the justification of that sinner.

The study of the personal sins of those whose failure is recorded in the Scriptures will add much to the understanding of the doctrine of personal sins. Such a study should include the sins of Adam, Cain, Noah, Nadab, Abihu, Korah, Dathan, Abiram, Aaron, Moses, Achan, Eli, Saul, David, Solomon, Peter, Pilate, Judas, Ananias, Sapphira, and Saul of Tarsus.

Having constructed an intricate machine composed of many parts, a man expects each part to remain in its place and fulfill the specific responsibility assigned to it. The separate independent action of one part would disarrange the whole. The creation is composed of many parts and under the present exercise of opposing wills is confusion which God alone can correct. This He will do in His own time and way.

As there is no rational accounting for the universe—a system and order which embraces all regulations from the movement of the stars down to the laws which overrule all forms of life that exist-apart from the truth that God is the Designer, Creator, and Sustainer of all, in like manner all that enters into moral character derives its values from God. It should be no more a problem to recognize God as the ground source of things moral than of things physical or intellectual. Were there actually such a thing as a wandering star severed from all other forces and attractions, it would well serve to illustrate a created intelligence, fitted for a great purpose and sustaining far-flung relationships, as sundered from the Source of all its being and wantonly defying the elements of holy character upon which all moral values depend and from which all obligations arise. Indeed, Jude likens certain “ungodly men” to “wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 1:4,13). As the necessity is laid on physical elements to abide under that mandate wherein they were placed by the Creator if they are to serve the end for which they were created, thus, and to a far more important degree, the necessity is laid upon moral beings to abide under the mandate wherein they were placed if they are to know the eternal fullness of life and experience which infinite love and wisdom proposed. Outside such a reasonable continuing, there can be only “blackness of darkness”; for apart from God no light exists, and man apart from God, having no power to generate light, is “full of darkness.”

Sin usually combines an immoral feature with the element of disobedience and what that means to God could not be fully revealed.

Again, the sinful character of sin is reflected in the penalties which are righteously imposed. The doom of Satan, the doom of unregenerate men, and all the suffering of this life bear their testimony, and it may be believed that any sin committed by any creature is as sinful in the divine estimation as those sins which, because of the position occupied by the sinner, brought ruin to uncounted multitudes of beings.

The utter independence of God on the part of the creature, whether it be angel or man, is the basic principle of evil. It manifests itself in manifold ways. The prophet declares: “All we like
sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” (Isa. 53:6). The wise man said: “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin” (Prov. 10:19); “He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: (Prov. 14:21); “The thought of foolishness is sin” (Prov. 24:9). And in the New Testament we read: “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23); “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17); “Sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4); and “The love of money is the root of all evil” (I Tim. 6:10). Thus the Scriptures indicate the extensive and complex character of sin’s expression, but in every case, whether it be doctrine or human experience, the one original evil is found to be in the sphere of the creature’s relation to the Creator.

IV. GENERAL DEFINITIONS

In entering the extensive field of the definition of sin, a distinction arises at the outset between the state of heart which impels one to sin and the overt act of the sin itself. In the case of Adam who sinned without the prompting of a sin nature, it is evident that his act of disobedience was preceded and prepared by a consent of his will, and that, when he had thus determined his course, or was willing to disobey God, he had already sinned potentially. That attitude could be defined as a state of sin. It is to be noted that, had he been hindered against his will from the overt act of disobedience, he would, nevertheless, have been condemnation by the ground of his intention and willingness. In the case of Adam’s posterity all of whom inherit the sin nature which unceasingly excites to sin, a constant state of sin exists which can be relieved only by the preventing power of the indwelling Spirit. Sin is therefore sometimes defined as a state of heart or mind. Much has been written on the subject of sin from a psychological approach, but such considerations are too often speculative and do not tend to develop the evil character of sin as it is set forth in the Bible. It may be admitted along with the speculative ideals that sin is an action of the will-either an overt omission or commission-but back of the will is the evil heart. Christ emphasized this when He said, “That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:20-23). The nature of fallen man is sinful whether it expresses its true character in overt acts or not.

Under the title Modern Theories of Sin, Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas (following Orchard) presents four theories which are here quoted, and, as they are clear, no comment on them need be added:

“(1) Theories which trace sin to the will of man (represented by Kant, Coleridge, and Muller).

“(2) Theories which regard sin as a necessarily (represented by Schelling, Weisse, and Hegel).

“(3) Theories which seek to explain sin by confining it within the bounds of religion (represented by Schleiermacher and Ritschl).
“(4) Theories which seek to explain sin from empirical observation (represented by Pfleiderer and Tennant)” (The Principles of Theology, p.170).

The general field of definition concerning personal sin may be comprehended in two aspects: (a) sin against God, and (b) sin against law. A patent distinction obtains between sin against God’s Person—which sin may be indicated by such terms as godlessness, defilement, selfhood—and sin against God’s moral government which is as properly expressed by such terms as transgression, rebellion, lawlessness. This twofold division seems to comprehend the whole field of definition, and the whole trend of man’s obligation may be traced along these two lines of relationship. These two forms of duty, being interdependent, are inseparable. No relationship to God can be conceived that does not acknowledge His holy will or law, nor can any authority be discovered in His holy will or law that does not ground itself in His holy Person. Man’s relation to the Person of God is largely one of state, while his relation to the will of God is one of action. The general term for sin is auapria, meaning that a prescribed mark or ideal had been missed. This mark or ideal is the essential character of God which is made known to man by God’s revealed will or law. Attention may now be given to these two aspects of sin and in the order indicated above:

1. **SIN AGAINST GOD’S HOLY PERSON.** Philosophers have long debated the question whether man is capable of originating a conscious distinction between right and wrong, whether the laws he makes for himself—though made through the medium of his limited understanding—are a reflection of his own ideals or whether they are derived from God. Theoretically, it is a question whether the voice of conscience—man’s intuition about what is right and true—is directly or indirectly the voice of God, or whether conscience is to be recognized as a natural factor in man’s being. Attention has been given to this subject in a previous section of this work and there it was asserted that conscience seems to stand over, or above, the other faculties of man’s being as a monitor or judge—a voice outside the action of the intellect, the sensibilities, and the will; yet a voice which may be stultified if not silenced, or, on the other hand, may be stimulated to keen discernment. Has God created a delicate instrument which, within its own resources, is able to contend for that which is right, or is conscience the immediate voice of God speaking in the inner consciousness of man? One thing is assured, which is, that God is the original food and all that is good in the universe is derived from Him. The untenable idea that right is an eternal principle to which God subscribes, or the notion that right is what it is because God has arbitrarily assigned that character to it—that He could have as easily made evil good had He chosen to do so—need not be refuted here. Since God Himself is the eternal One, immutable in His infinite holiness, He subscribes to no principle as one who is subject to it. He is the Principle. What is good and true is not a law which governs God; He is the source of these virtues. He is in no sense the source of evil and untruth. Evil and untruth have no original source. There was a time when evil could have been contemplated only as a possibility; but good, like all the divine attributes, in its most exalted reality had the same eternal existence which belongs to God. There was a time-if time it
be-when evil was only an anticipation; there will yet be a time-if time it be-when it will be only a memory. Good is immutable from everlasting to everlasting.

The effect of sin upon God and of His attitude toward sin is displayed in the plan which He saves the lost. Too little, indeed, is it realized by many who attempt to preach the gospel, that the grace of God which saves the lost is not mere big-heartedness or generosity on God’s part. He could have saved souls without the sacrifice of His Son had that been the case. The death of His Son as a sacrifice is required only because God cannot compromise His holy character by making light of sin. It is the very structure of the gospel that God is infinitely righteous in His attitude toward sinners, which means perfect and eternal condemnation unless the demands of infinite holiness are righteously met. In other words, whatever is done to save the lost, must be done in such a way as to preserve untarnished the character of God. To some it has seemed a worthy conception of God when presented as liberal and magnanimous enough to waive His holy requirements, little realizing that to turn thus from His holy judgments would be to forfeit every vestige of that foundation of righteousness on which His throne rests, which undergirds His government, and sustains His immutable character. Should God save one soul from the condemnation which rests on that soul because of sin by softening condemnation or by so loving the sinner that He surrenders or relinquishes one fraction of His holy demands against sin, that the soul might be saved, God, in turn, would be lost, His essential Being ruined by a compromise with sin, and Himself needing to be saved from dissolution. Such a truth has never been stated strongly enough, nor can it be, since language us incapable of expressing the hideous dishonor to God which lurks in gospel appeals that offer salvation based upon divine charity and not on the efficacious blood of Christ. If men had never preached any other message than that sin is so exceedingly sinful that it can be forgiven only on the ground of the shedding of the blood of one of the Godhead Three, and that thus illimitable sacrifice is as much required for the cure of one sin of one individual as for the sins of many, a better realization of the divine attitude toward sin would no doubt obtain. God Himself must be, and is, just when He justifies the ungodly who do no more than to believe in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). Preaching anything less than this merits the unrevoked anathema assured in Galatians 1:8-9.

What to this point has been defended, is to the end that a most essential truth may be emphasized, i.e, that sin is against God. It affects God immediately and directly; and it affects the one who sins largely through the reaction which arises because of its primary influence upon God. In his blindness and wickedness the creature may assume that what he may do is no concern of God’s, but such reasoning is only the hallucination which waits upon the insanity of sin. The supposition that the creature is free from responsibility and accountability to his Creator is the worst of delusions-second only to that irrational notion that God is not cognizant of the creature’s sin, or that sin can be hid from God. Concerning the divine observation of the creature’s sin, it is written: “For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings” (Job 34:21) ; “Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart” (Ps. 44:21); “Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance” (Psa.
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90:8); “For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God” (Jer. 2:22). And two testimonies recorded in the Bible declare the truth that sin is directly against God. David wrote: “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightiest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest” (Ps. 51:4); “And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son” (Luke 15:21). In addition to the condemnation which is imposed because of the sin nature, every personal sin must be, and therefore will be, weighed and judged on the basis of divine holiness. Quite dissimilar, however, is the relationship of the sinning Christian to God. He is subject to chastisement, but not to condemnation.

Beyond the offense which sin is to God’s government, and beyond the injury it is to that which is the indisputable property of God, it, because of its immoral nature, outrages and insults the holy Person of God. He is infinitely pure and righteous. The prophet of old has said, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?” (Hab. 1:13), and the Apostle John has written: “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (I John 1:5). So, also, the Apostle James declares: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:13). When the truth is considered apart from all relationships, there is no argument respecting the holiness of God; yet this is the very truth which measures the sinfulness of sin. It is the fact that God is transparently holy which lends meaning to such terms as ungodliness, defilement, and impiety.

If any unprejudiced attention be given to the subject at all, it will not be deemed unreasonable that the One who gives man his existence, who designs all that is best for man in time and eternity, who creates and arranges all that enters into man’s environment and comfort, who exercises an increasing providing and protecting providence, who at infinite cost prepares a remedy for man’s sin and failure, who loves man with an infinite love, and desires man—even though fallen in sin—to be blessed with His richest blessings, should, being Himself pellucidly holy, be injured and offended by man’s rejection of His Person, insult to His character, and rebellion against His holy will. Nor should any be amazed that, because of His immutable righteousness, He cannot condone sin but must demand that the price of redemption, reconciliation, and propitiation—which He alone could pay—should be included by man in his reckoning respecting what must enter into his salvation. It should not be counted strange that salvation is restricted to confidence in God to save through the Saviorhood of Christ, or that the rejection of Christ as Savior should be deemed the last and most iniquitous insult to God.

a. THE THEORY THAT SIN IS SELFISHNESS. Closely related to that aspect of sin which is against God, is the widely accepted contention that sin is selfishness, or selfhood in one form
or another. This theory has claimed advocates in the early days of the church; it was argued by Dr. Julius Muller, whose work, *The Christian Doctrine of Sin*, has long been hailed by devout scholarship as the most complete and worthy treatment of this great theme; and it has been defended by later theologians—notably Dr. Augustus H. Strong. The real issue may be approached by the inquiry whether all sin is selfishness, or whether all selfishness is sin. The difference in these propositions is obvious and the issue should not be passed over without attention.

Extended argument has already been advanced in this work to prove that the very essence of sin, as it was first committed by the highest angel and later by the first man, was an act both self-willed and self-seeking—a departure from that which, having been divinely purposed, was and ever must be God’s truth. For this truth the lie was substituted, which included not only the repudiation of God but also the adoption of an antigod enterprise which is none other than the present cosmos world system. The beginning of sin, or the first sin, is naturally the mold or pattern of all sin; that is, what Lucifer did is with respect to its vital nature, a model of all subsequent sin. In this connection, it has been noted also that the last sinner of the satanic program—the man of sin—will pursue the same unholy purpose. Of him it is written that he both “opposeth [God] and exalteth himself above all that is called God” (2 Thess. 2:4). While there is always a very wide field open for the multiplied manifestations of sin, sin is, in its essential nature, twofold: repudiation of God and promotion of self. Opposition to God and exaltation of self doubtless spring from the same self motive. It is true, as is often claimed, that self in all its forms constitutes an opposite to sacrificial love (it is identical with self-love). On this ground, it has been reasoned, and by none more effectively than Dr. Muller and Dr. Strong, that, since love is the first obligation in fulfilling the law—as it is said in Matthew 22:37-40, “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”; and in Romans 13:10, “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (cf. Gal. 5:14; James 2:8)—failure to love must be the first all-inclusive sin. Perplexity must arise if no recognition be accorded to the difference which exists between sin as a state, or nature, and sin in its outworking, or manifestation. In general, objective love is a manifestation; but, even if it be considered as a state of heart, the unregenerate person needs more than a revolution in his emotions. He must be regenerated. He has no ability to reverse his emotions. In place of fulfilling the law by the exercise of love, he fulfills “the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Eph. 2:3). However, were he able, even by divine enablement—admittedly an impossible hypothesis—to exercise love, yet he would be lacking those great transformations which constitute salvation. In other words, if salvation from sin may be secured by espousing a life characterized by love—even divinely enabled—it is by works; it arises in man; and to man be all the glory. If, as is usual, the problem be restricted to personal sins, even these are in some instances void of the elements of self. No self-interest need be present in malice, enmity toward God, or in unbelief.
It may be concluded that the part of anything is never the whole of it. Love for God and man is not all there is of holy character, as love for self is not all there is of sin. Unselfishness in Christ did not exhaust His virtues, nor does selfishness in Satan exhaust all his iniquity. To the Christian it may be said that, though Christ emphasized love to a marked degree (cf. John 13:34-35; 15:12), He did not imply that love is all that is required. When He said, “Keep my commandments,” He could hardly be thought to be referring to only one of them. Sin is any want of conformity to the character of God. It is true that “God is love,” but He is vastly more; He is truth, He is faithfulness, He is righteousness. When the Bible declares that lawlessness is sin, that lack of faith is sin, that failure to do what is known to be good is sin, there is implication that the exercise of love will correct these evils.

2. **SIN AGAINST THE LAW.** The term law must, in the present consideration, be given a very broad meaning including every form of the revealed will of God whether it be (a) early communications preserved by tradition, (b) human conscience, (c) direct spiritual guidance, or (d) the written Word of God with its various age-applications. These forms of the law are best considered separately and in the order indicated:

a. **EARLY COMMUNICATIONS PRESERVED BY TRADITION.** This aspect of law fills a large place in human history. It was apparently the sole governing rule over human life from Adam to Moses. It was that which determined the distinction between good and evil as recorded concerning the first parents; it was that which separated Cain from Abel; it was that upon the basis of which the antediluvians were judged and condemned; it was that which made subsequent Gentile peoples to be abhorrent to God; and it was that to which faithful Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph conformed their lives. Jehovah declared to Isaac concerning his father Abraham who lived a full half a millennium before the giving of a written law, “Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Gen. 26:5). A similar expression that Abraham pursued “the way of Jehovah” (Gen. 18:19, R.V.) evidently recognizes the truth that a well-defined edict or mandate was aboard in all those centuries of early history. To what extent humanity has preserved these early requirements or impressions would be difficult to determine. Such recognition of right conduct and equity as the heathen exhibit must be, to a large degree, the manifestations of this original unwritten, yet divinely revealed, law of God.

b. **HUMAN CONSCIENCE.** A return is made at this point to the contemplation of that mysterious faculty of the natural man, or within the natural man, which conforms not merely to that which is, but rather to that which *ought to be*—a faculty which so far transcends, in things moral, the intellect, the sensibilities, and the will, that is sits in judgment over them. The conscience, though acting as judge, does not essay to execute its decrees. Having declared what ought to be in that clearness which is commensurable with its competence, conscience must depend upon the spirit of man acting through his will to execute its decrees. In its broadest phase,
this vital faculty of man’s being which governs and yet does not execute its judgments, is the moral law. The law in its written form presents only a general statement of that which in principle is applicable to those to whom it is addressed. It cannot trace the specific obligations which arise in relation to the individual’s peculiar and ever-changing circumstances. The conscience alone can guide in these details of life. Obviously, what is thus said applies to the unregenerate; for a different relationship and responsibility rests on the regenerate, who, being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, are privileged to be led of the Spirit. Over against this, or to be added to this, God has spoken with particular directness to Jews and with another particular directness to Christians with due consideration of their different spheres of relationship to Him; but all are, like the inner voice of conscience, only proclamations of the one moral law—that which proceedeth from God and is the affirmation of His holy nature. This conception of law does not necessarily presuppose evil in the individuals to be corrected; it is primarily a positive directing, a pointing of the way, to those who otherwise would not know. Even human law are to a large degree based on divine revelation and are usually accepted or rejected according to the conscience, or convictions due to conscience, of those to whom such authority is given. It has been true that human authorities have sometimes confused their authority to act with their power to act, supposing that mere power determined that which is right; but the very resistance of such perversion argues strongly for the existence in moral law as an innate sense of that which is right as in contrast to that which is wrong. Thus conscience, as a feature of moral law, coincides with all other forms of law and normally, proclaims that which God requires. A violation of conscience, in so far as conscience asserts its authority, is sin.

c. DIRECT SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE. In this aspect of the divine will as revealed, the Christian alone is concerned. It is possible for the child of God to refuse the guidance which the Spirit proffers. A carnal life is a life lived in the flesh and in opposition to the mind of the Spirit, yet the word carnal applies to Christians (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1). This extensive theme must be reserved for its proper time and place.

d. THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD WITH ITS VARIOUS AGE-APPLICATIONS. At this point in this thesis, the most common definition for sin is in evidence, namely, that sin is a’vouia—a violation of law, or lawlessness. Using this word, the Apostle John declares that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). The question whether this a complete or a restricted
definition of sin has received some attention earlier when seeking to draft a proper definition of sin. There it was observed that any want of conformity to revealed law is not a broad enough conception; for much may be in the character of God that has not specific expression in any revealed law, just as, indeed, a lack of faith is sin, yet all sin is not a lack of faith; and to know good and not do it is sin, but not all sin is failure to do what is known to be good; and, again, to love money is a root of evil; but all evil is not included in the love of money. In the same manner, lawlessness is sin, but not all sin is a violation of some written code. Since the written law so nearly represents the whole of the divine requirements, great stress should be put on the searching truth that to transgress a law, which is addressed to one, is the most specific disobedience and compares with that disobedience by which angels and men have fallen. Question 24 of *The Larger Catechism* (Westminster) aims at the solemn truth regarding sin and the law. It reads, “What is sin?” and the answer is clear as far as it goes: “Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature.”

No discussion of sin as against law will be true to the Bible that does not incorporate some exposition of I John 3:4-10. The deeper meaning of this passage will be understood only when a distinction between the sins of regenerate men and unregenerate men is kept in mind. Possibly no other passage of Scripture contributes more to the present theme than this. It is certain that few portions of Scripture have been subject to more varied interpretations. The passage sets up a distinction between sin with its source in Satan, and righteousness (in conduct-not conduct which generates righteousness as a ground of standing before God, but conduct which is promoted to deeds of rectitude because of the perfect standing in the divine righteousness imputed to all who believe) with its source in God. Though allusion had been made before in this general discussion to this passage,, a more extended consideration of it is essential at this point.

Probably the key phase in this context is, “Sin is the transgression of the law” (vs. 4), where the force of is amounts to is equivalent to. In the foregoing chapters of this volume, evidence has been adduced to demonstrate that sin began with Satan in heaven, he thus becoming the father or originator of it; and that sin is, in its essential character, a lawless departure from the purpose and will of God. The passage under present consideration is in accord with the most distinctive characteristic of sin, namely, lawlessness. The Apostle includes here *all* sin, not *some* sin. It is
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lawlessness against God and all that His holy character demands. If the interpretation were permitted that some sins only were in view, there would be provided an explanation, which some have supposed to be true, of the strong statements which follow in the context. Roman Catholic theology distinguishes here between mortal and venial sins. Augustine, Luther, and Bede, in harmony with the tenor of the Epistle, sought to restrict this form of sin to sin against brotherly love. Others have restricted it to deadly sin. However, the passage is clear in its declaration. It most evidently refers to all sin and not merely to bad sins as in contradistinction to good sins, and the passage as certainly asserts that the essential character of sin (as the Greek auapria implies) is lawlessness-lawlessness, indeed, which is foreign to the Christian’s redemption, new birth by the Spirit, and present position in Christ. In verse 5, “And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin,” the Apostle refers parenthetically to the ground of all saving grace. The unqualified declaration of verse 6, “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him,” need not be softened by any modifications whatever. When abiding in Him, lawless sinning is excluded. Over against this, the lawless sinner neither seeth Christ nor knoweth Christ. Some have introduced here the explanation of the statement—that the one who sins neither sees nor knows Christ—by pointing out that the Christian’s vision and understanding are dulled by the practice of sin which truth could not be denied by any believer who knows from personal experience the effect of sin upon his own heart. To be observed, however, is the fact that the contrast in this passage is not between spiritual and unspiritual Christians, but is between the children of God and the children of Satan. The statement of verse 7, addressed to the “little children” of God, is exceedingly forceful and vital. It is there written: “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.” The verse declares that the only one who practices righteousness is by his new birth a partaker of the imputed righteousness of God. He not only does righteousness, but is righteous according to his eternal standing in Christ. Similarly (vs. 8), he that practiceth lawlessness is of the devil.

At this point it may clarify that which follows in this context if citation first be made of the culminative statement in verse 10: “In this [the freedom to practice sin lawlessly] the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.” Verse 9 reads as follows: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” Whatever specific qualities are in view under the phrase “doth not commit sin” (lit., ‘doeth
no sin’), are predicated of all who are “born of God.” No portion of this context has been more distorted by torturing exposition than verse 9, yet the truth here disclosed is only the logical conclusion of that which has gone before concerning lawless sinning. There is no basis in this passage for the doctrine of sinless perfection on the part of some Christians which is not true of all Christians. It will be remembered that the Apostle has warned here against all such conclusions (1:8-10). Nor does the Bible teach here, or elsewhere, that Christians do not sin. It does teach, however, that the Christian retains his Adamic, carnal nature until the day of his death, and apart from the enabling power of the Spirit, there will be sin in the Christian’s life. There is a very important difference to be observed between the two phases not able to sin and able not to sin. The latter alone is within the divine provisions. The Bible also teaches that the Christian, being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is possessed with a new standard of what is good or bad. His conduct either grieves, or does not grieve, the Holy Spirit. There is limitless suffering of heart in the path of the child of God who sins lawlessly. The Scriptures abound with illustrations of this suffering in the lives of saints whose history it records. David likened this heart suffering at the time of his lawless sinning to the waxing old of his bones through his roaring all day long, asserting that the heavy hand of God was upon him and that his moisture was turned into the drought of summer (Ps. 32:3-4). Paul, because of his failure to reach his spiritual ideals, testified that he was a “wretched man.” It is to be concluded, then, that the true child of God cannot sin lawlessly without great suffering and that suffering is due to the presence of the divine seed or nature in him. This reaction of the divine nature against sin in the Christian, which could never be experienced by unregenerate men who have not the Spirit (Jude 1:19), constitutes a ground for distinction between those who are the children of God and those who are not. There are manifold other disclosures found in the Word of God which serve to emphasize the specific character of the Christian’s sin. Some of these will yet appear in that which follows.

To a certain degree there is an element of indefiniteness about God’s law as expressed through conscience and through the leading of the Spirit, but that element is not lacking in the law of God as it is embodied in the Scriptures of Truth. The written law appears in three major forms or divisions according to its application in three distinct dispensations. The first is known as the Mosaic system, or the Mosaic Law which was addressed to Israel only, and was in effect from Mt. Sinai to the death of Christ. The second is the heaven-high instruction to Christians who, being perfected in Christ Jesus, are called to walk worthy of their heavenly calling. The third
system will govern in the yet future kingdom age and doubtless be extended as a rule of life for Gentiles who will share Israel’s earthly blessings. The difference between these governing rules of conduct, the time of their application, and the penalties related to each will yet be treated with a degree of completeness under Ecclesiology. When thus attempting a panoramic view of God’s times and ways of dealing with men, attention should be given, as before intimated, to the period between Adam and Moses—a period which is identified as before the law. (Rom. 5:13; cf. Gen. 26:5). To the same end, the truth should be observed that God addressed almost no instructions directly to Gentiles. Of them it is said that they “have not the law” (Rom. 2:14), and their estate is fully described also in Ephesians 2:12, “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” Yet, again, no rule of life is addressed to the unsaved of the present age-Jew or Gentile. To such God addresses warnings, as He does to the nations (Ps. 2:10-12), but His primary message to the unsaved is the invitation embodied in the gospel of divine grace.

A clear recognition of the important truth that the law of God presents various systems which belong to specific peoples of different ages is stated by Dr. Julius Muller:

It is evident from the hints here given regarding the relation of the moral law to the consciousness of man, that its elevation to an ever-increasing clearness of subjective conviction depends upon the progressive development of the human spirit generally; and it also follows that it must be exposed to disturbance and darkening in individuals and nations, through the force of propensities and tendencies of the will that strive against it. Hence it comes to pass that a positive revelation of the moral law—a giving of the law-appropriately finds its place in the series of God’s historical revelations to man. The Law of Moses is clearly in its moral precepts nothing more than a republication of the moral law in its intrinsic truth, suited to the wants of the Israelites; and, in order to preserve the knowledge of it in the midst of the darkening and perverting influence of human willfulness and sin, it was necessary to have it committed to writing as an actual standard of appeal. But as the moral law was in this case embodied in a code, clothed with outward political authority and inter-woven with ritualistic and civil laws, it had to accommodate itself both to the character and historical relations of the Israelites, and to the requirements of the stage of moral culture which the age had then reached. The exposition of it
as a whole had therefore to be limited, and its moral principles are exhibited only in the broadest outlines. An unprejudiced consideration of the Mosaic law obliges us to allow that while it announces the eternal principles of true morality, and it ever calculated to beget the knowledge of sin and repentance, there is in the Christian Church, through the power of the pattern of holiness in Christ, and of the divine Spirit, a far more developed and deeper knowledge of the law than could possibly have been given to the Israelites through Moses. –Op. cit. I, 38-39.

The written law does not serve to originate sin. It is stated in Romans 5:13 that “sin was in the world” before the Mosaic Law was given, though at that time, or until the law, sin was not imputed. In the light of all Scripture bearing on the period on the period from Adam to Moses, the statement that sin was not then imputed must be interpreted as meaning that the specific things which the law introduced and were thus definitely commanded became new ideals, the breaking of which became an overt act of disobedience. These new ideals, however, were not prescribed before the giving of the law and thus, in that earlier time, men were not charged with disobedience to commandments not yet given; but sin was in the world before the specific commands were given. The law which is “holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12) does stir the reaction of the sin nature and by so much creates discord in the life. It is written, “But sin [sin nature], taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead” (Rom. 7:8). The Apostles also states, “Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15); “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound” (Rom. 5:20).

To say that sin is lawlessness assigns a very wide field of application to it if all forms of law are considered, yet it is more extensive and complete to assert that sin is any want of conformity to the character of God.

V. GENERAL TERMS AND CLASSIFICATIONS

Concerning the precise meaning of terms which belong to the doctrine of sin, the student of theology would do well to be informed. The term sin is peculiar and restricted in its application. On this point Dr. A. M. Fairbairn remarks: “Sin’ is a religious term, intelligible only in the realm of religious experience and thought. ‘Evil’ is a philosophical term, and denotes every condition, circumstance, or act that in any manner or degree interferes with complete perfection.
or happiness of being, whether physical, metaphysical, or moral. ‘Vice’ is an ethical term; it is
moral evil interpreted as an offence against the ideal or law given in the nature of man: it is the
blot or stain left by the departure from nature. ‘Crime’ is a legal term, denotes the open or public
violation of the law which a society or state has framed for its own preservation and the
protection of its members. But sin differs from these in this respect: they may be in a system
which knows no God, but without God there can be no sin” (Christ in Modern Theology, 10th

Personal sins may be classified somewhat accurately by the familiar Biblical terms employed in
the Authorized Version of both Old and New Testament to designate them.

(1) Transgression, which is the stepping to one side, or the overstepping of those boundaries
which God has marked off.

(2) Iniquity, referring to that which is altogether wrong.

(3) Error, that which disregards the right or goes astray.

(4) Sin, which is coming short, or missing the mark.

(5) Wickedness, the outworking and expression of an evil nature, depravity.

(6) Evil, with reference to that which is actually wrong, opposing God.

(7) Ungodliness, lacking any worthy fear of God.

(8) Disobedience, an unwillingness to be led or guided in ways of truth.

(9) Unbelief, failure to trust in God. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Unbelief
appears as the one and only “besetting sin,” which sin is universal. Men do not have
individual and varied besetting sins. Each person is characterized by his failure to believe
God (note Heb. 12:1-2, where the one reference to “sin which doth so easily beset us” is set
over against that faith of which Jesus is the Author and Finisher).

(10) Lawlessness, which consists in the persistent contempt of divine law and a breaking
through all restraint to the end that self may be gratified regardless of divine admonition.
The most illuminating passage—1 John 3:4-10—is rendered somewhat obscure by the
translation of avouia by ‘transgression’. The discussion of this context develops the one
aspect of sin which is lawlessness, as in contrast to the righteousness which impels the saved
one whose new nature received from God cannot go in the ways of lawless sin. The
unregenerate prove their lost estate by their ability to sin lawlessly without pain of heart—that
suffering to which David referred when he said, “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old
through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my
moisture is turned into the drought of summer” (Ps. 32:3-4). The child of God when sinning experiences the grieving of the Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30), which experience will keep him from that carelessness of soul termed avouia-lawlessness. Therefore, according to I John 3:9, anyone born of God does not sin lawlessly. The presence of the divine nature precludes this. However, there is no reference in this passage to sinless perfection. Such perfection could not be in view at this point since what is here declared is said to be true in the case of all who are born of God, and not one of these is sinless before God. Similarly, the following verse (3:10) declares that this ability to sin lawlessly is a marking off of children of the devil from the children of God.

Again personal sins may be classified according to their general aspects.

1. As related to the divine requirements, they are either omissions or commissions.
2. As related to the object, they are against God, neighbor, or self.
3. As related to compass, they are either inward-of the soul or outward-of the body.
4. As related to chargeableness, they are to self alone, or to others as being partakers in them (I Tim. 5:22). There is probably no practice of sin which is harder to terminate than that which has drawn people into a partnership. The reason for this is clear. One cannot forsake the enterprise, as he might were he alone, without seeming to incriminate the other, or others, and to seem to be superior to the other, or others.
5. As related to intention, they are voluntary, or involuntary, which latter may be due to ignorance, uncontrollable passion, or infirmity.
6. As related to sinfulness, they may be greater, or less.
7. As related to the subject, they may be that of the unsaved, or saved.
8. As related to the divine penalty, some sins are at least partially judged in this world, while others are judged in the world to come.
9. As related to divine forgiveness, they are unforgiven, or forgiven. A form of unforgiven sin is seen in the case of the unpardonable sin, which was committed only when Christ was here on earth, and which sin is not now possible, both because of the fact that Christ is not here as He was then nor is He in the same relation to the Holy Spirit, and because such a penalty as is imposed on those who committed the unpardonable sin sets up a direct contradiction of divine grace in salvation. There cannot be an unpardonable sin and a whosoever-will gospel at the same time.
10. As related to their cause, they may be sins of ignorance, imprudence, heedlessness, concupiscence, malice, or presumption.
(11) As related to God as the Governor of the universe, sins are such as to call forth His vengeance, or such as to call forth His longsuffering.

VI. THE DIVINE REMEDY FOR PERSONAL SIN

In a previous discussion the specific character of personal sin had been presented, and it was there pointed out that personal sin of whatever form is only the legitimate fruitage of the sin nature. However, the divine cure for personal sin, it should be observed, is of a wholly different character than the divine cure for the sin nature. Being by birth a partaker of the sin nature, there is no personal guilt charged against the individual because of that nature, though there is condemnation on the ground of the inherent unlikeness of that nature to God. On the other hand, both guilt and condemnation are attributed to the individual because of personal sin. The divine cure for personal sin is twofold, namely, (1) forgiveness and (2) justification. It is recognized that the two themes — forgiveness and justification — being primarily to Soteriology, and under that main division they are to be treated again. With some disregard for precise divisional boundaries it has seemed good to incorporate into this work some reference to the divine remedy for each major aspect of sin.

1. FORGIVENESS. In approaching the doctrine of the forgiveness of personal sin, three erroneous impressions, quite common indeed, may well be pointed out — one of which has to do directly with this subject.

(a) In their treatment of the whole doctrine of sin, theological writers have too often restricted their discussion to the one theme of personal sin, which misleading practice has imposed incalculable limitations on the doctrine as a whole. (b) It is by any assumed that the forgiveness of personal sin is the equivalent of personal salvation. To such persons, a Christian is no more than a forgiven sinner, whereas, of upwards of thirty-three divine accomplishments which together comprise salvation, forgiveness is but one of them. (c) The distinction between divine forgiveness of the unsaved and that of the Christian must be clearly recognized, and will be so recognized in this treatment by reserving the discussion of that phase of the doctrine which concerns the Christian until a later division of this general theme is reached.

As an act of God, forgiveness is common to both Testaments, the English word *forgive*, in its various forms being a translation of five Hebrew words and four Greek words. One of the Greek words is translated nine times by the English word *remission*. The underlying though which the word *forgive* universally conveys when expressing the act of God is that of putting away, releasing, or pardoning. It is the taking away of sin and its condemnation from the offender, or offenders, by imputing the sin to, and imposing its righteous judgments upon, Another, Covering all generations of human life on the earth, no statement could be more conclusive than that found in Hebrews 9:22, “And without shedding of blood is no remission.” In the period covered by the Old Testament records, we find the word *forgive* used only of God in His dealing nationally or individually with Israel and her proselytes. Gentile standing before God preceding the death of
Christ is described in Ephesians 2:12 wherein it is declared that they were without Christ, without commonwealth privileges, without covenant promises, without hope, and without God in the world. There is but little Scripture bearing upon the forgiveness of the sin of Gentiles in the days before Christ. Some Gentiles, we are told, did offer sacrifices, and their forgiveness is thus implied. To Israel, whether as a nation or as individuals, divine forgiveness was an act of God which was based on and followed the offering of sacrifices (national-Num. 15:24-25, and individual-Lev. 4:31), though, being a people related to God by covenant based upon sacrifices, they were at times both nationally (Num. 14:11-20) and individually (Ps. 32:1-5) forgiven on the ground of confession of sin. When forgiveness was extended on the ground of confession, it was, as in the New Testament (cf. I John 1:9), made righteously possible only as based on sacrificial blood. Herein is seen the major distinction which exists between divine forgiveness and human forgiveness. At best, human forgiveness can do no more than to pass over, waive, or abandon any and all penalty that exists. In such forgiveness the injured party relinquishes all claim to any form of satisfaction which otherwise might be demanded or imposed upon the offender. Such forgiveness, so far as it ever exists, is only a voluntary gratuity in which the offended party surrenders all claim to compensation. On the other hand, divine forgiveness is never extended to the offender as an act of leniency, nor is the penalty waived, since God, being infinitely holy and upholding His government which is founded on undeviating righteousness, cannot make light of sin. Divine forgiveness is therefore extended only when the last demand or penalty against the offender has been satisfied. Since no human being could ever render divine satisfaction for his sins, God, in measureless mercy, has provided all the satisfaction, even divine propitiation, which the sinner could ever need. This is good news. The following form Dr. Henry C. Mabie is well stated: “God Himself, as Carnegie Simpson in his book, ‘The Fact of Christ,’ has so strongly shown, “is the moral law, is the ethical order,” in a sense that no man, no earthly father is. While among men, and particularly men as forgiven sinners, ‘forgiveness to others is the first and simplest of duties, with God it is the profoundest of problems.’ If He as the world’s moral Governor, even with the profoundest fatherly love, forgives, He must do it in a way that will not legitimize sin on the one hand, and as will win the heart to penitence and faith on the other” (The Divine Reason of the Cross, p. 130).

Under the Old Testament order, the value of the divinely provided and efficacious sacrifice of Christ was accepted in anticipation and symbolized by the shedding of blood. In due time God justified that expectation, and all His acts of forgiveness which had been based upon those offerings were proved to have been righteous by the bearing by Christ of those sins which were previously forgiven (Rom. 3:25). As a verification of the fact that, in the old order, sacrifices preceded divine forgiveness of the offender, we read the following statement four times in Leviticus, chapter four: “And the priest shall make an atonement for his sin that he hath committed, and it shall be forgiven him” (vss. 20,26,31, 35). Corresponding in the New Testament divine forgiveness is invariably based on the one sacrifice or sin which Christ has made. But one passage need be cited: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7). If question be raised here
concerning the fact that before His death Christ forgave sin, it should be remembered that such forgiveness preceded and was therefore in anticipation of His death. Being Himself the sacrificial Lamb that was to be slain who would elect to bear all sin, He said of Himself, “The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins” (Mark 2:10). However, it should be observed that divine forgiveness, being based as it is upon the perfect satisfaction which the death of Christ supplies, can be, and is, as perfect and complete in character as is the work of the Substitute on which it is based. Thus, according to Colossians 2:13, divine forgiveness is seen to reach to “all trespasses”—past, present and future—for the one who is saved. The perfection of this transaction and the extent of it are said to be such that the believer is now on a peace footing with God—“We have peace with God” (Rom. 5:1)—and “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). Such unqualified forgiveness belongs only to the Christian’s perfect standing, being “in Christ Jesus.” As a counterpart of this, there yet remains to be considered, as it will be in Chapter XXII, “The Christian’s Sin and Its Remedy,” the importance divine method of dealing with those sins which the child of God commits after he is saved and the fact that he is wholly forgiven through the blood of Christ, being perfectly accepted in the Beloved.

Though, on the divine side, the freedom to forgive sin is always secured, directly or indirectly, through the blood of Christ, the requirements on the human side vary to some extent with the different ages of time. During the period between Abel and Christ, forgiveness was made, on the human side, to depend on the presentation of a specified sacrifice. During the present age, it is made to depend, for the unsaved, on faith in Christ; but for the saved, who are already under the value of Christ’s blood, forgiveness is made to depend upon confession and is impelled by the fact that God has already forgiven (Eph. 4:32). But during the coming age divine forgiveness is, on the human side, made to depend upon a willingness of the offender to forgive those who have sinned against him (Matt. 6:14-15). The two principles—forgiving to be forgiven, or forgiving because forgiven—cannot be harmonized; nor is such an effort required since they belong to different ages and represent two widely diverse administrations.

It may be concluded, then, that divine forgiveness of sin in whatever age or under whatever conditions, though varying in the requirements on the human side, is always based upon the sacrifice of Christ and consists in a removal of sin in the sense that it is no longer charged against the sinner, but is charged against his Substitute. No better word can be found to express this removal of sin by forgiveness than that employed in Romans 11:27 concerning the yet future divine dealing with the sins of the nation Israel: “For this is my covenant with them, when I shall take away their sins.”

2. JUSTIFICATION. The words just and justify often occur in the Bible and are usually related directly or indirectly to justice as an element of human character. According to Scripture usage, to be just or justified may mean no more than to be free from guilt or innocent of any charge. With respect to their characters, the Old Testament saints are described upwards of thirty times as “just” persons, and it is under that designation, it would seem, they are to appear in the
heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22-24). Speaking to those who were still under the old order and by the parable of the lost sheep, Christ refers to one hundred individuals of whom ninety and nine were “just persons,” needing no repentance (Luke 15:3-7). In like manner, by his good works man may be justified in the eyes of his fellow men. This is the distinctive teaching of James 2:14-26. However, of far greater import is that justification of man by God, which justification is based on the imputed righteousness of God. Of the Old Testament saints, Abraham is said to have attained unto imputed righteousness (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:1-4), and Davis declares the man to be “blessed” unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works (Rom. 4:6; cf. Ps. 32:1-2). The Scriptures thus record the fact that Abraham attained by faith unto imputed righteousness and implies that he was justified by faith since he was not justified by works. David wrote, “For in thy sight shall no man living be justified” (Ps. 143: 2), and Bildad, who expressed the beliefs of the ancients, said: “How…can man be justified with God?” (Job 25:4). Though anticipated in the Old Testament, divine justification of men, as more fully revealed in the New Testament, is the highest consummating work, but one, of God for the believer, being surpassed only by that eternal glory which is to follow: “And whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom. 8:30). Though the precise features of this great doctrine are set forth in the Word of God, directly or indirectly, Romish perversions and Arminian unbelief have gone far in robbing multitudes of Christians of any adequate understanding of the benefits that justification affords them.

Imputed righteousness is secured by a vital union with Christ, while divine justification is a judicial decree of God which is based on, and is an acknowledgment of, imputed righteousness. There is a logical order—though not chronological, since each and every step is wrought simultaneously at the moment saving faith is effective—which leads to that consummating justification which is by divine decree. These steps are: (1) Upon believing, the individual enters actually and completely into the values secured for him by the death of Christ. This includes the remission of sins; but far more, indeed, since that death became the ground of divine justification. The precise rendering of Romans 4:25 is of surpassing importance as relating divine justification to the death rather than to the resurrection of Christ. We read: “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” In all, three causes for divine justification are to be distinguished: (a) a primary-the sovereign love of God, (b) a meritorious-the substitutionary death of Christ, and (c) an instrumental-faith. The text in question is concerned only with the meritorious cause and is one of the few texts in the New Testament bearing on this phase of the truth (cf. Rom. 5:9, where justification is declared to be by the blood of Christ; and 2 Cor. 5:21, where imputed righteousness, the ground of justification, is said to be possible because of the fact that Christ, by His death, was made to be sin for us). “It is finished,” which phrase was on the lips of Christ when about to die, would be emptied of much of its meaning if it did not witness to the fact that the basis of divine justification is established forever. By a certain group of expositors, this passage (Rom. 4:25) is taken to mean that Christ’s death is the ground of our forgiveness, while His resurrection is the ground of our justification. It is thus assumed that as sin caused Christ’s death, so justification necessitated His resurrection. On the contrary, as passage cited above imply, divine justification is based only on the death of Christ,
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who having secured the foundation for justification by His death, rose from the dead; for “it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24). Bishop Moule stated it thus; “We sinned, therefore He suffered: we were justified, therefore He rose” (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges-Romans, p. 98). This interpretation preserves the grammatical form, both phrases being of the same construction. It is obvious that none are actually justified until they believe, but provisionally the righteous ground upon which they could be justified when they do believe was secured once for all by Christ in His death. Therefore, that work being wrought, He rose from the dead.

Continuing the enumeration of the steps in their logical order which lead to divine justification, we note: (2) that the believer is, by a twofold ministry of the Spirit-namely, regeneration, by which a divine nature is imparted to the believer, which is the indwelling Christ; and the Spirit’s baptism, by which the believer is placed in Christ-so vitally and eternally related to Christ as Substitute that all that Christ is and all that He has done are imputed to the child of God. What Christ is, when reckoned to the believer, becomes the basis of his divine justification; what Christ has done becomes the basis of his divine forgiveness.

The doctrine of divine justification has ever suffered from, and at times has been all but lost by, the unwarranted supposition that it is synonymous with divine forgiveness. Though closely related as measureless benefits to the Christian, these benefits, since they point in opposite directions, are far removed the one from the other. Even the Shorter Catechism (Westminster)-usually dependable for accuracy of doctrine-confuses these two divine undertakings. It declares that “justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteous of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.” Similarly, the theology of Rome states: “Not the mere remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renovation of the inner man.” The Arminians go even further by stating: “Justification is a remission of sins and a sentence of pardon.” John Wesley asserted: “Justification is pardon-the forgiveness of sins.” This is but a slight improvement over the Unitarian contention that justification is only a moral change. It is true that none are justified who are not forgiven; and, with respect to that forgiveness which accompanies salvation, none are forgiven who are not justified. But divine forgiveness, often repeated in the Christian’s experience, is the subtraction of that which has been sinful, while once-for all divine justification is made possible by the addition of that which is righteous. The act of accepting Christ as Savior is one act, yet it results in many specific benefits and among these are pardon and justification.

It is likewise essential to a clear understanding of the doctrine of justification that a distinction be observed between imputed righteousness and divine justification. That these two aspects of the believer’s standing are closely related is evidenced by the fact that in the original Greek they are two forms of one and the same word. Imputed righteousness, which is that righteousness from God now reckoned to the believer because of the fact that he is in Christ-Christ being made unto him the very righteousness of God (cf. Rom. 3:22, 10:3-4; I cor. 1:30, 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:6;
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2:13) - represents the unchangeable value which Christ becomes to all who are in Him. It is secured wholly by the believer’s place in Christ and exists only by virtue of that relationship.

The letter to the Romans distinguishes four kinds of righteousness, namely, (a) God’s own character (3:25; 9:14); (b) human character (10:3); (c) inwrought, or Spirit-empowered, righteousness (8:4); and (d) imputed righteousness (1:7, etc.). The last-named is that which Christ is and which becomes the believer’s by divine imputation or reckoning, being, as it is, the legitimate benefit accruing automatically to the one who is in Christ. That righteousness of God which Christ is never ceased to be de facto Christ’s own, nor does it ever become de facto any part of the believer’s own character. As the wedding garment is not the person who wears it, so imputed righteousness is the believer’s standing or covering, and is not antecedently the believer’s own righteousness. It is true, however, that the undiminished value of imputed righteousness endures as long as the merit of Christ endures, upon which it is made to stand.

On the other hand, divine justification is the decree, or public acknowledgment, on the part of God that the believer whom He sees perfected with respect to standing, being in Christ, is justified in His sight. Thus (3) the last step in the logical order of divine undertaking leading to justification is seen to be, not the creation and bestowment of righteousness which is secured only through the believer’s relation to Christ, but rather the official divine recognition of that righteousness. The child of God is justified by virtue of the fact that God has declared him to be righteous. God does not, nor could He, legalize a mere fiction, much less a falsehood. The righteousness which is the basis of His justifying decree is no less than the absolute righteousness of God made available through Christ and is imputed to all who believe.

Concerning the legal, equitable character of imputed righteousness and the decree of divine justification, it should be observed that, of the five typical offerings of Leviticus, chapter 1 to 5 - the burnt offering, typifying Christ offering Himself without spot to God to do the Father’s will; the meal offering, typifying the evenness, balance, and perfection of Christ’s character; the peace offering, typifying Christ as our peace; the sin offering, typifying Christ as the Sin-bearer; and the trespass offering, typifying Christ in relation to the injury which sin has wrought against God and His rightful possessions as Creator (cf. Ps. 51:4) - the first three of these are classified as “sweet savour offerings” and the remaining two are classified as “non-sweet savour offerings.” By so much it is indicated that there was that in Christ’s death which was a delight to His Father. It was a sweet incense to His Father. And, likewise, there was that in the death of Christ which was abhorrent to His Father, and this was typified by the last two offerings which were non-sweet savour.

Considering these two groups of typical offerings more at length and in their reverse order, we observe: (a) that, because of holy character of God and the moral impossibility of His looking upon sin with the least degree of allowance, His face was turned away from the Sin-bearer. It was then that the Savior cried, ”My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It may well be inquired why the adorable Second Person of the Godhead was nailed to a cross and forsaken of
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the First Person. Indeed, men have advanced many answers to this question. The Word of God advances only one answer, namely, the Second Person, as the Lamb of God, is substituting as an offering in the room and stead of a lost world. As a part of the value to God of this sacrifice, the Father is able to forgive the personal sins of all those who come unto Him by Christ Jesus. When thus based upon the death of Christ, the transaction becomes legal, for when pardoning even the chief of sinners God is in no way complicated with sin nor is He condoning unrighteousness. Every penalty which His righteous government must impose upon the sinner, having fallen upon a Substitute, is perfectly answered. (b) We likewise observe that when Christ offered His own perfections to the Father, as typified by the sweet savor offerings, a legal provision was secured whereby the merit of the Son of God might be imputed to the one whom He saves. Referring to the Father’s delight in this aspect of the death of His Son, we read in Hebrews 10:6-7-words spoken by the Son to His Father when the Son came into the words (vs. 5)-“In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come…to do thy will O God.” The contrast which is here presented should not be passed over inattentively. The word of the Son that He received a sacrificial body (vs. 5) implies that His sacrifice will be well-pleasing to His Father as former burnt offerings and sacrifices (note that He here relates His death to the sweet savor offerings) has not been. In that aspect of Christ’s death, typified by the sweet savor offerings, the Father’s face is not turned away, but in this He finds delight; for the Second Person then “offered himself without spot to God” (Heb. 9:14). If the question be asked why the Second Person of the blessed Trinity is on a cross offering His perfections to the First Person, it may be answered: Certainly He is not making that offering as a revelation to the Father, for every perfection of the Son has been known by the Father throughout all eternity. It is rather that, since fallen man possesses no merit before God of his own, the Son, as Substitute, is offering His own perfect merit to the Father for him. Thus a legal ground is secured whereon God is free, not only to forgive according to the non-sweet savor offering type, but is likewise free to impute all the perfections of His Son according to the sweet savor offering type to the one whom He saves.

We thus conclude that divine justification is not a mere removal of personal sins by forgiveness, but it is rather a divine decree which declares the believer to be eternally clothed with the righteousness of God; it has no relation to the resurrection of Christ, but is based only upon His death. Justification is a divine act which is equitable to an infinite degree, and, though in no conflict with human reason, is knowledge-surpassing in its magnitude and glory. Divine justification is a bit of heaven’s perfection brought down to earth. It is so harmonious to divine jurisprudence that God is said to be just when He justifies a sinner who does no more than to believe in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). Divine justification, being legally equitable, will be defended by God to the end of eternity. In fact, the same righteousness which once condemned the sinner will, when that sinner is justified, defend his perfect standing in Christ forever. The chief end of man, we are told, is to glorify God. This every created being will do, for God has created no being who will not contribute to His eternal glory. Each and every one will either demonstrate His grace in all its perfections (Eph. 2:7), or display His wrath (Rom. 9:22) in all the ages to come. Divine justification is a feature of the divine cure for personal sin. It extends, also, to
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every other aspect of man’s unlikeness to God, and answers every challenge that could be brought against the one who is saved through faith in Christ.

VII. ORIGINAL SIN

The term original sin carries with it at least two implications, namely (1) the first sin of the race and (2) the state of man in all subsequent generations, which state is due to that original sin. The latter meaning of this term is assigned an entire section of the present main division of this discussion. The former meaning of the term is the one reason for the introduction of this topic under personal sin; for the first sin of Adam, which wrought his ruin and that of the race, was a personal sin. Much has been written about the specific nature of that original sin which does not call for restatement other than to point out that every human sin is of the same nature as the original sin, and, were the one who sins placed as Adam was placed as the federal, unfallen head of a race, the commonest sin in human life would have in it the power to cause the fall of the one who sinned as well as the entire race which he represented. The obvious effect of the first sin serves as one of the best measurements of the evil character of all sin.

VIII. GUILT

The New Standard Dictionary (1913 ed.) defines guilt as “the state of one who has consciously disobeyed God and is therefore under the divine condemnation.” From the theological point of view, this definition is defective. Sin is not a matter of consciousness of evil. Being, as it is, against God, and drawing its evil character from the fact that it is unlike God, sin is evil whether the sinner realizes it to be such or not. A distinction thus arises between blameworthiness, which must be tempered by extenuating circumstances, and guilt, which in its primary meaning refers to the historical fact that a certain sin was committed by a certain individual. No better illustration will be found of the mitigation which may determine blameworthiness than the experience of the Apostle Paul as a persecutor of the Church. He writes: “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (I Tim. 1:13). On the other hand, guilt, and sometimes blameworthiness, belong to the individual where his own estimation concerning himself would not coincide. Christ taught that a glance of the eye was equivalent to adultery (Matt. 5:27-28).

In its historical aspect, the guilt of sin committed will never be changed; it could not be transferred to any other person. God in grace may forget it and mention it no more forever, having removed all penalty and condemnation. The historical record remains unchanged. There is, however, an aspect of guilt, as related to theology, which considers it as an obligation to law. This may be discharged by punishment endured or transferred to another who as substitute suffers the penalty for the guilty person. Christ bore our guilt, not historically, which would mean that He became the actual doer of the crimes of men, but in the sense that the sin of man is an obligation to divine justice. As Substitute, He died “the just for the unjust.” In this
undertaking He never became the unjust, but as the just He bore the burden which was ever the rightful portion of the unjust.

The problem of guilt because of the sin nature is one which has divided the two major schools of theology, the Calvinistic and the Arminian. This phase of this discussion appears in the following section.

It remains to observe that concerning guilt, even as an obligation to God, no sinner could ever discharge his own responsibility. Human effort or suffering will not avail in time or eternity. The obligation is too vast. This truth must be stressed constantly. It therefore follows that, apart from the perfect relief which is provided in Christ’s forensic, substitutionary sufferings, the sinner must remain guilty before God in every sense of the word and for all eternity. On the basis of this truth, it is justly argued that, in respect to duration, the penalty continues forever, or as long as the unchangeable guilt endures. As long as the cause for penalty exists, there is reason for it to continue—the same reason which determined its infliction at all. The human mind dreams of a time when penalty will have been paid and relief earned by the sinner, but this is to assert that the sinner can pay the price of sin, which is never true. The fact of guilt and the consciousness of it are immeasurable realities. Carlyle, writing in his French Revolution (III.i.4), states regarding the reality of guilt:

From the purpose of crime to the act of crime there is an abyss; wonderful to think of. The finger lies on the pistol; but the man is not yet a murderer; nay, his whole nature staggering at such a consummation, is there not a confused pause rather—one last instant of possibility for him? Not yet a murderer; it is at the mercy of light trifles whether the most fixed idea may not yet become unfixed. One slight twitch of a muscle, the death-flash bursts; and he is it, and will for Eternity be it; and Earth has become a penal Tartarus for him; his horizon girdled now not with golden hope, but with red flames of remorse; voices from the depths of Nature sounding, Woe, woe on him! Of such stuff are we all made; on such powder-mines of bottomless guilt and criminality—“If God restrained not,” as is well said—does the purest of us walk? There are depths in man that go to the length of lowest Hell, as there are heights that reach highest Heaven—for are not both Heaven and Hell made out of him, made by him, everlasting miracle and mystery as he is?—Cited by W.G.T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, II, 723

In the midst of the awful truth regarding the eternity of guilt and its consequences, no small comfort is accorded those who embrace that inexhaustible, immutable, and perfect salvation which the substitutionary work of Christ affords. Not only is there “peace with God” through our Lord Jesus Christ and a perfect relationship secured which is no less than a justification which God accomplishes to His own satisfaction, but He will remember against the saved one no more those sins with their guilt which He has taken on His own breast in the Person of His Son. Thus by forgiveness and justification even the historical aspect of guilt is relieved beyond comprehension for those who believe.
IX. UNIVERSALITY

That the entire race, except One, have been, and are, sinners by practice is the teaching of the Bible and is confirmed by every candid observation. Richard Watson cites five striking proofs of the universality of human sin. These are as headings in the extended discussion which he offers in his *Institutes* (II, 61-66).

1. That in all ages great, and even general wickedness has prevailed among those large masses of men which are called nations.

2. The second fact to be accounted for is, the strength of that tendency to the wickedness which we have seen to be general.

3. The third fact is, that the seeds of the vices which exist in society may be discovered in children in their earliest years, selfishness, envy, pride, resentment, deceit, lying, and often cruelty; and so much is this the case, so explicitly is this acknowledged by all, that it is the principal object of the moral branch of education to restrain and correct those evils, both by coercion, and by diligently impressing upon children, as their faculties open, the evil and mischief of all such affections and tendencies.

4. The fourth fact is, that every man is conscious of a natural tendency to many evils.

5. The fifth fact is, even after a serious wish and intention has been formed in men to renounce these views, and “to live righteously, soberly, and godly,” as becomes creatures made to glorify God, and on their trial for eternity, strong and constant resistance is made by the passions, appetites, and inclinations of the heart at every step of the attempt.

The Scriptures bear an uncomplicated testimony to the sinfulness of man; even the sins of those who wrote the Bible are exposed. The Old Testament declares: “For there is no man that sinneth not” (I Kings 8:46); “For in thy sight shall no man living be justified” (Ps. 143:2); “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” (Prov. 20:9); “For there is not a just man on the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Eccl. 7:20). With the same end in view, the New Testament is even more emphatic. The universal practice of sin is presupposed by Christ (cf. Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; 6:12; Luke 24:47; John 3:3-5). The preaching of the gospel is itself an implication that salvation is needed by all. Apart from redemption, man is wrong in the sight of God. Those who fail to receive the saving grace of God are in every instance condemned. The very universality of Christ’s death indicates the truth that God sees a lost world of men for whom He gave His Son (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Many direct statements appear in the New Testament. A few only need be quoted: “What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin” (Rom. 3:9); “Now we know just that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:19-20); “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23); “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might
be given to them that believe” (Gal. 3:22); “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (I John 1:10).

The experience of personal sin is so closely related to the fact of the sin nature that any discussion of the one involves the other. Men have sought to modify the teachings of the Bible on the sinfulness of sin, and they have denied the doctrine of the sin nature; but none from the earliest of heathen philosophers to the leaders of modern thought have denied the universality of sin.

The truth relative to personal sin, though extended, is but a portion of the whole doctrine of sin; therefore this discussion advances to the transmitted sin nature.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TRANSMITTED SIN NATURE

As EVERY EFFECT must have its cause, there is a cause or reason for the fact that personal sin is universal. That cause is the sin nature-sometimes styled the Adamic nature, inborn sin, original sin, or the old man. By whatever term it is indicated, the reference is to a reality which originated with Adam and has been transmitted from Adam to all his race. The effect of the first sin upon unfallen Adam was a degeneration—a conversion downwards. As an immediate result of that first sin, Adam became a different kind of being from that which God had created, and the law of generation obtained, which sees to it that reproduction by any living thing will be “after its kind.” Of the Adamic nature which Adam gained by disobedience, John Calvin writes in his Institutes, II. ii.12: “Since God is the author of nature, how comes it that no blame attaches to God if we are lost by nature? I answer, there is a twofold nature: The one produced by God, and the other is corruption of it. We are not born such as Adam was at first created” (cited by W.G.T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, II, 196). Adam’s experience was unique beyond all other members of his race—save One. Adam became a sinner by sinning. Every other member of the race-save One-sins because he is a sinner by birth. In Adam’s case a personal sin caused the sin nature; in the case of all other human beings-save One-the sin nature causes personal sins. The fact that sinners sin should create no surprise; and while this truth does not mitigate the sinfulness of personal sin, it is clear that God fully anticipates that where the root is evil the fruit will be evil also. Where the fountain is bitter the water will be bitter also. The divine reasonableness proposes to deal with the root that is evil and the fountain that is bitter. At once, when this aspect of truth is approached, deep and far-reaching problems—more or less metaphysical—are encountered. Nothing could be more useless than are those systems which propose to deal with sin’s manifestations and not at all with the cause. It is the folly of treating symptoms without any effort to identify and correct the cause. In the Expositor (I-IX, 21) Dr. George Matheson says, “There is the same difference between the Christian and Pagan idea of prayer as there is between the Christian and Pagan idea of sin. Paganism knows nothing of sin, it knows only sins; it has no conception of the principle of evil, it comprehends only a succession
of sinful acts” (cited by W.H. Griffith Thomas in *The Principles of Theology*, p. 161). Another folly may be identified in the rationalistic notion that the Adamic nature may be eradicted through some so-called *second work of grace*. As is always the case, normal experience runs true to sound Biblical doctrine. Not only does the Bible lend no sanction to this eradication idea, but human experience contradicts it without exception. As Dr. Muller well says concerning a similar error, “This theory does not explain the real facts of our moral life and consciousness; it gives them the lie, and the facts avenge themselves by taking no notice of the theory” (*The Christian Doctrine of Sin*, I, 30). This phase of this general theme pertains wholly to the Christian life and experience and will be resumed under a subsequent division of this study. In fact, nothing belongs to this division as it concerns the unregenerate other than the general proofs which establish the truth regarding the sin nature as a vital part of every unregenerate person.

Since the sin of Adam merited the penalty of death, attention is again directed to that penalty in its three forms. Apart from revelation, men gain vague notions about the experience termed death. Revelation alone explains its origin, present universal sway, and its future termination. Death is an intruder into God’s creation. As created, man was as immortal as the angels. The history is plainly written. God said to Adam concerning the forbidden fruit, “In the day that thou eatest thereof, ‘dying thou shalt die.’” The death thus promised and afterwards executed in judgment, embraced spiritual death, which is the separation of soul and spirit from God; second death, which is the permanent form of spiritual death or eternal separation of soul and spirit from God; and physical death, which is the separation of soul and spirit from the body. Upon his repudiation of God by disobedience, Adam came at once into the experience of spiritual death. He was doomed to the second death, except he should be redeemed, and then he began the process of physical death, which process in due time came to its full completion.

As physical death is related to imputed sin (yet to be examined), spiritual death is related to the transmitted sin nature. This nature manifests itself along two lines—inclination to evil, by which it is usually identified; and depravity, which is the inability to do good in the manner which is pleasing to God. Spiritual death is evidenced in both of these features, though, since death is so universally associated with cessation, it is perhaps easier to relate spiritual death with the incapacity to do good than to associate it with the inclination to evil. The truth to be stressed by which much confusion may be clarified is that spiritual death is not the cessation of any form of life. It is rather life to its full measure as separate from God. The state of spiritual death is well described with its activities in Ephesians 2:1-3: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” and Ephesians 4:18-19: “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of
their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over into lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”

Spiritual death and the sin nature are alike, then, in these respects that each manifests life in separation from the knowledge of God, from the life of God, from the power of God, and from the benefits of His grace. Spiritual death is a state. The sin nature is fallen man attempting too live in that state.

It remains to be seen that both spiritual death and the sin nature are transmitted medially from parent to child in all generations. There is no apparent diminishing of the force and character of this perverted life. The last child born into the race is as affected with spiritual death and as saturated with the sin nature as was Cain who received his evil tendency immediately from his father, Adam.

I. THE FACT OF THE SIN NATURE

In seeking to analyze more specifically what the sin nature is, it should be remembered that it is a perversion of God’s original creation and in that sense is an abnormal thing. Every faculty of man is injured by the fall, and the disability to do good and the strange predisposition to evil arise from that inner confusion.

Dr. W. G. T. Shedd has written at length on the injury to the original man by sin and the peculiar characteristics of the sin nature. He asserts:

Viewed as natural corruption, original sin may be considered with respect to the understanding. (a) It is blindness. Is. 42:7, “A light to open blind eyes.” Luke 4:18, “Recovering of sight to the blind.” Rev. 3:17, “Knowest not that thou art blind.” 2 Cor. 4:4. “The god of this world hath blinded their minds.” All texts that speak of regeneration as “enlightening.” 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:14; I Thes. 5:5; Ps. 97:11, etc. All texts that call sin “darkness.” Prov. 4:19; Is. 60:2; Eph. 5:11; Col. 1:13; I John 2:11; I Thes. 5:4; Eph 4:18, “Having the understanding darkened;” Rom. 1:28, “Reprobate mind.” Sin blinds and darkness the understanding, by destroying the consciousness of divine things. For example, the soul destitute of love to God is no longer conscious of love; of reverence, is no longer conscious of reverence, etc. Its knowledge of such affections, therefore, is from hearsay, like that which a blind man has of colors, or a deaf man of sound. God, the object of these affections, is of course unknown for the same reason. The spiritual discernment, spoken of in I Cor. 2:6, is the immediate consciousness of a renewed man. It is experimental knowledge. Sin is described in Scripture as voluntary ignorance, “This they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old,” 2 Pet. 3:5. Christ says to the Jews: “If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin:” the sin, namely, of “not knowing him that sent me,” John 15:21-22. But the ignorance, in this case, was a willing ignorance. They, desired to be ignorant.
Another effect of original sin upon the understanding as including the conscience is: (b) Insensibility. It does not render conscience extinct, but it stupefies it. I Tim. 4:2, “having cauterized their own conscience.” (c) Pollution. Titus 1:15, “Even their reason and conscience are polluted,” or stained. Rom. 1:21, “They became vain in their reasonings,” or speculations. The pollution of reason is seen in the foolish speculations of mythology. The myth of polytheism are not pure reason. The pollution of conscience is seen in remorse. The testifying faculty is spotted with guilt. It is no longer a “good conscience;” spoken of in Heb. 13:18; I Pet. 3:16, 21; I Tim. 1:5, 19; Acts 23:1; nor a “pure conscience;” mentioned in I Tim. 3:9. It is an “evil conscience”: a conscience needing cleansing by atoning blood “from dead works,” Heb. 9:14. Dead works, being no fulfillment of the law, leave the conscience perturbed and unpacified.


Following this exhaustive statement regarding the condition of the understanding and will as influenced by the fallen nature, Dr. Shedd writes with equal force on the question of the fallen nature and its guilt. This issue which has so divided the two major schools-Calvinists and Arminians-is not clearly stated by Dr. Shedd in defense of the Calvinistic view, but that which he has written serves to expose the shallow rationalism which the Arminian notion presents. Dr. Shedd declares:

Original sin, considered as corruption of nature, is sin in the sense of guilt. ...Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God doth in its own nature bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and make subject to death, temporal and eternal.” Westminster Confession, VI.vi, “Corruption of nature doth remain in those that are regenerated, and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself and all the motion thereof are truly and properly sin.” Westminster Confession, VI.v. The Semi-Pelagian, Papal, and Arminian anthropologies differ from the Augustinian and Reformed, by denying that corruption of nature is guilt. It is a physical and mental disorder leading to sin, but is not sin itself.

Corruption of nature is guilt because: (a) The scriptures do not distinguish between sin proper, and improper. “Auapria, as denoting the principle of sin, is exchanged with naparrwua, denoting the act of sin, and vice versa. Rom. 5:13, 15,16,17,19,21. (b) Auapria is the equivalent of emovuia and oape. Rom. 7:7, “I had not known sin, except the law had said, Thou shalt not lust.”
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Rom. 8:3,5. (c) The remainders of corruption in the regeneration are hated as sin by the regenerate himself, Rom. 7:15; and by God, who slays them by his Spirit, Rom. 8:13. (d) Evil desire is forbidden in the tenth commandment, Ex. 20:17. Compare I John 2:16. The tenth commandment...prohibits that internal lusting which is the chief characteristic of the corrupt nature. It is also forbidden by Christ in his exposition of the seventh commandment. Matt. 5:28. I John 3:15, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.” (e) Corruption of nature is guilt, because it is the inclination of the will. It is “voluntary” though not “volitionary.” It is conceded that the inclination to murder is as truly culpable as the act of murder. “The thought of foolishness is sin,” Prov. 24:9. (f) Corruption of nature is guilt, upon the principle that the cause must have the same predicates as its effects. If actual transgressions are truly and properly sin, then the evil heart or inclination which prompts them must be so likewise. If the stream is bitter water, the fountain must be also. If the murderer’s act is guilt, then the murderer’s hate is. (g) If corruption of nature, or sinful disposition is not guilty, then it is an extenuation and excuse for actual transgressions. These latter are less blameworthy, if the character which prompts them and renders their avoidance more difficult it not self-determined and culpable (h) If corruption of nature is not culpable, it is impossible to assign a reason why the dying infant needs redemption by atoning blood. Christ came “by water and blood;” that is, with both expiating and sanctifying power. I John 5:6. But if there be no guilt in natural depravity, Christ comes to the infant “by water only,” and not “by blood;” by sanctification, and not by justification. Infant redemption implies that the infant has guilt as well as pollution. The infant has a rational soul; this soul has a will; this will is inclined; this inclination, like that of an adult, is centered on the creature instead of the Creator. This is culpable, and needs pardon. It is also pollution, and needs removal. (i) God forgives orginal sin as well as actual transgression, when he bestows the “remission of sins.” The “carnal mind,” or the enmity of the heart is as great an offence against his excellence and honor, as any particular act that issues from it. Indeed, if there be mutual good-will between two parties an occasional outward offence is less serious. “Suppose,” says Thirlwall (Letters, p. 46), “two friends really loving one another, but liable now and then to quarrel. They may easily forgive the occasional offence, because their habitual disposition is one of mutual good-will; but should the case be the reverse-hatred stifled, but occasionally venting itself by unfriendly acts-how little would it matter though they should forget the particular offence, if the enmity should continue at the bottom of the heart.” This illustrates the guilt of sin as a state of the heart towards god, and the need of its forgiveness and removal. Ibid., II, 198-200

Defining the sin nature, Melancthon wrote that it is “the present disturbed constitution of our nature” (Apologia, Art. I, pp. 51,53, cited by Muller, op. cit., II, 268). Comparing fallen man with the animals, Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas (Op. cit., p. 157) states, “The certainty and consciousness of this in man is a characteristic of him in relation to other animals, for of none else can it be said that they are out of harmony with the law of their nature.”

Were it not for a secondary meaning of the word nature, t would not be a proper designation as it is now being used. A nature, primarily, is a thing created by God, such as the unfallen human
nature which reflected the image and likeness of God. In its secondary meaning, the term *nature* designates the perversion, with its unholy dispositions, which the fall engendered.

Concerning the general unwisdom of discursing respecting the mere metaphysical aspects of the fallen nature, Dr. James Denney says, “It is a mistake, in all probability, in discussing this subject, to enter into metaphysical considerations at all; the question of man’s inability to any spiritual good accompanying salvation is a question as to matter of fact, and is to be answered ultimately by an appeal to experience. When a man has been discovered, who has been able, without Christ, to reconcile himself to God, and to obtain dominion over the world and over sin, then the doctrine of inability, or of the bondage due to sin, may be denied; then, but not till then” (Studies in Theology, p. 85, cited by W.H. Griffith Thomas, ibid., p. 164). And, having this same nature in mind under the term depravity, Dr. Denney points out, also, the important truth that the nature of fallen man is a unity and every part is injured equally. He states, “What it means is not that every individual is as bad as he can be, a statement so transparently absurd that it should hardly have been attributed to any one, but that the depravity which sin has produced in human nature extends to the whole of it. There is no part of man’s nature which is unaffected by it. Man’s nature is all of a piece, and that which affects it all affects it altogether. When the conscience is violated by disobedience to the will of God, the moral understanding is darkened, and the will in enfeebled. We are not constructed in water-tight compartments, one of which might be ruined while the others remain intact; what touches us for harm, with a corrupting, depraving touch, at a single point, has effects throughout our nature none the less real that they may be for a time beneath consciousness” (Ibid., p. 83, cited by W. H. Griffith Thomas, ibid., p. 165).

Added to those passages which have been cited earlier in proof of the universality of personal sin—most of which applies as fully to the sin nature—are uncounted passages which speak of moral evil as a characteristic, or distinguishing mark, not of individual or classes of men in certain localities, but of human nature as it is under all circumstances—excepting only those who are regenerate, of whom specific facts are revealed bearing on that nature. The unregenerate man is styled the *natural* man; certainly not natural in the sense that he reflects his original unfallen state, but natural, or soulish, in the sense that he, being perverted in all his ways, is true to the fallen racial condition which is ever the same. Only illustrative passages need be cited. These will serve to represent what is the invariable witness of the Bible concerning the estate of fallen man in the sight of God.

*Genesis* 8:21. “And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground anymore for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.” Strangely, this direct and conclusive estimation of fallen man is uttered by Jehovah in the midst of His promise of everlasting mercy. This evil state to which Jehovah refers, is not originated by each individual for himself; it was thus from the beginning.
Psalm 14:2-3. “The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” This revealing passage is quoted by the Apostle in the midst of the extended indictment against the whole race which is recorded in Romans 3:9-19, and the Apostle’s statement is of such important that it too should be quoted in full: “What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written. There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: the feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” While this and other passages name the various manifestations of the sin nature, they also imply the existence of that nature as the source of evil in man.

Psalm 51:5. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Of all the Old Testament testimony, none is more convincing than this. In verse 3 David has confessed his great sin. In verse 4 he sees it as a sin against God alone, regardless of the fact that he had committed so great a crime against certain individuals and outraged the whole kingdom of Israel. Compared to this, however, in verse 6 he states that which is well-pleasing to God.

Jeremiah 17:5,9. “Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” The divine estimation of fallen and degenerate man could hardly be spoken more clearly. In the one passage the declaration is made that man is, in character, opposite to Jehovah. In no sense is dependence to be placed on man. In the other passage, it is directly said that man is not moderately evil. As Jehovah sees him, he is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” It is also indicated that, with all his vanity and baseless conceit, man does not know the truth respecting himself.

John 3:6. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” What Dr. Julius Muller has written as a comment on this passage is worthy of reprint. He says:

As to the New Testament, with the older theologians and with some of our modern divines, John iii.6 has been regarded as the standard authority for the doctrine of man’s inborn sinfulness: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.” Taken in connection with what precedes, this declaration of Christ clearly proves the fact of corruption attaching to human nature, seeing that He makes participation in His kingdom dependent upon a thorough renewal, wrought by the Holy Spirit. This universal necessity for a new birth (see John iii.3,5,i.12,13; Tit. Ii.5; Jas. i.18; I Pet. i.3,23), this beginning and development of a new life,
implies not only that sin is already present in every human being, but that it has struck its roots deep into the nature which man inherits from his birth. In like manner, the Apostle Paul regards renewal in Christ Jesus as a universal law of human life, and describes it as the “putting off,” or “death” of “the old man,” Eph. iv. 22; Col. iii.9. compare v. 3; Rom. vi.3-6. Attempted explanations of these passages, which really explain nothing-e.g., that the old man is “the power of vice, confirmed by habit,”-do not require refutation-Op. cit., II, 276

*Romans 1:18-8:13.* In this context-too extensive for quotation-as is fitting in view of the truth that this epistle presents the central revelation concerning salvation from the sin nature as well as from personal sin, the corruption of the whole race is pictured more fully than elsewhere in the Bible. The passage should be weighed with this consideration in view.

*I Corinthians 7:14.* Special attention is given to this text-partly because it contributes much to this general line of proof, and partly because it is but seldom employed in this connection. The passage reads, “The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the [believing] wife, and the unbelieving wife sanctified by the [believing] husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.” The uncleanness mentioned is clearly the state at birth of every child except for the influence of even one Christian parent. The Christian parent does not remove the sin nature from the child, but the child is *set apart* as different by the Christian parent. If, however, the parent cannot remove the sanctified child’s fallen nature, how certainly those who are unclean are under the power of that nature!

*Ephesians 2:3.* “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Direct and conclusive testimony is not wanting in this Scripture. It is a matter of nature which classifies the whole human family as “children of wrath”-as all are apart from the redeeming grace of God.

*Galatians 5:17-21.* “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” The Apostle here defines the works of the *flesh.* This term and its meaning have been developed previously at some length and must yet reappear under other aspects of doctrine. The ethical meaning of oapE, as used by the Apostle, carries it back to human nature and to its corruption. The works of the flesh are here set forth in contrast to the “fruit of the Spirit” (cf. vs.18 with vs. 22). The works of the flesh have nothing to commend them. The conclusion of the matter is that man is by nature, as Jeremiah states, “desperately wicked.”
Additional Scriptures bearing on man’s fallen nature, which should be examined, are: Genesis 6:5; Job 11:12; 15-14,16; Psalm 58:2-5; 94:11; 130:3; 143:2; Proverbs 21:8; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 9:3; Isaiah 64:6; Jeremiah 13:23; 16:12; Hosea 6:7; Matthew 7:11; 12:34; 15; 19; 16:23; Luke 1:79; John 3:18-19; 8:23; 14:17; Romans 3:9; 6:20; I Corinthians 2:14; 3:3; Galatians 3:22; Colossians 1:13, 21; 2:13; 3:5-7; II Timothy 3:2; I Peter 1:18; 4:2; II Peter 1:4; I John 1:8; 2:16; 5:19.

II. THE REMEDY FOR THE SIN NATURE

Contemplation of the remedy for the sin nature at once involves issues wholly within that field of truth which belongs to the Christian and must, properly, be reserved for that division of this theme. The unregenerate may be told that upon becoming regenerate they will be accorded a twofold provision whereby the sin nature may be divinely dealt with. They may look on to such an experience the same as they may anticipate forgiveness and justification, though, since all that enters into the remedy for the sin nature so relates only to the problems of the Christian’s daily life, the divine dealing with the sin nature is not at any time included in the offers which the gospel of the grace of God extends to the unsaved. On the other hand, the sin nature enters largely into the need of salvation which is represented by all the unsaved. No more misleading message can be given by sincere men than when the unsaved are told that they are lost because of their personal sins. To this they might reply that, since they had never been even one per cent as sinful as they might have been, they are only one per cent lost. Such reasoning naturally follows that form of preaching which bases man’s lost estate on the personal sins committed. Man is lost by nature-born a lost soul, with no hope apart from the redeeming blood of Christ. A much more weighty appeal is made when the need of salvation is made to reach to the root of all the evil ever wrought. The twofold remedy is (a) the judgment for believers of the sin nature by Christ on the cross, and (b) the gift of the indwelling Spirit as One who is able to give victory over every evil disposition. God has judged the sin nature for believers, else it could not be said, as it is, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

In conclusion it may be restated that at the beginning God declared concerning man that he was “very good,” but after fifteen hundred years of human history, Jehovah said of man “that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5), and more than two thousand years later He said, “They are all under sin...there is none righteous, no, not one....there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom. 3:9-12). This contrast is as strong as language can make it. Theologians have differed on certain phases of the doctrine of sin, but there is a notable agreement among them concerning the universality of sin. This agreement may be accounted for on the basis of the fact that the Word of God is exceedingly clear in its testimony with respect to the sinfulness of man, and, also, on the fact that human observation so fully corroborates the Scriptures. The doctrine of depravity is often rejected through misunderstanding. This doctrine does not imply that there is no good to be seen in men as men observe each other; it rather asserts that, because of the fallen nature, God sees nothing in them
which commends them to Himself. They are only objects of His grace. It is significant that the drastic indictments against the whole race which appear in the New Testament are quotations from the Old Testament, thus demonstrating that the Bible is a unit in its testimony on the doctrine of depravity. There are special privileges and covenants which are extended to the Jew, but, in the matter of sin and a divinely provided remedy, “there is no difference.” As Dr. Timothy Dwight states, when writing of the universality of sin,” In truth, no doctrine of the Scriptures is expressed in more numerous, or more various forms; or in terms more direct, or less capable of misapprehension” (Theology, Sermon 29). Added to this, it may be observed that the fact of universal human sinfulness and depravity is implied in the provision of a sacrifice for sin whether typical or antitypical; in the Bible’s emphasis upon the universal need of regeneration; in the disclosure that the human body is injured and, in the case of the saved, will yet be redeemed; and in the fact that “God…now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

From the original sin, as a femoral cause, far-reaching, universal results have been realized by Adam’s posterity. The doctrine of original sin divides into two branches of truth which are, notably, quite unrelated other than that they proceed from the same source. One branch has to do with original corruption, which is spiritual death, while the other has to do with original guilt, with its penalty of physical death. Though the term original sin is more frequently used in reference to the former, it is, also, as properly a designation of the latter. The first division of the doctrine of original sin, which is original corruption, or spiritual death, contends that the whole race has inherited from its first progenitor a vitiated nature which is ever and incurably at enmity with God, being, in His sight, wholly depraved and spiritually dead, and is the root from which, as fruit, evil thoughts, words, and actions spring. The doctrine contends that Adam is the first and only member of the race who has become a sinner by sinning; all other members from the first to the last are born sinners and sin, not to become sinners, but because they are sinners. They do not die spiritually by sinning, but are born spiritually dead. The doctrine contends, likewise, that this fact of corruption in nature and spiritual death is the first and all-important ground of divine judgment upon the race; and that evil works, as wicked as they may be, are but the reasonable manifestation of that corrupt nature. Similarly, apart from the fact of the corrupt nature, it is impossible to demonstrate to the lost the need of the full saving grace of God. On the other hand, the full saving grace of God is needed in the salvation of the lost because of the fact that the whole being of man is depraved and spiritually dead. It is beside the point to argue that man is not to blame for the nature received by birth. Though born in poverty and ignorance, the individual is justified in doing what may be done to correct these limitations; but how much more is one justified in claiming God’s relief from the lost estate in which he is born when it is remembered that God, in infinite love and at infinite cost, has provided that relief!

With various theories concerning man’s lost estate this study, for want of space, cannot be concerned. The fact that a fallen nature received mediately from Adam (a) is established by the
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Scriptures, (b) is observable in all history, and (c) is witnessed to by the consciousness of man, should terminate all argument. These evidences may be considered in their reverse order:

(a) Human consciousness of an evil nature or disposition is practically universal, extending to the earliest records of human experience. Aristotle declared, “There appears another something besides the reason natural to us which fights and struggles against the reason.” Kant said, “‘That the world lieth in wickedness,’ is a lament as old as history, nay, as old as the oldest poetry.” The Apostle Paul witnessed of himself, “The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.” Such, indeed, is the consciousness of all thoughtful men relative to themselves.

(b) The record of history which demonstrates the evil nature of man is inexhaustible. “Man’s inhumanity to man,” war, inquisition, murder, prostitution, slavery, drunkenness, cruelty, falsehood, avarice, covetousness, pride, unbelief, and hatred of God, all, and very much more, have their share in the history of the race.

(c) To those who are subject to God’s Word, the Scriptures are explicit and a final authority. The testimony of the Scriptures has been cited above.

CHAPTER XX

IMPUTED SIN

THE THEOLOGICAL meaning of the word impute is ‘to attribute or reckon over something to a person.’ It is usually vicarious in the sense that the thing attributed is derived from another. The nature of imputation is to be seen in the Apostle’s word to Philemon concerning Onesimus, “If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account” (Philemon 1:17-18). Similarly, the same Apostle writes of the Gentiles, “Shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?” Two original words appear in the New Testament text which carry the idea of imputation-Eyyoyew, used but twice (Rom. 5:13; Philemon 1:18), and Yoyisouai, used 41 times, 16 of which are in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Though a broad field in the selection of words is observable in the Authorized Version translation, the essential thought of imputation is always present. In the matter of man’s relation to God, the Bible presents three major imputations: (a) imputation of the Adamic sin to the human race, (b) imputation of the sin of man to the Substitute, Christ, and (c) an imputation of the righteousness of God to the believer. Imputation may be either real or judicial. That which is real is the reckoning to one of that which is antecedently his, while judicial imputation is the reckoning to one of that which is not antecedently his. Had the trespass mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:19 been imputed to those mentioned-as naturally it would have been-it would have been a real imputation. The trespasses were their own and the reckoning of those trespasses to them would have been no more than an official declaration of their accountability. Over against this, when the Apostle said “Put that to my account,” he referred to a debt that was not antecedently his own.
An immature judgment will usually conclude that each of the major imputations, listed above, is judicial in character. Such unconsidered estimation of truth has characterized certain schools of theology, from which schools much misleading doctrine has risen. It is not germane to the present theme of imputed sin to dwell upon the other two major imputations—except it be by way of illustration of the principle involved. Those imputations belong to Soteriology. It will be seen, however, that the imputation of human sin to Christ is, since it could not be under any circumstances His own, a clear instance of judicial imputation. Likewise, the imputation of the righteousness of God to the believer, while it provides a ground so equitable that God is said to be just when He justifies those who believe on Christ, does not bestow upon the believer anything which is antecedently his own. This imputation is also easily identified as being judicial in character. However, in the case of the imputation of Adam’s initial sin to each member of his race (Christ excepted in all such reckonings), there is a wide difference of opinion on the part of various schools of doctrine. The general theme of imputed sin is subject to subdivisions: (a) the scope of the doctrine of imputation, (b) theories of imputation, and (c) the divine remedy for imputed sin.

I. THE SCOPE OF THE DOCTRINE OF IMPUTATION

The scope of the doctrine of imputation controversy centers upon the one most theological context in the Bible—Romans 5:12-21. This context is, in the main, an elucidation of the primary declaration set forth in verse 12. It therefore follows that any interpretation of verse 12 which is not harmoniously unfolded in verses 13 to 21 is proved by so much to be wrong. The worthy student of theology will spend much time on this portion of the Scriptures. It will not do to accept merely the findings of the nest of men, but painstaking exegetical effort must be bestowed. Writing on this very point, Stearns, in his Present Day Theology (p. 321), suggests: “If you wish to know whether a man is a theologian, turn to his Greek Testament, and if it opens of its own accord to the fifth chapter of Romans, and you find the page worn and brown, you may safely set him down as a devotee of the sacred science” (cited by W.H. Griffith Thomas in Principles of Theology, p. 163). Upon this passage the greatest minds have been focused and to the best purpose. A rationalistic interpretation is dangerous here, as always. The question at issue is one of revelation, and that alone.

In further preparation for a right exegesis of Romans 5:12, it is important to observe that the one initial sin of Adam—properly styled the original sin, so far as humanity is concerned—is the main subject under discussion. As before stated, the original sin of Adam is the fontal source from which two widely different lines of influence proceed. The previous thesis has dealt with the transmitted sin nature which is received meditately from generation to generation, which nature is so closely allied to spiritual death. The present objective is to trace the other line of influence arising from Adam’s initial sin, which line is that of imputed sin and is the only reason assigned in the Word of God for the imposition upon the race of physical death. The first line of inference mentioned has to do with corruption, while the second, now in view, has to do with
guilt. Added to the revelation that guilt is the portion of all, is the truth that the penalty-physical death is imposed on each member of the race immediately, that is, directly from Adam to each individual without reference to intermediate generations. It is as though but two persons existed-Adam and any particular member of the race. To use a modern figure of speech, each human being stands related to Adam immediately and individually as by a private wire. A diagram may be drawn consisting of two lines starting downward from one point, which point may represent the Adamic sin. One of these lines is an arc bending to the right and the other an arc bending to the left and both converging again at one point, which point may represent the individual human being of any time or place as this twofold effect of Adam’s sin reaches to every member of the human race. One line may be made to represent the Adamic nature-akin to spiritual death-which reaches the individual mediatley, or by transmission from parent to child. This line may be divided in many sections which will suggest intervening generations between Adam and the individual person. The other line may be made to represent imputed Adamic sin which reaches the same individual immediately, or directly from Adam without recognition of intermediate generations. Though this personal relationship with Adam is shared by all in every generation, the isolated individual character of it is not lessened or confused in any instance. The Bible’s answer to the question why each person is subject to physical death is that each one had his share in the sin that injured Adam himself and caused him to die physically, and they share the penalty, also. Physical death is not an inheritance, must less an infection which parents pass on to their children. It is a penalty for that form of impersonal, unconscious joint action with Adam in his disobedience.

Great confusion has resulted when the Adamic nature and its corruption is confounded with the idea of individual guilt and its punishment due to participation in that sin. It is not forgotten that the sin nature does engender a form of guilt, but it is that which arises from a state of being while the guilt of the participation is due to action. Some writers who have entered into this difficult field of doctrine have taught, with attending disarrangement of vital truth, that the sin nature is the cause of physical death. The Scriptures lend little sanction to that impression.

“Spiritual death is implied in Romans 5:12-21 (yet to be attended), but beginning with Romans 6:1, where the sin nature is seen to be in conflict with spiritual living and sanctification, spiritual death is altogether in view. Naturally, the sin nature and spiritual death are closely related here as always. To bear fruit unto that nature is to be in the way, or on the side, of spiritual death, whereas to be empowered unto good by the Spirit is to be in the way, or on the side, of life and peace (cf. Rom. 6:16, 21, 23; 7:5; 8:2, 6, 13). Of the hundreds of references in the Bible to death, but the merest fraction concern spiritual death. So great is the preponderance of texts which relate to physical death that multitudes of people are not aware of the truth as pertains to spiritual death. The central passage bearing upon physical death-which passage is intensely theological—is Romans 5:12-21.
This context, as has been noted, consists in a primary declaration, restricted to verse 12, while all that remains-verses 13 to 21-is explanatory. It is therefore reasonable that consideration be given first to the precise meaning of verse 12. Every school of theology which attends at all upon the Scriptures seeks by its own interpretation of this passage to justify its claims, or beliefs, concerning the reality of sin and death as well as of righteousness and life. Few portions of the Bible have endured a more varied treatment. It is probable that some degree of truth will be found in each attempted interpretation, and there may be some error in each; but the objective in every case is to eliminate the error and establish the truth.

The setting of this passage (5:12-21) is an important factor in the right evaluation of it. Preceding is the portion (3:21-5:11) with its message of justification by faith, and following is the portion (6:1-8:13) with its message of sanctification by faith. Both justification and sanctification are said to be based on the death of Christ. The intermediate portion, now being considered, is a consummation of that which goes before and a preparation for that which follows. In this passage the dark picture of sin and of its penalty, death, is presented in contrast to the marvelous glories of righteousness and life. The two federal headships-that of Adam and that of Christ-are set side by side in their similarities and dissimilarities. The first Adam wrought the ruin of his race; the Last Adam wrought the eternal salvation and glory of His people. In the parallels in which these similarities and dissimilarities appear, there are many details. These, though of immeasurable importance, do not at any point change, but rather strengthen, the central theme, namely, what was lost in the first Adam is more than regained for those who receive the saving grace of the Last Adam. Many exceedingly valuable works, both expository and exegetical, are extant. Only a brief investigation of this passage is possible here.

Verse 12. Demonstrating that it is a consummation of the preceding section on justification (3:21-5:11), this portion opens with the connecting word wherefore. The thought is that, since the facts about justification are what they are, it follows that certain conclusions and added truths are in sequence. On the vital connection between these divisions of Scripture as implied in the word wherefore, Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas has written:

The close connection of this section with that which immediately precedes it must be carefully noted. The first word “Wherefore” is literally “on this account,” showing that the thought remains unbroken. Justification has been shown to be permanent (vers. 1-11), and the fundamental proof and guarantee of this is God Himself in Whom we boast (ver. 11). This primary reason is now elaborated in the section before us by pointing out that as man’s connection with Adam involved him in certain death through sin, so his relation to Christ insures to him life without fail. Thus, these verses give us the logical centre of the Epistle. They are the great central point to which everything that precedes has converged, and out of which everything that follows will flow. The great ideas of Sin, Death, and Judgment are here shown to be involved in the connection of the human race with Adam, but over against this we have the blessed fact of a union with Christ, and in this union righteousness and life. This double headship
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of mankind in Adam and Christ shows the significance of the work of redemption for the entire race. -St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, I, 202

The second word, as, is no less important since it indicates the first of a series of contrasts, which contrasts characterize this portion of the Scriptures. The two members of this comparison are justification through One Man over against ruin through one man. The as connects that which has gone before with the idea of sin entering by one man. It may be paraphrased: Wherefore as the case of justification is, being by one man, so the case of ruin is, being by one man. Such, indeed, is the substance of the more detailed argument which follows in the context.

The words, “as by one man sin entered into the world,” imply that sin had already had its manifestation in other spheres and that the one man, Adam, became the avenue or open door by which it entered into the cosmos world. But more is added, since the text goes on to state, “and death by sin.” Though a close relation exists between spiritual death and physical death-they both begin with the one initial sin of the first man and converge alike on each individual of Adam’s race-the reference in verse 12 is to physical death. It is possible that some reference is made before the end of this context is reached to death on so broad a scale that it may include both of its forms; but the meaning of the word in the primary statement is of physical death. The universal character of physical death requires no defense. Thus the Scriptures declare, “It is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27), and it is no different message when the Apostle states here, “And so death passed upon [spread through] all men, for that all have sinned.” Since the aorist tense is used in the last clause and thus a single, historical act completed in the past is indicated, the phrase “all have sinned” is better rendered all sinned. The effort of language at this point is to say that each member dies physically because of his own part in Adam’s sin. Since one complete, single, historical act is in view, the words all sinned cannot refer to a nature which results from that act, nor can it refer to personal sins of many individuals. It is not that man became sinful. The assertion is that all sinned at one time and under the same circumstances. In like manner, the penalty-death-is not for pollution, which would indicate spiritual death, but for guilt, or for participation in an act; and that indicates physical death. The statement is clear, the issue being that all had a part in Adam’s initial sin. A parallel passage in that grammatical construction is the same as found in Romans 3:23, which is translated, “For all have sinned,” but the same correction is indicated and it may be better rendered all sinned. Without warrant, this passage is almost universally interpreted to mean personal sin. The International Revision Commentary, edited by Dr. Philip Schaff, gives the following, “A single historical act is meant, namely, the past event of Adam’s fall, which was at the same time virtually the fall of the human race as represented by him and germinally contained in him..As regards the interpretation of the words, it may be insisted that ‘sinned’ is not equivalent to ‘became sinful.’ There remain two views: (1) As a historical fact, when Adam sinned all sinned, because of the vital connection between him and his posterity (2) When Adam sinned, all were declared sinners, he being the representative of the race. The objection to this is, that ‘sinned’ is not equivalent to ‘were regarded as sinners.’ It makes the parallel between Adam and Christ more close than the passage
thus far appears to warrant” (*Romans, VI, 81-82*). Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown in their *Commentary* (Zondervan Pub. House, 1934) state concerning this same phrase, “Thus death reaches every individual of the human family, as the penalty due to *himsel*” (in loc.) The construction is so demanding that exegetes are largely of one mind. Strangely, however, Calvin missed the force of the passage when he restricted it to a matter of being born in sin. It should be emphasized, also, that but one interpretation will carry through the remaining explanatory context, and that, naturally, the required rendering of the primary statement of verse 12. An *actual* imputation of the Adamic sin is denoted by the right rendering of the text. Whether it can be explained or understood is quite aside from the fact that the words declare an actual imputation with its attending individual guilt and penalty of physical death.

Dr. Charles Hodge (Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, 1854 ed., pp. 167-68) states:

The doctrine of imputation is clearly taught in this passage. This doctrine does not include the idea of a mysterious identity of Adam and his race, nor that of a transfer of the moral turpitude of his sin to his descendants. It does not teach that his offence was personally or properly the sin of all men, or that his act was, in any mysterious sense, the act of his posterity. Neither does it imply, in reference to the righteousness of Christ, that his righteousness becomes personally and inherently ours, or that his moral excellence is in any way transferred from him to believers. The sin of Adam, therefore, is no ground to us of remorse; and the righteousness of Christ is no ground of self-complacency in those to whom it is imputed. This doctrine merely teaches that, in virtue of the union, representative and natural, between Adam and his posterity, his sin is the ground of their condemnation, that is, of their subjection to penal evils; and that, in virtue of the union between Christ and his people, his righteousness is the ground of their justification. This doctrine is taught almost in so many words, in ver. 12,15,16,17,18,19. It is so clearly stated, so often repeated or assumed, and so formally proved, that very few commentators of any class fail to acknowledge, in one form or another, that it is the doctrine of the apostle.

This, for the most part, is an acceptable and illuminating declaration; however, the impression could be gained from Dr. Hodge that there is not an actual responsibility resting on each member of the race sufficient to warrant the penalty of death.

The difficulty arising in almost every mind regarding what seems to be the apparent message of this verse is the universal inability to comprehend what is properly involved in a federal-headship relationship. Such inability is most natural since no other such relationship exists in the sphere of human experience generally. Adam contained the race in himself in a manner which is not true of any succeeding progenitor in his line. No other man stood first in the generations of humanity nor did any other receive a divine commission to this unique responsibility. There is a less perfect headship to be seen in the case of Abraham as progenitor of the one race Israel—the reality is traced only in Jacob’s line. Yet, again, there is a perfect headship in the resurrected Christ over the New Creation. All typology in Adam respecting Christ is built on the fact of the two perfect headships. Abraham, however important in his relation to Israel, does not appear in
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this typology. Nevertheless, the most illuminating Scripture bearing on the fact of federal headship concerns Abraham. The passage not only implies headship, but declares that, when but seminally represented in the federal head, the offspring is divinely reckoned as having acted in the federal head. Reference is made to Hebrews 7:0-10, which reads: "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him." Levi, who in his own lifetime by divine arrangements received tithes, notwithstanding, paid tithes to Melchizedek when in the loins of his great-grandfather Abraham (Gen. 14:20). None would claim that Levi consciously or purposefully paid tithes to Melchizedek, yet God declares that he did pay tithes. Such is the divine estimation. Likewise, none will claim that each individual in Adam's race consciously or purposefully sinned in Adam; yet there can be no doubt that God reckons that each member of the race sinned in Adam's transgression. In I Corinthians 15:22 this statement appears: "For as in Adam all die," and this implies the same federal coaction as is asserted in the words all sinned. In reality, God sees but two men and each member of the race is either in one or the other. The unregenerate are in Adam; the regenerate are in Christ. Such inability to understand the outworking of this line of truth arises from the incapacity to fathom all that is asserted when it is said that some of the human family are in Adam and some in Christ. The mind can grasp the specified results, but cannot discern the deep reality which enters into a federal-head relationship. In the further development of the context-Romans 5:12-21-it will be seen that, as declared by Christ (John 14:20) and elucidated by the Apostle Paul, measureless blessings flow out to the believer on no other ground than that he is in Christ, and by so much the principle of the federal-headship imputation is established and is acknowledged by all. That injury and disaster—even death—are the portion of the natural man on no other ground than the position in Adam, should, in the interests of consistency, be as freely acknowledged by all. To the same end, and concerning the third major imputation—human sin to Christ—it is said that “if one died for all, then were all dead” (2 Cor. 5:14). The sinner’s share in the death of the Substitute is thus counted as the sinner’s own death for himself (here the student may note that, though translations are not always satisfactory, certain passages declare that the action of Christ in dying as a substitute is referred to as though it were the very action of the sinner himself—Rom. 6:2, We who died to sin; 6:6; Our old man was crucified with Him; Col. 3:3, Ye died; and Eph. 4:22, Ye did put off; cf. Col. 3:9).

The principle of imputation is thus seen to be one in which certain realities are reckoned from one to another. The story is complete as represented in the three major imputations. Man’s need is indicated in the imputation from Adam to his posterity; man’s salvation is secured in the imputation of man’s demerit to Christ; and man’s eternal standing and felicity are established through the imputation of the righteousness of God to man when he is placed in Christ by the baptism of the Sprit. If the imputation of Adam’s sin to the race be resisted, consistency demands that both salvation and standing shall be resisted also.

It is conceded that there are slight differences to be noted in certain particulars when these three major imputations are compared. These are largely developed by the truth that two are judicial
imputations and one is real. No sinner is ever said to have acted consciously or otherwise in the
imputation which flows out of Christ’s death, or in the imputation which secures the standing of
a perfect righteousness, but it is declared that in Adam’s sin all his posterity sinned. This
particular feature, involving some degree of participation on the sinner’s part, not found in the
other two, but strengthens the reality of the Adamic imputation.

It may be deduced, then, that the words all sinned assert that all humanity-save One-are
divinely reckoned to have participated in Adam’s sin and that the penalty for that participation is,
in, each individual, physical death. It is natural to suppose from the Authorized English
translation that the words all sinned refer to personal sin in each individual’s life experience. So
general is this tendency, regardless of translations, that the Spirit of God has led the Apostle to
present conclusive proof that there is no reference here to personal sin. This proof is in the next
two verses of the context.

Verses 13-14. “(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no
law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after
the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.” Bishop
Moule, writing of the two uses of the word law as it appears in verse 13, states, “Both these
words in the Greek are without the article. In spite of some difficulty, we must interpret the first
of the Mosaic Law, and the second of Law in some other sense; here probably in the sense of the
declared Will of God in general, against which, in a particular case, Adam sinned, and we ‘in
him’” (Cambridge Bible, Romans, p. 105). The phrase “Sin was in the world” indicates that the
character of God was then, as always, that against which men sin, but as no elaborate written
statement of God’s requirements had been given, men were not held guilty of having broken that
which did not exist. A very helpful illustration of this situation is to be seen in Christ’s words to
His disciples concerning the Jewish rulers, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had
not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

…If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not sin: but now
have they both seen and hated both me and my Father” (John 15:22,24). The Apostle continues
with the words, “Nevertheless death reigned,” which fact proves that death is not due to personal
transgression of law in its revealed form; and death came, likewise, to those “who had not
sinned” against law. Some expositors hold that the proof that verse 12 does not refer to personal
sin is demonstrated in the fact that there was no law against which man might sin. Others hold
that the evidence that personal sin is not in view is found in the truth that infants and incompetent
persons died, as all others; yet these had not sinned willfully as Adam sinned. The latter
argument, though conclusive, is not restricted to the age in question. Probably both
interpretations are true and the evidence is complete that physical death is not the penalty for
personal sin, but rather the penalty for participation, in the federal-headship sense, in the sin of
Adam. Verse 14 closes with the declaration that Adam is the figure (“type”) of Him that was to
come. A few make this to be the second advent, in which sense Christ is yet to come. It must be
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remembered that the first advent was a very vital hope and in the period in question. The Rabbis believed that the Last Adam is the Messiah. This the Apostle, no doubt, believed before he knew Christ as Savior.

Verses 15-19. “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

After having asserted the truth that Adam is a type of Christ, the Apostle goes on in this portion to enumerate certain parallels and contrasts between them. Comment has been made on these verses by Dr. W. H Griffith Thomas as follows:

Trespass and Gift (ver. 15).-There is no need to regard vers. 13-17 as a parenthesis. It is much simpler and more natural to regard vers. 15,16 as giving the details of the analogy mentioned in general terms in vers. 12-14, and it will be in every way clearer and more in harmony with the argument to adopt the interrogative form in these verses and render thus: “But shall not, as the offence, so also be the free gift?” If Adam is a type of Christ will there not be some correspondence between the fall of one and the free gift of the other? Surely they resemble each other in their far-reaching effects, for if by the lapse of the one the many connected with him were involved in death, it is much easier to believe that by the free sacrifice of One Man, Christ Jesus, God’s loving favour and His gift of righteousness abounded unto the many connected with Him.

Condemnation and Justification (ver. 16).-Again we render by means of a question: “And shall not the gift be even as it was by one that sinned?” That is to say, Is there not also a correspondence between God’s gift and man’s ruin in respect of its being caused by the agency of one man? For indeed the free gift which led to the just acquittal of man was occasioned by many lapse; the judgment which led to condemnation was occasioned by one man’s single lapse.

Death and Life (ver. 17)-there is undoubted correspondence here, for if by virtue of that one man’s single lapse the reign of death was established through the agency of the one man, it is much easier to believe that a reign of a far different kind (that is, more in harmony with God’s heart) will be established through the agency of One Man, Christ Jesus…Of course there are remarkable contrasts between the sin of Adam and the work of Christ, but the very contrasts strengthen the argument for the analogy which is the great point St. Paul wishes to emphasise. The first resemblance between Adam and Christ is that in both Fall and Redemption we have far-
reaching effects, for in both “the many” are involved (ver. 15). The second resemblance is that in both the result is brought in through the agency of “one man” (vers, 16,17).

Trespass and Righteousness (ver. 18).-Now various points of comparison are gathered up into one conclusion. We have on the one side as the cause one lapse, and the effect extending to all men for condemnation. We have on the other side as the cause one just sentence of acquittal, and the effect extending to all men for a justifying which carries with it life. These differences, however, only strengthens the argument for the correspondences, for grace is stronger than sin. If “the many” were involved in sin and death through the agency of the one man, Adam; “much more” may we believe that “the many” will be involved in righteousness and life through the agency of the One Man, Christ Jesus.

DISOBEDIENCE AND OBEDIENCE (ver.19).-One point in the comparison is still incomplete. Adam’s sin has not been contrasted with Christ’s obedience, but with the cause of that obedience, grace (ver. 15), and with the result of it, a gift (ver. 17, 18). It is now shown that these effects were wrought by means of Christ’s obedience, the exact contrast of Adam’s disobedience, for as through the disobedience of the one man, Adam, the many connected with him were set down in the class of sin, so through the obedience of the One Man, Christ Jesus, the many connected with Him shall be set down in the class of righteousness.-St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, I, 206-9

Verse 20. “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

The two features consummated in verse 20, namely, one man’s disobedience, and one man’s obedience (each subject to imputation as this context declares), having alone been in view to this point, the Jew may reasonably inquire, If there is only a condemnation for Adam’s sin and a justification in Christ, wherefore serveth the Law? To this it may be replied, that the Law entered (‘came in beside,’ as over and above the truth that men were already sinners) that the offense might abound, or be multiplied. The Law’s reign began at Sinai and ended with Christ’s death and resurrection. It is an ad interim dealing “till the seed should come.” It is a temporary economy and should never be treated as the principal divine objective-as too often it has been treated. “The law was added” (Gal. 3:19). On the seeming unrighteousness of introducing that which at once increases the ground of condemnation, F.W. Grant writes: “Law came in by the way that the offence might abound;’-did that need? one might ask; was it not to add difficulty to difficulty-to make greater the distress that it could not relieve? So it would indeed seem, and not only seem, but so it really was: law, as we shall see fully in the argument of the seventh chapter, by its very opposition to the innate evil only arouses it to full activity and communicates to it new strength: ‘the strength of sin is the law’ (I. Cor. Xv.56). This was indeed its mission; which if that were all, would be but disaster-a ministration of death and condemnation indeed! ( 2 Cor. Iii.7,9); but it came in by the way, says the apostle,-to fulfil a temporary purpose, in making manifest the hopeless condition of man apart from grace, when every command on God’s part
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arouses the hostility of man’s heart against it: “the law entered that the offence might abound’!” (The Numerical Bible, Acts to II Corinthians, p. 223). But where sin was thus multiplied, grace did superabound. The disease was brought to the surface in overt acts. The two words translated *abound* are quite different in the original. Sin was multiplied, but grace superabounded.

**Verse 21.** “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In closing this discussion, the Apostle again restates the contrast-sin reigned in death; grace reigns in life. Thus the last contrast is drawn and it is between *death* and *life*-the former through Adam, and the latter through Christ. As always in the Bible, the dark picture of sin is painted only that the glories of God’s healing grace may more clearly be seen. The picture as drawn by Besser is, “*Sin, death, grace, righteousness, life.* These five stand thus: Grace rises highest in the middle; the two conquering giants, sin and death, at the left; the double prize of victory, righteousness and life, at the right; and over the buried name of Adam the glory of the name of Jesus blooms” (cited by M.B. Riddle. Romans, p.88).

As an additional comment on this context, the remarks appended by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown in their *Commentary* (in loc.) and at the close of their illuminating exegesis of Romans 5:12-21 are reproduced here in full:

On reviewing this golden section of our Epistle, the following additional remarks occur: (1) If this section does not teach that the whole race of Adam, standing in him as their federal head, “sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression, we may despair of any intelligible exposition of it. The apostle, after saying that Adam’s sin introduced death in the world, does not say “and so death passed upon all men for that” Adam “sinned,” but “for that all sinned.” Thus according to the teaching of the apostle, “the death of all is for the sin of all;” and as this cannot mean the personal sins of each individual, but some sin of which unconscious infants are guilty equally with adults, it can mean nothing but the one “first transgression” of their common head, regarded as the sin of each of his race, and punished, as such, with death. It is vain to start back form this imputation to all of the guilt of Adam’s first sin, as wearing the appearance of injustice. For not only are all other theories liable to the same objection, in some other form-besides being inconsistent with the text-but the actual *facts of human nature*, which none dispute, and which cannot be explained away, involve essentially the same difficulties as the great *principle* on which the apostle here explains them. If we admit this principle, on the authority of our apostle, a flood of light is at once thrown upon certain features of the Divine procedure, and certain portions of the Divine oracles, which otherwise are involved in much darkness; and if the principle itself seem hard to digest, it is not harder than the *existence of evil*, which, as a fact, admits of no dispute, but, as a feature in the Divine administration, admits of no explanation in the present state. (2) What is called *original sin*-or that depraved tendency to evil with which every child of Adam comes into the world-is not formally treated of in this section (and even in ch. 7 it is rather its nature and operation than its connection with the first sin which is handled).
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But indirectly, this section bears testimony to it; representing the one original offence, unlike every other, as having an *enduring vitality* in the bosom of every child of Adam, as a principle of disobedience, whose virulence has gotten it the familiar name of ‘original sin.’ (3) In what sense is the word “*death*” used throughout this section? Not certainly as mere *temporal death*, as Arminian commentators affirm. For as Christ came to undo what Adam did, which is all comprehended in the word “death,” it would hence follow that Christ has merely dissolved the sentence by which soul and body are parted in death; in other words, merely procured the resurrection of the body. But the New Testament throughout teaches that the salvation of Christ is from a vastly more comprehensive “*death*” than that. But neither is death here used merely in the sense of *penal evil*, i.e., “any evil inflicted in punishment of sin and for the support of law” (Hodge). This is too indefinite, making death a mere figure of speech to denote “penal evil” in general-an idea foreign to the simplicity of Scripture-or at least making death, strictly so called, only one part of the thing meant by it, which ought not to be resorted to if a more simple and natural explanation can be found. By “death” then, in this section, we understand the sinner’s *destruction*, in the only sense in which he is capable of it. Even temporal death is called “destruction” (Deuteronomy 7:23; I Samuel 5,11,&c.), as extinguishing all that men regard as life. But a destruction extending to the soul as well as the body, and into the *future world*, is clearly expressed in Matthew 7:13; 2 Thessalonians 1.9; 2 Peter 3.16, &c. This is the penal “death” of our section, and in this view of it we retain its proper sense. Life—as a state of enjoyment of the favour of God, of pure fellowship with Him, and voluntary submission to Him—is a blighted thing from the moment that sin is found in the creature’s skirts; in that sense, the threatening, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” was carried into immediate effect in the case of Adam when he fell, who was thenceforward “dead while he lived.” Such are all his posterity from their birth. The separation of soul and body in temporal death carries the sinner’s “destruction” a stage farther, dissolving his connection with that world out of which he extracted a pleasurable, though unblest, existence, and ushering him into the presence of his Judge-first as a disembodied spirit, but ultimately in the body too, in an enduring condition—“to be punished (and this is the final state) with *everlasting destruction* from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.” This final extinction in soul and body of all that constitutes life, but yet eternal consciousness of a blighted existence this, in its amplest and most awful sense, is *DEATH*! Not that Adam understood all that. It is enough that he understood “the day” of his disobedience to be the terminating period of his blissful “life.” In that simple idea was wrapt up all the rest. But that he should comprehend its *details* was not necessary. Nor is it necessary to suppose all that to be intended in every passage of Scripture where the word occurs. Enough that all we have described is in the bosom of the *thing*, and will be realized in as many as are not the happy subjects of the Reign of Grace. Beyond doubt, the whole of this is intended in such sublime and comprehensive passages as this: “God...gave His...Son that whosoever believeth in Him might not PERISH, but have everlasting LIFE” (John 3:16). And should not the untold horrors of the “DEATH”—already “reigning over” all that are not in Christ, and hastening to its consummation—quicken our flight into “the second Adam,” that having
“received the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, we may reign in LIFE by the One, Jesus Christ”?

II. THEORIES OF IMPUTATION

As might be expected, the context-Romans 5:12-21-has drawn out many interpretations of this teaching concerning *imputation*. Some have entered strange avenues of speculation. It is essential that the student shall be informed about the more general views men have advanced. The brief introduction to the study of Romans 5:12-21 and the summarization (abridged) of this great field of truth as given in the *International Revision Commentary*, edited by Dr. Philip Schaff, is appended here in full:

The universal dominion of sin and death over the human race is a fact, clearly taught by the Apostle here, and daily confirmed by our religious experience. This dominion extends in an unbroken line to our first parents, as the transgression of Adam stands in a causal relation to the guilt and sin of his posterity. The Apostle assumes this connection, in order to illustrate the blessed truth, that the power and principle of righteousness and life go back to Jesus Christ, the second Adam. However explained, the existence of sin remains a stubborn, terrible reality. Least of all can it be explained by the denial of the parallel, yet contrasted, saving facts which are prominent in the Apostle’s mind throughout this section. The leading points which he asserts, and which therefore must enter into any consistent theory respecting his view of original sin, are:

1. That the sin of Adam was the sin of all his posterity (see ver.12); in what sense this is true, must be determined by the passage as a whole.
2. That there is parallel and contrast between the connection of Adam and his posterity, and Christ and His people (see vers. 14-19).
3. That this parallel applies to the point which has been so fully discussed in the previous part of the Epistle, namely, that believers are reckoned righteous (see vers. 12-18).
4. That the connection with the two representative heads of the race has moral results; that guilt and sin, righteousness and life, are inseparably connected (see vers. 17-19).

The various theories may be reviewed in the light of these positons:-

I. THE PANTHEISTIC AND NECESSITATION theory, which regards sin as an essential attribute (a limitation) of the finite, destroys the radical antagonism between good and evil, and has nothing in common with Paul’s views of sin or grace.

II. THE PELAGIAN heresy resolves the fall of Adam into a comparatively trivial, childish act of disobedience, which sets a bad example. It holds that every child is born as innocent and perfect, though as fallible, as Adam when created. This view explains nothing, and virtually denies all the assertions made in this section. Its affinities, logically and historically, are with Socinianism and the multifarious forms of Rationalism. It, and every other theory which denies the connection with Adam, fails to meet the great question respecting the salvation of those dying in infancy. Such theories logically exclude them from the heaven of the redeemed, either
by denying their need of salvation, or by rejecting the only principle in accordance with which such salvation, if they need it, is possible, namely, that of imputation.

III. The theory of a PRE-ADAMIC fall of all men, which implies the pre-existence of souls, as held by Plato and Origen, is a pure speculation, and inconsistent with ver. 12 as well as with Gen. 3. It is incidentally opposed in chap. 9:12.

IV. THE AUGUSTINIAN OF REALISTIC theory holds that the connection between Adam and his posterity was such, that by his individual transgression he vitiated human nature, and transmitted it in this corrupt and guilty state to his descendants by physical generation, so that there was an impersonal and unconscious participation of the whole human race in the fall of Adam. There is this difference, however: Adam’s individual transgression resulted in a sinful nature; while, in the case of his descendants, the sinful nature or depraved will results in individual transgression. This view accords in the main with the grammatical exegesis of ver. 11, but Augustine himself incorrectly explained “for that,” as “in whom” i.e., Adam. It accepts, but does not explains, the relation between genus and species. Like all other matters pertaining to life, it confronts us with a mystery...

V. THE FEDERAL theory of a vicarious representation of mankind by Adam, in virtue of a covenant (faedus, hence “federal”) made with him. It supposes a (one-sided) covenant, called the covenant of works (in distinction from the covenant of grace), to the effect that Adam should stand a moral probation on behalf of all his descendants, so that his act of obedience or disobedience, with all its consequences, should be accounted theirs, just as the righteousness of the second Adam is reckoned as that of His people. This transaction, because unilateral (one-sided), finds its ultimate ground in the sovereign pleasure of God. It is a part of the theological system developed in Holland, and largely incorporated in the standards of the Westminster Assembly. Yet here, too, a distinction has been made.

1. The founders and chief advocates of the federal scheme combined with it the Augustinian view of an unconscious and impersonal participation of the whole human race in the fall of Adam, and thus made imputation to rest on ethical as well as legal grounds. This view, which differs very slightly from IV., seems to accord best with the four leading points of this section, since it recognizes Adam as both federal and natural head of the race.

2. The purely federal school holds, that by virtue of the federal headship of Adam, on the ground of a sovereign arrangement, his sin and guilt are justly, directly, and immediately imputed to his posterity. It makes the parallel between Adam and Christ exact, in the matter of the imputation of sin and of righteousness. “In virtue of the union between him and his descendants, his sin is the judicial ground of the condemnation of the race, precisely as the righteousness of Christ is the judicial ground of the justification of His people.” This view does not deny that Adam is the natural head of the race, but asserts that “over and beyond this natural relation which exists...
between a man and his posterity, there was a special divine constitution by which he was appointed the head and representative of his whole race” (Hodge, Theology, ii., pp. 195, 197).

VI. In sharp antagonism to the last view, most of the recent New England theologians have virtually rejected imputation altogether. They “maintain that the sinfulness of the descendants of Adam results with infallible certainty (though not with necessity) from his transgression; the one class holding to hereditary depravity prior to sinful choice, the other class teaching that the first moral choice of all is universally sinful, yet with the power of contrary choice.” In this view a nice distinction is made between natural ability and moral inability. When consistently held, it denies that “all sinned” (ver. 12) refers to the sin of Adam, taking it as equivalent to the perfect, “all have sinned,” namely, personally with the first responsible act.

VII. The SEMI-PELAGIAN and kindred ARMININAN theories, though differing from each other, agree in admitting the Adamic unity, and the disastrous effects of Adam’s transgression, but regard hereditary corruption as an evil or misfortune, not properly as sin and guilt, of itself exposing us to punishment. Arminianism, however, on this pint, inclines toward Augustinianism more than Semi-Pelagianism does. The latter fails to give full force to the language of the Apostle in this section, and to sympathize with his profound sense of the guilt and sinfulness of sin. The advocates of neither theory present explicit and uniform statements on this doctrinal point.

Those views which seem to keep most closely to the grammatical sense of the Apostle’s words involve mysteries of physiology, psychology, ethics, and theology. Outside the revelation there confronts us the undeniable, stubborn, terrible fact, of the universal dominion of sin and death over the entire race, infants as well as adults. No system of philosophy explains this; outside the Christian redemption, the mystery is entirely one of darkness, unillumined by the greatest mystery of love. Hence the wisdom of following as closely as possible the words which reveal the cure, as we attempt to penetrate the gloom that envelops the origin of the disease. The more so when the obvious purpose of the Apostle here is to bring into proper prominence the Person and Work of the Second Adam. Here alone can we find any practical solution of the problem respecting the first head of the race; only herein do we perceive the triumphant vindication of Divine justice and mercy. The best help to unity in the doctrine of Original Sin will be by larger experiences of the “much more” which is our portion in Christ Jesus. Only when we are assured of righteousness and life in Him, can we fearlessly face the fact of sin and death in Adam.-Pp.88-91

III. THE DIVINE REMEDY FOR IMPUTED SIN

The divine cure for that phase of the Adamic sin which is reckoned to all human beings by an actual imputation resulting in their physical death, appears in a sequence of divine accomplishments which are finally consummated in the complete disposition of death itself. Being a divine judgment which was imposed on the human race subsequent to creation, death is

1. THE DEATH OF CHRIST. THE CAREFUL STUDENT OF DOCTRINE, WHEN EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES, SOON BECOMES AWARE OF THE IMPERATIVE NEED OF DISCRIMINATING BETWEEN PHYSICAL DEATH AND SPIRITUAL DEATH, AND IN NO ASPECT OF THIS GREAT THEME IS THE HUMAN MIND MORE IMPOTENT THAN WHEN CONSIDERING THE DEATH OF CHRIST IN THE LIGHT OF THESE DISTINCTIONS. THERE COULD BE NO DOUBT ABOUT CHRIST’S PHYSICAL DEATH, EVEN THOUGH HE, IN HIS HUMANITY, BEING UNFALLEN, WAS IN NO WAY SUBJECT TO DEATH; NOR WAS HE, IN HIS DEATH, TO SEE CORRUPTION (PS. 16:10); NOR WAS A BONE OF HIS BODY TO BE BROKEN (JOHN 19:36). ON THE OTHER HAND, CHRIST’S DEATH WAS A COMPLETE JUDGMENT OF THE SIN NATURE FOR ALL WHO ARE REGENERATED, AND HE, AS SUBSTITUTE, BORE A CONDEMNATION WHICH NO MORTAL CAN COMPREHEND, WHICH PENALTY ENTERED FAR INTO THE REALMS OF SPIRITUAL DEATH-SEPARATION FROM GOD (CF. MATT. 27:46). IN HIS DEATH, HE SHRANK BACK, NOT FROM PHYSICAL PAIN, NOR FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF QUITTING THE PHYSICAL BODY, BUT, WHEN CONTEMPLATING THE PLACE OF A SIN BEARER AND THE ANTICIPATION OF BEING MADE SIN FOR US, HE PLEADED THAT THE CUP MIGHT PASS. THE DEATH OF CHRIST WAS WHOLLY ON BEHALF OF OTHERS; YET, WHILE BOTH THE PHYSICAL AND THE SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF DEATH WERE DEMANDED IN THAT SACRIFICE WHICH HE PROVIDED, IT IS NOT GIVEN TO MAN, WHEN CONSIDERING THE DEATH OF CHRIST, TO DISSOCIATE THESE TWO THE ONE FROM THE OTHER.

2. THE KEYS OF DEATH. THROUGH HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION, CHRIST BECAME POSSESSED OF “THE KEYS OF DEATH.” THAT HE HAD NOT BEFORE HIS DEATH WRESTED THIS SPECIFIC AUTHORITY FROM SATAN IS INTIMATED IN THESE WORDS: “THAT THROUGH DEATH HE MIGHT DESTROY HIM THAT HAD THE POWER OF DEATH, THAT IS, THE DEVIL” (HEB. 2:14); HOWEVER, AFTER HIS RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION HE SPOKE FROM HEAVEN SAYING, “I AM HE THAT LIVETH, AND WAS DEAD; AND, BEHOLD, I AM ALIVE FOR EVERMORE, AMEN; AND HAVE THE KEYS OF HELL AND DEATH” (REV. 1:18). THE NULLIFICATION ON THE PART OF THE SON OF GOD OF THIS GREAT AUTHORITY WHICH HAD BEEN BEFORE ACCORDED TO SATAN IS IN AGREEMENT WITH
Christ’s word that “all power is given unto me,” and represents a transfer of authority which must mean much indeed to every member of this death-doomed race.

3. DEATH AND THE UNSAVED. Whatever is available to the unsaved as a relief from sin and its judgments through the saving grace of God, they remain in the bondage of sin and under the sentence of death in all its forms until they are saved—if ever they are saved. Concerning physical death, the penalty for man’s share in Adam’s sin, they remain under death as a judgment; concerning spiritual death, they remain separate from God; concerning the second death, they are doomed to eternal separation from God, Great, indeed, is their need of the Savior!

4. DEATH AND THE CHRISTIAN. This extended theme belongs to a later division of this thesis. It may be said, however, that, though death, as the only way of departure out of this world, continues even for the believer until the coming of Christ, its judgment aspect is lifted forever. Of Christians it is said, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1, R.V.), and for the Christian death is described as a sleep so far as the body is concerned, and as a departure to be with Christ so far as the soul and spirit are concerned.

5. DEATH IN THE MILLENNIUM. But one passage seems to bear upon this division of the doctrine of the divine cure for physical death within the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth. In Isaiah 65:20 it is written and most evidently of the coming kingdom: “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.” Obviously, physical death is much restrained in the age of the glory of this earth. In like manner, it is in that same age that the reigning Messiah shall put down all rule and all authority and all power. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (I Cor. 15:24-26). Thus the reign of so terrible a curse and so dreaded a foe, though permitted to continue its blight over even the redeemed and through all the ages, is finally banished forever by the irresistible authority and power of the Son of God.

CONCLUSION

Though both arise from the initial sin of Adam and alike converge on each member of his race, a crucial distinction must be maintained between the transmitted sin nature received mediately, and imputed sin received immediately. It will be noted, also, that both the sin nature and imputed sin are distinct from personal sin. In the one case, the nature to sin is not the act of sin, and in the other case, though men are held individually responsible and under the penalty of physical death for their share in what was, in Adam’s experience, a personal sin and this unlikeness is demonstrated with extended argument. There yet remains in the field of universal conditions which are to be recognized in the whole field of hamartiology, the one category, namely, man’s estate under sin.
CHAPTER XXI

MAN’S ESTATE UNDER SIN AND HIS RELATION TO SATAN

I. THE FACT

The PHRASE “under sin,” as an English rendering, occurs but three times in the New Testament: “We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin” (Rom 3:9); “But I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14); “But the scripture had concluded all under sin” (Gal. 3:22)—and with far-reaching significance in each instance. Romans 3:9 and Galatians 3:22, having reference to the estate of the unregenerate, are germane to this division of the doctrine of sin. The force of this phrase may be seen when compared with the similar expressions, under law and under grace (Rom. 6:14). The word under as used in these passages does not imply merely that a system—sin, law, or grace—holds an inherent dominion over the individual; it rather implies that, in addition to dominions, there is a divine reckoning that the relationship is true. In the matter of supremacy, the reckoning God is far more important than the mere force of circumstances growing out of any situation.

Man, who has been under condemnation for sin since the beginning of the race, is, in the present age (which is bounded by the two advents of Christ), under a specific divine decree of condemnation, and this condemnation is itself the necessary background for the present far-reaching offers of divine grace. Each of the three aspects of sin already considered has been seen to be universal in character, and man’s estate “under sin” is no exception. In fact, it is this universal character which provides the basis for the understanding of the precise meaning of the phrase.

That the estate of man “under sin” is peculiar to the present age is disclosed in Romans 3:9, and by the declaration there set forth that unregenerate Jews and Gentiles are now alike in respect to their relation to God, being equally fallen and condemned under sin. Similarly, the Apostle declares that both Jews and Gentiles are now alike in the fact that the same gospel of divine grace is offered to them and by this alone can they be saved. We read: “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek [Gentile]: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever [Jew or Gentile] shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:12-13; cf. Acts 15:9; Rom. 3:22). During the period from Abraham to Christ, which in the Scriptures is characterized by Jewish history, the Jew with ever increasing conviction asserted his superior position and importance over the Gentile, and with the fullest divine attestation as regards his superior position. The Israelites were and are God’s chosen above all the people of the earth (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6-7; 10:15; Ps. 135:4). Of them the Apostle declares: “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom. 9:4-5); but of the Gentiles he asserts: “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the
commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). Language could hardly serve to set forth a greater difference between two peoples than is indicated by these two passages. Such, indeed, was the divinely appointed difference between Jew and Gentile in the 2000 years between Abraham and Christ. On the basis of his place of privilege, the Jew, so far from being humbled by his blessings, had developed a national pride and arrogance toward the Gentile which promoted him to refuse to have any personal contact with a Gentile, or to enter his house, and he termed the Gentile a *dog*. Perhaps no Jew of his generation was more saturated with this unholy prejudice than was Saul of Tarsus; yet, under the transforming, illuminating power of the Spirit, Saul became Paul the “apostle to the Gentiles,” and the voice of God to declare the message— at that time more revolutionary than almost any other could be—that there is now “no difference between Jew and Gentile.” There is abundant prophecy announcing the fact that in the coming kingdom age the Jew will again and forevermore be divinely exalted above the Gentiles (Isa. 14:1-2; 60:12). It therefore follows that since in the past ages the Jew by divine authority and appointment held a position superior to the Gentile, and since in the ages to come he will again be exalted above all other peoples, this is the age, unique indeed, when by divine authority and arrangement it is declared that there is “no difference between Jew and Gentile.” Jewish national and covenant standing before God is, for the present age, set aside. The Jew is not now urged to recognize his Messiah, but he is urged to believe on a crucified and risen Savior.

The common position of Jew and Gentile “under sin” may be defined as one wherein they are both absolutely condemned and utterly without merit before God. Immediately following the statement of Romans 3:9 that both Jew and Gentile are all “under sin,” the context goes on to define the condemnable condition of the entire race. It is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:10-18). With the same all-inclusiveness, comprehending both Jew and Gentile, it is declared in John 3:18, “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” In their vanity men are ever prone to imagine that their estate before God may yet prove to be to some degree acceptable. However, God declares that they are already condemned, which fact must take its course leading on to eternal woe unless, through grace, they are saved.

Two passages declare that the position under sin is due to a divine decree. It is written, “But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe” (Gal. 3:22). Romans 11:32 presents a parallel statement: “But God hath concluded them all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all.” In each of these passages the position described is on which is there said to be due to a divine decree. In the former passage it
is the Scriptures which are said to have concluded all under sin, while in the latter passage it is God who is said to have concluded all in unbelief. The word ovykveiw, here translated concluded, is in Luke 5:6 translated inclosed and in Galatians 3:23 it is translated shut up in the sense of being restricted to definite limitations. These limitations, it will be observed, are, in each case in question, divinely imposed. As divine justification is the public declaration by God of the fact that the believer stands justified in His sight since he has attained to the righteousness of God, being in Christ, so to be under sin is to be not only without merit before God, but it is to be declared so by God. In Galatians 3:22 man is said to be restricted by divine decree to the estate which is thus without merit in order that the promise which is by faith of Jesus Christ—salvation wholly and only through the merit of the Savior—might be given to those who have faith; and faith as here indicated is the antipodes of meritorious works. Similarly, in Romans 11:32 God is said to have confined all in unbelief, or that, again, which is the antipodes of faith, that they might thus become the uncomplicated objects of divine mercy. While these Scriptures emphasize the removal of special blessings which before belonged to the Jew, it is also true that the Gentile, like the Jew, is now under sin even though no previous blessings were his to be forfeited. God must remove from both Jew and Gentile every vestige of supposed human merit from the issue in order that the way may be clear for mercy to act apart from every complexity that arises when two opposing principles—faith and works—are intermingled. That this immeasurable privilege of attaining to all divine blessing on the principle of faith apart from human merit might be the position of all—Jew and Gentile alike—they are all, and without exception, concluded under sin.

II. THE REMEDY

The remedy for this meritless and therefore hopeless estate is the saving grace of God through Christ in all its magnitude and perfections. This has been implied in the passages cited above. The two positions—under sin or under grace, with all that grace secures—are polarities as far removed the one from the other as the east is from the west, as holiness from sin, or as heaven from hell. All men have been placed under sin, these passages declare, to the end that the grace of God may be exercised in their behalf without complication or restraint. Though the benefit to man is knowledge-surpassing (not only is sin forgiven for the one who is saved, but he is justified freely without the slightest compensation to God—Rom. 3:24, and made to stand in all the perfection of Christ—Eph. 1:6; Col. 2:10), yet the advantage to God in the salvation of a soul is even greater. To satisfy the love of God is a greater achievement than to bring measureless blessing to men. Thus the supreme objective in the death of Christ is discovered. Because of infinite love for lost men, the gratification of that holy desire to redeem—which is common to all three Persons of the blessed Trinity—constitutes the supreme reason for the divine sacrifice. That the Father’s love might be manifested which would give His Only Begotten Son that men might be saved (John 3:16), that the Son might see of the travel of His soul and be satisfied (Isa. 53:11), and that by the Spirit many sons might be brought into glory (Heb. 2:10)—is of immeasurable import. There was that in God which could never before have been expressed, nor could it now be expressed apart from His redeeming grace. Angelic hosts and all created intelligence could
have seen the power of God, the wisdom of God, and the glory of God as disclosed in creation; but, apart from the demonstration which sin and redemption have supplied, none could have conceived of the love and grace of God toward hell-deserving sinners. Thus it is revealed that salvation is provided and its priceless benefits secured not merely as an advantage to men, but as an even greater boon to the One whose infinite love is satisfied thereby. That the one who is saved might really be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom.8:29; I John 3:2) and be a faultless representation of His grace (Eph. 2:7), God reserves every aspect of salvation unto Himself. “Salvation is of the LORD” (John 2:9; Ps. 3:8). Being, as it is, supernatural in its every phase, none but God could achieve it.

It may be concluded, then, that men are either lost, being under sin, which is to be meritless before God in the issues related to their salvation, or they are perfected forever in Christ by the saving of God, which salvation is divinely secured to all who believe.

To be without merit in relation to salvation is to be in possession of nothing which might be credited to one’s account. It is according to human reason to suppose that a moral, cultured person would have something which God might accept and incorporate into His saving work, but such is not the case. To be under sin is not only to be hopelessly condemned because of the sinful state, but to be without merit, or utterly void of any good which might be credited to one’s account. In Romans 11:32 the Apostles states that “God hath concluded them all in unbelief,” which unbelief, as has been seen from John 3:18, is the ground of the present condemnation of all men. It is probable that the first reaction of the human heart to this revelation, that God has now decreed that the good which men believe they possess will not accrue to their account to the slightest degree, is a feeling that God is unjust in rejecting even the good one may possess. Has not man become accustomed to a meritorious standing by home discipline in childhood, by the recognition of personal qualities in all the field of education, and by the advantages which are accredited to him in society and government because of a correct manner of life? The passage (Rom. 11:32) goes on to state, not only that God has concluded all in unbelief, which is condemnation, but that this done in order “that he might have mercy upon all.” Salvation by grace is according to a plan which is wholly within God and therefore cannot incorporate anything, even human merit, into its execution. It is a standardized whole, complete in all its parts, which proceeds from God and, being itself infinitely perfect, leaves no place for any human contribution. A bridge may be condemned when there is much in it of value, and the engineer may have to determine whether it should be merely repaired by adding support to its weak parts, or whether it ought to be torn away to make place for a wholly new structure. One thing is sure: if the old bridge is torn away, its good parts are not left intact to be incorporated into the new structure. The good is set aside along with the bad. Salvation by grace is a wholly new structure into which no human goodness may be incorporated. God has concluded all in unbelief, which is the wrecking of the first structure without regard to its relative worthiness, in order that His exceeding mercy, which provides a structure of infinite perfection, might be available to all. It naturally follows that is one persists in demanding that his own merit shall be
credited he cannot be saved by grace, since God is not patching up imperfect structures. In the salvation of men, God has undertaken two stupendous purposes which render impossible the acceptance of any patched-up ad imperfect structures. (a) It is declared that, through His saving race, the believer shall be conformed to the image of His Son. This excludes any mere revising of the old creation. At this point neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but only a new creation. (b) Salvation has for its primary objective the demonstration before all the universe of beings the exceeding grace of God. It is true that men are saved “unto good works” (Eph. 2:10), and that God loved them enough to give His Son that they might not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16), but the highest divine motive in the salvation of men is that in the ages to come the grace of God may be demonstrated before all created beings. Were that salvation to incorporate any fraction of human merit, it would by so much be imperfect as a demonstration of God’s grace. Thus, again, the very purpose of God in salvation precluded the mere patching up of an old structure or the salvaging of any part of it. It would be folly indeed to contend that a good life is not more beneficial to the state, to society, or the home than a bad life; but this question under discussion does not involve the state, society, or the home directly: it is a matter of getting sinners so perfected that they may enjoy the presence of God in heaven forever. Fallen man is condemned root and branch. He could be credited with nothing for the good that he imagines he possesses. Such supposed good, at best, would not be of the same quality as the perfection of Christ, nor is it required since Christ’s merit supplies all that a sinner could ever need. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God” (2 Cor. 5:17-18. Observe the force of the word all in each use of it in this passage). Indeed, one thus saved has a new and superhuman obligation to live as one who is perfectly saved in Christ should live; but even Christian faithfulness, though full of blessing for the one who so lives, can add nothing to the new creation wrought of God.

It will be observed, however, that, since God is Himself infinitely righteous, He cannot accept anything which is not perfect in His own sight. He could not base the salvation of a sinner upon a mere fiction; He therefore bases it upon the merit of His Son whose perfection is, through infinite grace, rendered available for every sinner. The sinner, then, in the last analysis, is saved on a meritorious basis, but it is the merit of the One who is made unto him the very righteousness of God.

No misapprehension of gospel truth is more prevalent than the sentiment that the grace of God that saves the lost is an adjustable device which adapts itself to the varying degrees of human worthiness—that it requires less grace to save the moral individual than it requires to save the immoral individual. All such conceptions are based on the wholly erroneous idea that human merit or works combine with divine grace to the end that a soul may be saved. Resisting this very impression, the Apostle declared, “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Rom. 11:6); “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
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But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:4-5).

Thus, it may be observed that the phrase “under sin” refers to an estate of man which is constituted by a divine decree and which has obtained in no other age than this, since by it Jews and Gentiles are alike leveled to the position of objects of divine grace to the end that they may be saved upon a wholly different principle than that of a divine recognition and acceptance of human merit. God undertakes and secures a new creation to the glory of His grace. Thus it also seen that the reckoning of all in unbelief is a necessity if all human beings are to be placed before God as those whose meritorious structure has been torn away and who are now eligible to receive as a gift from God all that enters into the new creation. None but God can accomplish a new creation, and He can undertake it only as His Son has borne the demerit of sinners and offered Himself without spot unto God that His merit might be available to them.

The only attitude that a meritless person under sin could reasonably maintain toward so great and supernatural a salvation is to trust Another who is mighty to save to accomplish it all. This is saving faith; and no more is, nor reasonable could be, required of any unsaved person. Therefore, we read in Galatians 3:22: “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

III. THE RELATION OF THE UNSAVED TO SATAN

The present relation of the unregenerate to Satan as described in the Bible and when added to the four aspects of sin already named, comprises a dark picture. No reference is made here to the eternal estate of those who die without the salvation which is in Christ. Little indeed are the unregenerate prepared to recognize their present relation to Satan. Satan is described as the one who deceiveth the whole world (Rev. 12:9; 20:3,8); and the inability of the unsaved to discern the revelation regarding themselves is the result of this satanic deception While there are many passages of Scripture bearing on the present relation of the unsaved to Satan, four present this important body of truth in its main features:

*Colossians 1:13*, which reads: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” In this Scripture it is revealed that God’s saving power is exercised to the end that those who are saved are “delivered…from the power of darkness.” Adam’s scepter of authority and dominion (Gen. 1:26-28) was evidently surrendered to Satan to some extent and has been held by Satan by right of conquest. Fallen man must be rescued from the power of darkness, which is the estate of all who are unsaved.

*Ephesians 2:1-2*. Writing of the former estate of those now saved, the Apostle states: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh [energizeth] in the children of disobedience.” The classification, “the children
of disobedience,” refers to Adam’s federal disobedience and includes all of the unregenerate as disobedient and energized by Satan (note the use of EVEPYEW in both Eph. 2:2 and Phil. 2:13).

2 Corinthians 4:3-4, which states: “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,” discloses the fact that the unregenerate are restricted by Satan in their capacity to understand the gospel of Christ. The effectiveness of this blinding every soul-winner soon discovers.

1 John 5:19, which reads: “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” A more literal translation develops the revelation that the unregenerate are now unconscious of their relation to Satan. They are as those who are being carried asleep in the arms of the wicked one.

Finally, the estate of unregenerate man may be summarized, (a) as being subject to death in all its forms, because of participation in Adam’s sin; (b) as being born in depravity or spiritual death and forever separated from God unless regenerated by the saving power of God; (c) as guilty of personal sins, each one of which is as sinful in the sight of God as the first sin of Satan or the first sin of Adam; (d) ad under sin, in which estate all-both Jew and Gentile-are now placed by divine decree and in which estate every human merit is disregarded to the end that the uncompromised saving grace of God may be exercised toward those who believe; and (e) as under the influence of Satan who is in authority over them, who energizes them, who blinds them concerning the gospel, and who deceives them concerning their true relation to himself.

The problem of relief from the immeasurable tragedy of sin is never solved by minimizing any aspect of sin; it is solved by discovering a Savior whose salvation is equal to every need for time and eternity.

CHAPTER XXII
THE CHRISTIAN’S SIN AND ITS REMEDY

NO DIVISION of the Biblical doctrine of sin is more extensive or vitally important than that which contemplates the Christian’s sin; yet, it will be observed, Systematic Theology, as set forth in written standard works and as taught in seminaries generally, does not recognize this feature of the doctrine. The loss to the theological student is beyond calculation, for when graduated and ordained to the ministry of God’s Word he is at once constituted a doctor of souls and the majority of those to whom he ministers will be Christians who are suffering from some spiritual injury which sin has inflicted upon them. Indeed, what Christian, waging, as all Christians do, a simultaneous battle on three fronts-the world, the flesh, and the devil-is not often, if not almost constantly, in a state of spiritual injury? The soul doctor himself does not escape this conflict and sad indeed is his plight if he is so ignorant of the essential truths regarding the Christian’s sin and its divinely provided cure, that he cannot diagnose even his own
case or apply the healing to his own stricken heart! Though the pastor is a doctor of souls, his first responsibility to others is so to teach the members of his flock with regard to the whole subject of sin as related to the Christian, that they may themselves be able to diagnose their own troubles and apply intermeddling human priest or Romish confessional for the child of God. It does propose an instructed pastor and teacher and a worthy ministry on his part in that field of truth which concerns the spiritual progress, power, prayer, and potency of those of God’s redeemed ones who are committed to his spiritual care. The blight of sin upon Christian experience and service is tragic indeed, but how much more so when pastor and people alike are ignorant about the most elementary features of the well-defined and divinely revealed steps to be taken in its cure by Christians who are injured by sin!

In approaching this great theme, it will perhaps tend to clarify this aspect of doctrine if the Christian’s relation to each of the four major features of sin, which have just been pursued, is considered separately.

Because of its unlikeness to God, personal sin is always equally sinful and condemnable whether it be committed by the saved or the unsaved, nor is there aught provided in either case for its cure other than the efficacy of the all-sufficient blood of Christ. Unregenerate men “have redemption” through the blood of Christ; that is, the blood has been shed and its saving, transforming application awaits faith’s appropriation. Over against this it is written of the Christians that “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin” (I John1:7). Most significant indeed is the use here of the present tense. It is while the Christian is walking in the light that he has both fellowship (fellowship which is with the Father and His Son, cf. vs. 3) and perpetual cleansing by the blood of Christ. The cleansing, it is evident, depends upon the walk—as does the fellowship—but all that the walk implies must be discerned if the doctrine involved is not to be distorted. To walk in the light is not to be sinless; that would consist in becoming the light. Walking in the light is responding to, and being guided by, the Light—and God is Light (vs. 5). In a practical way, it means that when the Light, which God is, shines into the heart and reveals sin or darkness that is there, it is judged and put away by His grace and power. This conception is in harmony with verse 9, that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The blood of Christ must be applied, and it is when the Christian confesses his sin to God. It must be observed, however, that while sin is always exceedingly sinful and its cure is by the blood of Christ alone, the divine reckoning and consequent method of remedial dealing with the Christian’s sin, because of his background relationship to God, is far removed from the divine reckoning and remedial dealing with the sin of unregenerate persons who sustain no such relationship to God.

The divine forgiveness of sin for unregenerate men is available only as it is included in the sum total of all that enters into their salvation. At least thirty-three divine undertaking, including forgiveness, are wrought simultaneously and instantaneously at the moment the individual is
saved and this marvelous achievement represents the measureless difference between those who are saved and those who are not saved. Deeply in error, indeed, and dishonoring to God are those current definitions which represent the Christian to be different merely in his ideals, his manner of life, or his outward relationships, when, in reality, he is a new creation in Christ Jesus. His new headship—standing in Christ, every change which is needed has been wrought to conform him to his new positions and possessions. Forgiveness, then, in its positional aspect (Col. 2:13), is final and complete, and of the Christian thus forgiven it may be said, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). However, this is but a part of all that God accomplished in His salvation. Unregenerate men are not encouraged to seek the forgiveness of sin alone, or any other individual feature of saving grace. If they secured forgiveness, it must come to them as a part of, and included in, the whole divine undertaking. Forgiveness of sin and salvation are not synonymous terms. On the other hand, when sin has entered into the life of a Christian it becomes a question of sin and sin alone which is involved. The remaining features of his salvation are unchanged. This truth is well illustrated in Chapter XVIII in which the remedy for the personal sin of the unregenerate was seen to be both forgiveness and justification, that is, not only forgiveness which cancels the offense, but justification which secures a perfect standing before God. It is never implied that a Christian should be justified again after he is justified by his initial faith in Christ, but he must be forgiven as often as he sins. Thus, the terms of cure which are divinely imposed respectively upon these two groups—the saved and the unsaved—must be different, as indeed they are.

The difference between the divine method of dealing with the sins of regenerate men as in contrast to the divine method of dealing with the sins of unsaved members of the human family is a major distinction in doctrine which if confounded cannot result in anything short of spiritual tragedy for all concerned. The preaching of the Arminian notion that, having sinned, the Christian must be saved again, has wrought untold injury to uncounted millions; but even a greater disaster has been wrought by the careless and misguided preaching to unregenerate people of repentance as a divine requirement separate from believing, of confession of sin as an essential to salvation, and of reformation of the daily life as the ground upon which a right relation to God may be secured.

The Scriptures distinguish with great clarity the divine method of dealing with the sins of these two classes. In I John 2:2 we read: “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” No consideration can be given here to the interpretation of this passage which is offered by the advocates of a limited-redemption theory. Without question, the passage sets up a vital contrast between “our sins,” which could not refer to those of the mass of unregenerate human beings, and “the sins of the whole [cosmos] world,” which classification as certainly includes more than the sins of the regenerate portion of humanity, unless language is strained beyond measure in the interests of a theory. This passage is a great revelation to unregenerate men. Because of Christ’s death, God is now propitious toward them. But who can measure the comfort to the crushed and bleeding heart of a Christian when it is
discovered to that heart that already the very sin so much deplored has been borne by Christ, and that, on the most righteous basis, the Father is now propitious toward the suffering saint—a propitiation so real and true that the Father’s arms are outstretched to welcome the returning Christian who, like the Prodigal, makes unreserved confession of his sin? It will be remembered that, according to the infinite accuracy of the Scriptures, the Prodigal is kissed by the father even before any confession is made. Thus it is disclosed that the Father is propitious toward His sinning child even before that child can be supposed to have merited anything, either by repentance, restitution, or confession. How persistent is the thought that God’s heart must be softened by our tears! And, yet, how marvelous is the assurance that Christ is already the propitiation for our sins!

Again, the first five chapters of the Letter to the Romans present the fact of the unregenerate world’s position before God and set forth the ground of the gospel of God’s saving grace, but chapters six to eight are addressed to regenerate men and have to do with the problem of a holy walk and the divine provisions thereunto. The sin problem as it concerns the believer is not in view in the first five chapters of Romans, nor is any phase of salvation as it concerns unbelievers to be found in Romans, chapter six to eight. Similarly, the hortatory portions of all the epistles are addressed to those who are saved. They could not be addressed to unsaved men since the issue between God and them is not one of an improved manner of life; it is rather the reception of the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, which gift is conditioned not upon any manner of works or human merit but upon saving faith in Christ alone.

In the case of the Christian, as in contrast to the unregenerate, the field of possible sin is greatly increased. Having come into the knowledge of the truth, the Christian, when he sins, offends against greater light. Likewise, he sins against God in the sphere of that new relationship which exists between a son and his father. It will also be seen that the Christian, being a citizen of heaven, is normally called upon to walk worthy of that high calling (Eph. 4:1). That high standard is no less than the ideal of Christlikeness. It is written: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21); “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5); But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). Such an ideal is wholly unknown to those who are unregenerate and who make up this cosmos world. It is not unreasonable that requirements which are impossible to human ability are addressed to the Christian since he is given the Holy Spirit whose power is ever available; but the range for possible failure is here, as in the instance cited above, wide indeed. That the manner of life which becomes the child of God is supernatural, is constantly implied in the Scriptures which guide him in his manner of life. It is written: “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5); “That ye should shew forth the praises [virtues] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9); “Giving thanks always for all things unto God” (Eph. 5:20); “That ye walk
worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph. 4:1); “Walk in the light” (I John 1:7); “Walk in love” (Eph. 5:2); “Walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16); “Grieve not the holy Spirit o God” (Eph. 4:30); “Quench not the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19). A greater responsibility of daily life and service, due to the exalted position which he occupies, implies that, in the usual experience, the Christian will need a constant recourse to divine forgiveness and to be restored by grace to divine fellowship. Recognizing his imperative need, the Word of God presents its extended teaching regarding the cure of the believer’s sin—a doctrine which has no counterpart or parallel in the truth which belongs to the unregenerate.

Continuing the contemplation of the stress which is imposed upon the Christian because of his position and relationships, certain conflicts are emphasized in the struggle which is common to all who are saved. It is generally and properly taught that the Christian’s conflict is threefold, namely, (a) against the world, (b) against the flesh, and (c) against the devil. By this it is asserted that the Christian’s solicitation to evil will arise from any or all of these three sources. It is of supreme importance, then, that the child of God be intelligently aware of the scope and power of each of these mighty influences. Only the most restricted treatment of these forces can be undertaken here, and that in the light of the fact that much has been written previously on these general themes.

I. THE WORLD

Of the three Greek words which in the Authorized Version are translated by the English word world, but one—koouos—presents the thought of a sphere of conflict. This word means order, system, regulation, ad indicates that the world is an order or system, but in every instance—and there are many—where a moral feature of the world is in view, this cosmos world is said to be opposed to God. It is declared to have originated—in its plan and order—with Satan. He promotes it and is its prince and god. This cosmos system is largely characterized by its ideals and entertainments and these become allurements to the Christian who is in this cosmos though no part of it. These features of the cosmos are often close counterfeits of the things of God and in no place does the believer need divine guidance more than when attempting to draw a line of separation between the things of God and the things of Satan’s cosmos. In their far-flung realities, the things of God are wholly unrelated to the things of Satan. It is at the border line that Satan confuses the issues. It is indeed true, as just stated, that the believer is in the world, but not of it. Taken out of the world system by the New Creation relationship, believers are no longer any more a part of the world than is Christ; but Christ has sent them into the world even as the Father sent Him into the world, not to be conformed to it, but to be witnesses in it (John 17:18).

One, and only one, plan is provided for a victory over the world. It is stated in 1 John 5:4, “And this is the victory that overcometh [lit, overcame] the world, even our faith.” Reference here is not to a present vacillating faith; the past tense is used looking back to that faith which identified the believer with Christ. Thus the Apostle goes on to say, “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” Though there is a need that it shall be
claimed as a present experience, the victory is Christ, and all in Christ are already equipped by the indwelling Spirit to be more than conquerors. The world presents a constant hazard to the child of God and his ability in the direction of that form of sin which is worldliness is ever a reality.

II. THE FLESH

The recurrence of this subject at various points in an orderly system of doctrine is necessary and indicates its immense importance. In its moral significance, it denotes that which is the very structure of the being of the unregenerate man. It remains as a vital part of the regenerate person’s being and abides and is the occasion of an unceasing conflict against the indwelling Spirit so long as there is life in the mortal body. Proof has been adduced that the flesh, in its moral significance, is incurably evil in the sight of God. From it all manner of evil thoughts, evil desires, and evil actions arise. It is only as the believer experiences the larger restraining power of the Spirit of God that he will be able to live above the incitements and proclivities of the flesh. It was subsequent to his experience of regeneration that the Apostle testified of himself, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). He also asserted that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and that these are always contrary the one to the other (Gal. 5:17). He also enumerated “the works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21). All this, it will be observed, is said to be the experience of regenerate persons. Galatians 5:16 discloses the one and only relief, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” The passage is not an instruction to unregenerate persons, nor does it imply that the fallen nature, which is the evil principle in the flesh, will ever be eradicated. God is no more proposing eradication of the flesh than of the world or of the devil. The divine method is the same in each of these conflicts. The victory is gained by the superior, overcoming power of the Spirit.

III. THE DEVIL

Closely related, indeed, are the Christian’s three enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil. Especially related are the world, or the satanic system, and Satan who is the “god” and “prince” of that system. However, the world and the flesh are impersonal influences, while Satan, the wisest of all created beings, is personal. He it is who exercises *ueoodeia-circumvention of deceit, wille, or artifices*-against the children of God. There is no conflict between unregenerate men and Satan; they are energized by him (Eph. 2:2). On the other hand, the Christian is in the center of the most terrible, supernatural warfare. It is described in Ephesians as a wrestling. The word implies the closest like-and-death struggle, hand to hand and foot to foot, of a tug of war. Nor is the uttermost device and power of Satan inspired by any enmity against regenerate men as such. His enmity is against God as it has been since his fall in the unknown ages past, and against the believer only on the ground that he has partaken of the divine nature. The “fiery darts” of the wicked one are aimed at God alone. To possess the priceless indwelling presence of the divine
nature is to become so identified with God that His enemy becomes the enemy of the one who is saved.

Solemn, therefore, is the divine revelation that the wisest of all created beings, and the most powerful, is ceasing not to study the strategy by which he may snare the child of God, and, were it in his power, to bring that one to destruction. How unconcerned, unconscious, and ignorant Christians are! How ungrateful they are, because of their limited understanding, for the divine deliverance wrought in their behalf every hour of every day! Yet, how much of defeat, especially in the spiritual realm, is suffered by all who are saved because of their failure to wage their warfare in “the power of his might,” who alone can give victory, and to “put on the whole armour of God”! No more vital injunction was ever addressed to the Christian than that he must “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” He must put on the whole armor of God that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:10-11-on the meaning of wiles cf. Eph. 4:14). Faith, it has been seen, is the only way of victory over the world and the flesh, but it is equally certain and according to the Word of God that faith is the only way of victory over the power of Satan. How assuring is the word, “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (I John 4:4)! Even Michael the archangel, when contending with Satan, did not in his own strength bring a “railing accusation” against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke thee” (Jude 1:9). True, James states, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”; but that is a word of admonition to those who have first submitted themselves unto God (James 4:7). Likewise, Peter declares in reference to Satan, “whom resist stedfast in the faith” (I Pet. 5:9; cf. 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Phil. 2:13; 4:13; John 15:5).

Quite apart from human opinion or experience which is of a contrary nature, it must be concluded that, in his threefold conflict, there is nothing but defeat and failure in the path of the Christian should he not pursue the way of faith or dependence upon the Spirit of God. The child of God must “fight the good fight of faith.” His responsibility is not to war with his enemies in his own strength, but rather to maintain the ever triumphant attitude of faith.

IV. THE THREEFOLD PROVISION

In recognition of the believer’s conflict while in the world, God has, in marvelous grace, provided a threefold prevention against the Christian’s sin. If the Christian sins, it will be in spite of these provisions. These great requisites are a revelation found in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament.

1. THE WORD OF GOD. The Psalmist states, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Ps. 119:11), and in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 it is declared, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” It is as His Word abides in the believer that he is in the place of spiritual achievement (John 15:7). There is little hope for victory in daily life on the part of those believers who, being ignorant of
the Word of God, do not know the nature of their conflict or the deliverance God has provided. Over against this, there is no estimating the sanctifying power of the Word of God. Our Savior prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

2. THE INTERCEDING CHRIST. Again, the Psalmist records, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Ps. 23:1), and the New Testament revelation of the interceding Christ is also broad enough to include His shepherd care. Little did Peter know of the testing that was before him or of his own pitiful weakness, but Christian has anticipated it all. He could say in assurance to Peter, “I have prayed for thee” (Luke 22:32), as in fact, He prays for all whom He has saved. It is probable that His High Priestly prayer recorded in John, chapter 17, is but the beginning of His prayer for “those whom thou hast given me,” which prayer is now continued without ceasing by Him in heaven. On the ground of this unceasing intercession, the believer is assured of his security forever. In Romans 8:34 it is written that there is none to condemn since, among other efficacious forces, Christ “maketh intercession for us.” In like manner, the writer to the Hebrews discloses the truth that Christ as Priest, in contrast to the death-doomed priests of the old order, will never again be subject to death. He therefore has an unchangeable or unending priesthood; and, because He abideth forever as a sufficient priest, He is able to save eternally (or as long as He remains a priest) those who come unto God by Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:23-25). This guarantee of abiding endurance, based as it is, upon the absolute efficacy of the interceding Christ, is final and complete. But, as has been seen, the intercession of Christ is ever a preventative against failure as well as a security for the children of God.

3. THE INDWELLING SPIRIT. The saints of the old order were reminded that it is “not by might, nor power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6). So, as has been indicated before, every defense and protection as well as every victory for the Christian is dependent upon the power of all the indwelling Spirit.

V. THE TWOFOLD EFFECT OF THE CHRISTIAN SIN

In its effect, the Christian’s sin reaches into two spheres, namely, (a) himself and (b) God. There could be no question about the relative importance of these two results of the Christian’s sin. That which is so evidently of least import will be considered first.

1. THE EFFECT OF THE CHRISTIAN’S SIN UPON HIMSELF. Though including in its realities all that is experiential, this phase of the doctrine of the Christian’s sin is secondary, indeed, to the crucial and all-determining aspects of the doctrine which are confronted when contemplating the effect of the Christian’s sin upon God. The First Epistle by John is the portion of the Scriptures which records the damaging effect of the Christian’s sin upon himself. In that Epistle, believers are contemplated as children in the Father’s family and household, and the effect of sin on the child of God is there seen to be, not the dissolution of the abiding fact of sonship, but rather an injury to those normal experiences and relationships, exalted and glorious, which are wholly within the family circle. Inaccuracy of doctrine on this point cannot but impose
immeasurable misconceptions of the truth, and the injury will be inflicted within the realm of the believer’s experience wherein all spiritual suffering originates and thrives. The Apostle John enumerates at least seven distressing experiential penalties which together constitute the effect of the Christian’s sin upon himself.

First, the light of God, which in normal conditions falls upon the believer’s mind and upon his path, is turned to darkness (I John 1:6). John dwells particularly upon the truth that the believer may walk either in the dark or in the light. As he walks in the light other realities are secured which enter into his spiritual blessing, but specifically the Apostle states that when walking in the light there is no occasion of stumbling (2:10).

Second, in I John 1:4 it is implied that sin in the Christian will result in the loss of joy. This joy is none other than the imparted, celestial joy of Christ (John 15:11; Gal. 5:22). The prayer of David in the midst of his confession of his sin was, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation” (Ps. 51:12). It is not the salvation but rather its normal, celestial joy which is lost when the Christian sins.

Third, the loss of fellowship with the Father and with His Son is inevitable for those among the children of God who walk in darkness. On the other hand, the riches of His presence is the experience of those who walk in the light (1:3, 6-7).

Fourth, the loss of the experience of imparted divine love will be the portion of those Christians who do not keep the Word of God and who love this world (2:5, 15-17; 4:12). The perfecting within the child of God of divine compassion is one of the greatest themes of this Epistle and the experience of that perfected love is supreme amid all spiritual ecstasy.

Fifth, the loss of peace, according to 3:4-10, is another penalty which the believer must suffer when he sins. This passage, previously considered, states that the Christian cannot sin lawlessly without that anguish of heart which is the total loss of peace. It is on the ground of the reaction to sin on the part of the Christian, that he is to be distinguished from those that are unregenerate who sin lawlessly and without conscience (3:10).

Sixth, the loss of “confidence” toward God in the experience of prayer is also certain for the believer who sins (3:19-22). This, indeed, is serious, and is immediately the conscious experience of all who fail to do the will of God.

Seventh, the loss of “confidence” at the coming of Christ (2:28) is to be anticipated by Christians who sin. Either to have “boldness” (4:17) or to be “ashamed” at His coming are two possible experiences widely separated the one from the other.

The truth regarding the Father’s discipline or chastisement of His unyielding child—a doctrine of great importance and its understanding is most vital to each Christian—could be introduced here with propriety. It is reserved, however, for the next chapter which deals with the divine
punishment where some vital distinction may be drawn more at length between chastisement and
punishment.

Other aspects of spiritual power and blessing which are sacrificed by the Christian when he sins
might be named. All the gracious fruit and ministry of the indwelling Spirit are hindered when
the Spirit is grieved because of sin. By all this it may be seen that sin is a tragedy of
immeasurable proportions in the Christian’s experience. The cure which is divinely provided is
both natural, in view of the believer’s relationships in the household of God, and explicit.

The responsibility resting upon the unregenerate man who would avail himself of the
forgiveness of all trespasses and be saved is expressed in the one all-inclusive word-believe,
while the responsibility resting upon the regenerate man who would be forgiven and restored to
correct relations with God is expressed in the one word-confess. These two words are each
specifically adapted to the situation, relationships, and circumstances with which they are
associated. Untold confusion follows when unregenerate men are told to confess as a condition
of forgiveness and salvation, which confusion is equaled when a regenerate man is told to believe
as a condition of securing a renewal of right relations to God. Hymnology is sometimes
misleading at this point. By such hymns, words are put into the lips of the unsaved which
encourage them to conceive of themselves as wanderers who are returning to God. As a matter of
fact, the unregenerate man has never before been in any favorable relation to God. When, as a
part of his salvation, he is forgiven, it is unto a hitherto unexperienced union with God which
abides forever; but when the Christian is forgiven it is unto the restoration of communion with
God which may be broken again all too soon. The saints of all the ages have returned to the
blessings of their covenant relation to God by the confession of their sin. This, however, is far
removed from those terms upon which they entered the covenant at the beginning. The loss of
the blessing within the covenant is different, indeed, from the loss of the covenant relation itself.
In the case of a believer related to God by the New Covenant made in His blood, restoration to
communion, as always, is by confession of sin to God. We read in I John 1:9, “If we confess our
sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
Similarly, in I Corinthians 11:31-32 it is stated that “if we would judge ourselves, we should not
be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be
condemned with the world.” Since confession and self-judgment refer to the same action on the
part of the believer, these passages emphasize the same important truth. Confession and self-
judgment are the outward expression of heart-repentance; and repentance, which is a change of
mind of purpose, brings the sin-burdened Christian back into agreement with God. While
practicing sin, he was opposed to the will and character of God; by repentance, expressed to God
in the confession of sin and self-judgment, he returns to agreement with God. “Two cannot walk
together, except they be agreed,” nor can the Christian have fellowship with God who is Light
and at the same time be walking in darkness (I John 1:6). To walk in the light is not to become
the light, which would mean attainment to infinite holiness. God alone is Light. Nor does
walking in the light mean that one never does wrong. It is rather that when the searchlight, which
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God is, penetrates the heart and life and discloses that which is contrary to His will, the wrong thus disclosed is by a true heart-repentance at once confessed and judged before God. Assurance is given to the believer that when thus adjusted to the light (which is “walking in the light”), the sin is forgiven and its pollution cleansed by the blood of Christ. Both I John 1:8 and 10 are in the nature of a parenthesis. The word of assurance presented in 1:7 is continued in 1:9 which states that, “If we confess our sins [which is adjustment to God who is the Light], he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Confession of sin, it should be observed, is first and always to God and is to be extended to others only as they have been directly injured by the sin. So, likewise, this divine forgiveness and cleansing are not said to be acts of divine mercy and kindness, being wrought rather on the basis of absolute righteousness which is made possible through the fact that the penalty which the sin merits has fallen upon the Substitute God’s provided Lamb. Since the Substitute has endured the penalty, God is seen to be just rather than merciful when He justifies the unsaved who do more than to “believe in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26), and just rather than merciful when He forgives the Christian who has sinned, on no other condition than that he “confess” his sin (I John 1:9). In forgiving the Christian who confesses his sin, God is “faithful” to His eternal character and purpose and is “just” in so doing because of the penalty which Christ has endured. The basis for this provision whereby the Christian may be forgiven and cleansed in the faithfulness and justice of God is found in the declaration which consummates this context (I John 2:2), where it is said that “he is the propitiation for our sins.” Since this context is concerned only with the sins of Christians, the great aspect of propitiation for a lost world is mentioned here only incidentally. Too much emphasis cannot be placed on the fact that Christ is the propitiation for our sins. By His death He has rendered God propitious and free to forgive and cleanse the Christian who confesses his sin.

It is evident that the divine forgiveness of the believer is household in its character. It contemplates, not the once-for-all forgiveness which is a part of salvation (Col. 2:13), but the forgiveness of the one who already and permanently is a member of the household and family of God. Vital union with God, which is secured by Christ for the believer, has not been and cannot be broken (Rom. 8:1, R.V.). This renewal is unto fellowship and communion with God. At no point in Christian doctrine is the specific and unique character of the present grace-relationship to God more clearly seen than in household forgiveness. The divine dealing with men under grace, like any complete economy of government, provides at least four essential features: (a) a setting forth of the manner of life which is desired-this is contained in the grace injunctions of the New Testament; (b) a penalty for wrongdoing-this has been pointed out above under the seven warnings contained in the First Epistle by John; (c) a cure for the wrong with specific revelation of its terms-this has been seen to be a genuine heart-repentance expressed in confession of sin and self-judgment; and (d) a motive for right action.

Identification of the divinely conceived reason for right action under the governmental economy of grace is of supreme import since the motivating principle under grace is
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diametrically opposite to the motivating principles set forth in all legal systems of government. Under a legal system, a thing is done that standing and merit may be secured. The legal aspect appears in the form of a contract or necessity imposed. Under the grace economy, a thing is done in recognition of the fact that perfect standing and merit have already been secured through the imputed merit of Christ. This motive is gracious in character and void of all contracts or necessities. Earlier in this discussion it was demonstrated that the child of God, being in Christ, is justified before God forever, to which standing human merit could add nothing. True to the grace motive for right action and in accordance with his household relationships, which are the distinctive relationships under grace, the believer is directed to forgive those who injure him on the basis of the fact that God has already freely forgiven him. Of this we read in Ephesians 4:32, “And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” And again in Colossians 3:13, “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” This, indeed, is far removed from a system of divine dealing in which the blessing of forgiveness is made to depend, in the most absolute terms, on the offender’s forgiveness of others. As a feature of one legal system we read, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14-15). It is a serious error when one, who through saving faith in Christ has been for Christ’s sake once-for-all forgiven all trespasses, assumes the attitude before God which implies that he is not forgiven until for his own sake or merit he has forgiven those who have trespassed against him. Doubtless both Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13 are not referring to oft-repeated household forgiveness, but rather to once-for-all forgiveness accompanying salvation. However, Matthew 6:14-15, being Christ’s own enlargement on a clause in the kingdom prayer which He taught His disciples, is often confused with household forgiveness. Of various distinctions to be observed between the kingdom aspect of forgiveness and household forgiveness, but three will be mentioned here:

First, in the one case (Matt. 6:12), forgiveness is made to depend to some degree upon asking for it, which implies that propitiation is not complete, or that God must be besought and persuaded to forgive. In the other case (I John 1:9), forgiveness is made to depend on confession, which implies that God is wholly propitious and awaiting only that adjustment to His holy will which confession provides. It is doubtful in the light of I John 2:2 with 1:9 is a Christian is to ask for forgiveness for present sins any more than he was called upon to ask for once-for-all forgiveness when he was saved. When saved he was forgiven upon believing, and, being saved, he will be forgiven upon confessing. Both confessing and believing are efficacious and represent the uncomplicated human obligation in their respective spheres apart from human pleading since Christ is “the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (I John 2:2). No objection could be raised against the declaration that I John 1:1-2:2 is the central passage in the Scriptures on household forgiveness, and it is far from accidental and of more than passing significance that in this context neither by percept, nor by
example, nor by implication is asking constituted any part of the believer’s obligation when in need of forgiveness.

Second, the second indication that Matthew 6:14-15 is not to be classed as household forgiveness may be introduced by asking the usual hypothetical, abstract question, namely, Will God forgive a Christian who does not first forgive those who have sinned against that Christian? The answer need not be complicated. Unforgiveness in a Christian is a sin which calls for confession, and when it is confessed it is forgiven by God because it is confessed and not because the unforgiving Christian has merited forgiveness of the sin by a self-changed heart. In fact, no one is able of himself to command a forgiving spirit in his own heart which by nature is unforgiving. Tenderheartedness and longsuffering are divine characteristics which are secured not by human effort but by faith in the indwelling Spirit whose power and fruit are available to those who, having confessed all known sin including an unforgiving heart, are empowered unto every right attitude before God. The principles and requirements set forth in Matthew 6:14-15 will obtain in the kingdom, but under grace relationships the deeper question is raised and answered: How may a heart of compassion be secured at all? The answer is that all sin must first be confessed and that a forgiving heart is then possible only through the enabling power of God.

Third, the place and importance of human merit is a feature which serves to demonstrate the fact that Matthew 6:14-15 is not household or grace forgiveness. The forgiveness required in this passage precedes and determines divine forgiveness and is therefore meritorious in character; whereas I John 1:9 suggests a situation in which all supposed merit is abandoned in abject confession of failure and grace reigns based, as it must be, upon that propitiation which Christ is.

The confusion which may arise through failure to distinguish truths which differ is illustrated in the case of certain teachers who, in one instance, earnestly contend that, according to Matthew 6:14-15, no Christian will be forgiven who does not himself forgive, and, in another instance, as earnestly contend that the Christian, in conformity to the divine pattern, must not forgive those who have injured him until they are penitent. The logic of these positions is obvious: If a Christian can be forgiven only when he forgives and if he must not forgive until those who have injured him are penitent, then he cannot himself be forgiven of God for his own sins until all those who have injured him repent—a dubious prospect indeed, to say the least.

The obligation of a Christian toward his brother in Christ is on a plane so exalted that none could hope to attain to it by dependence upon his own resources, which dependence is the substance of the merit relationship. Who, indeed, could by unaided human strength comply with Christ’s new commandment: “Love one another, as I have loved you” (John 13:34; 15:12)? Each Christian’s obligation toward every other Christian is expressed in such terms as “longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph. 4:2); “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32); “kindness, longsuffering; forgiving one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on
charity [love], which is the bond of perfectness” (which is the goal of a spiritual life-Col. 3:12-14). Such high standards cannot be attained or maintained apart from the power of the indwelling Spirit. If they are thus wrought of God, they are not based on merit, and Matthew 6:14-15, because it is based on merit, is, in the light of these standards, seen to be foreign to the divine administration under grace.

There are yet three important portions of the Scriptures to be mentioned bearing on the fact that God has always dealt specifically and constantly with the defilement of His covenant people. (a) In Numbers 19:1-22 the ordinance of the law of Jehovah provided for the sacrifice and burning of a red heifer and specified that the ashes of the heifer should be preserved, and, when mingled with water, and as occasion might arise, should serve for the cleansing by sprinkling of any in Israel who had become unclean. The ashes of the heifer preserved in a vessel and serving over a long period of time for cleansing became a type of the perpetual cleansing of the child of God by the blood of Christ (I John 1:7,9). (b) In Exodus 30:17-21 the record is given of Jehovah’s commandment to Moses concerning the laver of brass which, by the appointment of Jehovah, stood at the entrance of the holy place and at this laver the priests were to bathe their hands and feet before each service in the holy place. Failure on the part of the priest to comply with this statute merited the penalty of death. The priest, though born to his office, being of the house of Aaron and of the tribe of Levi and having been completely bathed ceremonially by the high priest when inducted into his priestly service, was, nevertheless, compelled to observe the ceremonial bathing of his hands and feet-the members which contact the defilement of the world—before every service. The Old Testament priest is a type of the New Testament believer and the constant bathing on the part of the Old Testament priest typifies the constant cleansing of the New Testament believer who is born to his position by the new birth and is once and for all washed by the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5; cf. I Cor. 6:11). (c) In John 13:1-17 the record is given of the bathing of the disciples’ feet by Christ. By the use of the word virrrtw Christ distinguishes the bathing He was performing as a partial bathing and quite different indeed from the whole bath, to which He refers in verse 10 by the use of the word Yovw. This partial bathing implies that these disciples, expecting Judas whom Christ dismisses from the company, were wholly bathed and had no further need in the way of cleansing save the washing of the feet. Similarly, this partial bathing was unto the maintenance of fellowship as indicated by the words, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part [yepos] with me” (verse 8).

It may be concluded, therefore, that there has been a continual cleansing in addition to the once-for-all, initial cleansing which God has provided and prescribed for His people in other ages, and that, in the present age, a true repentance or change of mind with its outward expression, which is confession, represents the sole human responsibility; but, on the divine side, the forgiveness and cleansing of the believer is made possible only through the propitiatory blood of Christ.

2. THE EFFECT OF THE CHRISTIAN’S SIN UPON GOD. Far deeper in their import are the issues related to the effect of Christian’s sin upon God than those related to the effect of
Christian’s sin upon himself. Rationalistic systems of theology have contended that, since God is infinitely holy, the effect of the Christian’s sin upon God must be that salvation is forfeited and the cure for that situation is a re-regeneration of the one who has sinned. Since so-called lesser sins are so constantly the experience of the believer, it has been necessary to attribute only to great and flagrant sins the power to unsave. Apparently the generous nature and forbearance of God is depended upon to pass over or forgive the lesser sins. However, the Word of God lends itself in no way to the support of the notion that some sins are good and some bad, or that God can forgive apart from the substitutionary work of Christ. Sin, even in its inoffensive form, is exceedingly sinful in the sight of God and, were it not for the efficacious blood of Christ, would have the power to separate a Christian from God forever. But since Christ’s sacrifice for sin extends to all sin, sin’s power to separate a believer from God is annulled, though, as has been seen, there may be for the believer because of his sin the tragic loss of fellowship with God, of celestial joy, confidence, and peace.

Having presented the effect of the Christian’s sin upon himself and having stated the human responsibility in the directing of its cure, the Apostle John goes on (I John 2:1) to present the fact that there is also a divine remedy for the effect of the Christian’s sin upon God, but wholly apart from any human responsibility or cooperation. God alone can solve His own problem which the Christian’s sin creates in its relation to His holiness and governmental authority. The salvation which is offered through Christ is eternal, which means that every aspect of possible condemnation that might arise will be anticipated and met. The Christian can cooperate in no way in the sphere of the provision of a righteous ground either for his salvation or safe-keeping. The one verse (I John 2:1) presents a vast field of closely related doctrines. We read: “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not [be not sinning]. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Five contributive aspects of truth are to be discerned in this verse:

First, “My little children.” By this salutation it is evidenced that the message is addressed only to the children of God. It must be emphasized that the safe-keeping which the passage reveals and the divine working to that end have to do only with those who are born again. There is an ever increasing company of professors of religion who, it would seem, may never have passed from death unto life. What this passage discloses applies only to those who are saved.

Second, “These things write I unto you, that ye sin not” (be not sinning). Reference is probably made in this clause to that which has gone before as well as to that which follows. As anticipated by the Apostle, the effect of this message upon true believers will be to deter them from the practice of sin. Eternal security for all who are saved is abundantly assured in the New Testament and nowhere more fully than in this verse, yet the doctrine is by many thought to provide a license to sin. In opposition to this rationalistic notion, the Apostle here presents the great fact of eternal security as a motive for not sinning, and the fact of eternal security when
intelligently grasped by the believer has ever proved in practical experience to be just such a restraint.

Third, “If any man sin.” There can be little doubt that the Apostle is referring to the same limited group of those who are saved. The phrase “little children” which constitutes the salutation and the word “we” which follows give sufficient evidence that only saved persons are included in these benefits. The fact that Christians do sin is patent. The source of sin in the Christian, as has been observed, is the sin nature and the force of its tendency is seen in that the impulse to sin often rides over all restraint. God has provided three restraining factors—His Word (Ps. 119:11), His indwelling Spirit (Gal. 5:16), and the interceding Christ (Luke 22:31-32)—but He has also revealed that the child of God may, if he persists, disregard to some extent these restraining forces. However, when the believer’s will is in agreement with the will of God, these same divinely provided restraints become the very factors which enable the believer to live unto God.

Fourth, “We have an advocate with the Father.” The designation, Ἰαπακύνρος, is used of both the Holy Spirit (John 16:7) and of Christ (I John 2:1). When Christ referred to the Spirit as “another” Ἰαπακύνρος, He implied that He Himself was then to the disciples a true helper. However, His present ministry in heaven as Ἰαπακύνρος, assumes a legal aspect. As Advocate He espouses the cause of another in the open court. Christ defends rather than prosecutes those whom He has saved. The scene is of a court in session. The Father is the Judge.

In Revelation 12:10 it is stated that Satan ceases not day and night to accuse the brethren before God. The issue before the court is one of actual sin on the part of the child of God. Since God is infinitely holy, He must act in absolute righteousness toward all offenders. The accuser of the brethren is presenting no false charges. It should be observed that, as Intercessor, Christ contemplates and supports the believer in the sphere of the believer’s weakness, immaturity, and ignorance; but, as Advocate, He confronts the most serious situation that could ever arise concerning a child in the Father’s household. As Advocate He defends the believer when charged with actual sin. This He does while the believer is sinning and not sometime afterwards. The assurance is given that, if a Christian sins, he has an Advocate with the Father. It might be supposed by some that the Advocate is begging the Father to be lenient toward the offender; but God cannot be lenient toward sin. Likewise, it might be supposed that the Advocate is making excuses for the one He defends; but there are no excuses. In like manner, it might be supposed that the Advocate is able to confuse the issue and make out a case that would divert the natural course of justice; but that unworthy conception is answered in the very title which He gains as Advocate, which title is nowhere else applied to Him.

Fifth, “Jesus Christ the righteous,” is the title which He gains as Advocate. Thus it is disclosed that the thing which the Advocate does, not only saves the offender from the holy judgments of God, but that defense is wrought upon a ground so equitable that the Advocate, because of His advocacy, is given the title, Jesus Christ the Righteous. This title does not refer to Christ’s own holy character, which is righteous to an infinite degree; it rather refers to the righteous basis upon
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which the offender is delivered by the Advocate—a deliverance wrought in full view of the unalterable demands of holiness and in spite of the truthful accusations of Satan. As Advocate in heaven and in behalf of a Christian who is sinning, Christ presents the evidence of His own death and proves the fact that He bore that sin on the cross. The removal of the penalty from the believer on the ground of the Advocate’s having borne it is a transaction of unsurpassed equity.

There is no appeal that can be made to the child of God that he refrain from sin, which could be more effective than that which results from even a partial knowledge of all that his sin imposes on the Advocate in heaven. Such knowledge does not tend to carelessness, nor does the deliverance wrought by the Advocate lower the standards of the holy judgments of God. The child of God is preserved by the abiding, propitiatory value of the death of Christ. Here, as in the case of the divine freedom to deal with the effect of the Christian’s sin upon himself, the effect of his sin upon God is also annulled by the fact that, as the context goes on to say, “He is the propitiation for our sins.”

It may be concluded, therefore, that the cure of the Christian’s sin is based upon that aspect of the propitiatory work of Christ which contemplates the Christian sin, and, on that basis, the effect of the Christian’s sin upon himself may be removed on no other ground than that he confess his sin; and that the effect of the Christian’s sin upon God is cured by the same propitiatory work of Christ, but upon no human terms whatsoever, since Christ, as Savior, undertakes not only to save but to keep those whom He saves.

As a consummation of the specific theme, the Christian’s personal sin, it may be restated that sin is as evil when committed by a Christian as when committed by the unsaved, that the Christian sins against greater light, against a more intimate relation to God, from a higher position, being in Christ, and against a more exalted standard of holy living which is no less than that which pertains to a heavenly citizenship and a manifestation of Christ’s own character. It is also declared that the Christian is more beset than the unregenerate since he wages a conflict against the world, the flesh, and the devil. It has also been pointed out that the Christian has the divinely provided help which is contributed by the Word of God, the interceding Christ, and the indwelling Spirit. And, finally, the Christian’s sin reacts upon himself to his spiritual injury, which may be cured by confession of his sin to God, and it reacts against God, who, being propitious through the death of Christ for the Christian’s sin, continues the Christian as His child through that infinite grace which provides a righteous satisfaction for every wrong.

V. THE CHRISTIAN’S SIN NATURE

Though the fact of the sin nature has been attended at length in Chapter XIX, it yet remains to consider the divine remedy for that nature. That there is no provided remedy for it as pertains to the unregenerate would hardly be disputed. The whole divine revelation respecting the remedy is exclusively a message to believers. In approaching the truth respecting the remedy, a brief survey will first be given of the origin, character, and propagation of this nature.
As a faithful warning, God said to Adam, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” or, *dying thou shalt die* (Gen. 2:17). Though his physical death was delayed for centuries, Adam died spiritually on the day in which he disobeyed and repudiated God. The whole character of his being was abruptly changed; it was not merely that he was charged with the guilt of sin, but he was changed in every part of his being. He who was, in his creation, satisfying to his Creator became a degenerate and depraved man in himself, capable of generating only after his kind, and through fallen Adam a spiritually dead race has been propagated who are blighted by a death which is none other than separation of the soul and spirit from God. Indicative of this great change in Adam, he is seen hiding from God, as a confession of his own change of heart, and, likewise, the record is given of a divine expulsion from the garden, with other penalties, as an expression of the judgment of God. No longer did God alone come down and walk with Adam in the cool of the day. This spiritually dead condition, which is termed a fallen, or Adamic, nature, is transmitted without diminution from father to son throughout all generations.

That Christians are wont to sin and do sin is observable on every hand. This is equally true of those who, through erroneous teaching, have been encouraged to profess that they have attained unto sinless perfection. In arriving at an understanding of the problem of the source from which sin proceeds in a Christian, and the issues involved in its cure, it is essential to recognize the meaning and force of three terms which are employed in the New Testament:

1. “*FLESH*” (*oapE*). On the precise meaning of this term, Bishop Moule writes:

In New Testament usage, on the whole, this word bears in each place (where its meaning is not merely literal) one of two meanings. It denotes either (a) human nature as conditioned by the body; (e.g. ix. 3,5,9; 2 Cor. Viii. 5, & c.&c.;) or (b) human nature as conditioned by the Fall, or in other words by the dominion of sin, which then began, and which works so largely through the conditions of bodily life that those conditions are almost, in language, identified with sinfulness…In the *first* connexion “the flesh” may bear a neutral, or a holy, meaning; (John i.14;) in the *second*, it means a state which is essentially evil, and which may be described with practical correctness as (1) the state of man unregenerate, and (2), in the regenerate, the state of that element of the being which still resists grace. For manifestly (see gal. v.17) “the flesh” is an element still in the regenerate, not only in the sense of corporeal conditions, but in that of sinful conditions. But, in the latter sense, they are no longer characterized by it; they are not “fleshly” because the *dominant* element is now not “the flesh,” but the renewed will, energized by the Divine Spirit.-*Cambridge Bible, Romans, p. 140*.

The life impulses and desires are called “lusts of the flesh.” “Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16, R.V. See also, Eph. 2:3; 2 Pet. 2:18; I John 2:16; Rom. 13:14). That the Bible use of the word *lust* is not limited to inordinate desires is evidenced by the fact that the Holy Spirit is said to “lust against the flesh,” according to the next verse in this context (see, also, James 4:5). The Scriptures are still more explicit concerning the breadth of the
meaning of this word. Reference is made to “fleshly wisdom (2 Cor. 1:12), “fleshly tables of the heart” (2 Cor. 3:3), and “fleshly mind” (Col. 2:18, cf. Rom. 8:6). The Apostle does not say that either his body or nature are “fleshly”; he says, “I am carnal” (fleshly, Rom. 7:14), and “In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). The unregenerate self is, within itself, hopelessly evil and condemned; but it is subject to the present control and ultimate transformation provided for in the grace and power of God.

Into this whole “natural man” a new divine nature is imparted when the individual is saved. Salvation is more than a change of heart. It is more than a transformation of the old. It is a regeneration or creation of something wholly new which is possessed in conjunction with the old nature so long as the child of God is in this body. The presence of two opposing natures (not two personalities) in one individual results in conflict. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other” (Gal. 5:17). There is no hint that this divine restraint upon the flesh will ever be unnecessary so long as the Christian is in this body; But the Bible bears a clear testimony that the believer may experience an unbroken “walk in the Spirit,” and “not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” To secure all of this, no removal of the “flesh” is promised. The human spirit, soul, and body abide, and the victory is gained over the “flesh” by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

2. “OLD MAN” (nayaioS avfwnoS). Similarly, Bishop Moule begins his study of this word in Romans thus: “Cp., for illustrative passages, vii.22; 2 Cor. lv.16; Eph. lli.16, iv. 22,24; Col. lli.9; I Pet. lli.4. In view of these the word ‘self’ in it popular use (‘a man’s true self,’&c.) appears to be a fair equivalent for ‘man’ here. Meyer here gives ‘unser altes Ich,’ (‘our old Ego’). Here the Apostles views the Christian before his union to Christ as (figuratively, of course,) another person; so profoundly different was his position before God, as a person unconnected with Christ” (Ibid., p.114).

This term is used only three times in the New Testament. Once it has to do with the present position of the “old man” through the death of Christ (Rom. 6:6). In the other two passages (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10) the fact that the “old man” has been put off forever is made the basis of an appeal for a holy manner of life.

In Romans 6:6 it is written: “Knowing this, that our old man is [was] crucified with him.” There can be no reference here to the experience of the Christian; it is rather a cocrucifixion “with him” and most evidently at the time and place when and where Christ was crucified. In the context this passage follows immediately upon the statement concerning the individual’s transfer in federal headship from the first Adam to the Last Adam. (Rom. 5:12-21). The first Adam, as perpetuated in the believer, was judged in the crucifixion of Christ. The “old man,” the fallen nature received from Adam, was “crucified with him.” This cocrucifixion, it will be seen, is of the greatest importance, on the divine side, in making possible a true deliverance from the power of the “old man.”
In the second passage in which the term “old man” is used, the fact that the old man is already crucified with Christ is the basis for an appeal: “That ye [did] put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye [did] put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24).

In the third passage the position suggests again the corresponding experience, “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:9-10). Positionally the “old man” has been put off forever. Experimentally the “old man” remains as an active force in the life and can be controlled only by the power of God. There is no Biblical ground for a distinction between the Adamic nature and a “human nature.” Unregenerate people have but one nature, while those who are regenerate have two natures. There is but one fallen nature, which is from Adam, and one new nature, which is from God. The “old man,” then, is the Adamic nature which has been judged in the death of Christ. It still abides with the Christian as an active principle in his life, and his experimental victory over it will be realized only through a definite reliance upon the indwelling Spirit. The “old man” is a part, but not all, of the “flesh.”

3.”SIN” (auapria). The third Bible word related to the source of evil in the child of God is “sin.” In certain portions of the Scriptures, notably Romans 6:1-8:13 and I John 1:1-2:2, there is an important distinction between two uses of the word “sin.” The two meanings will be obvious if it is remembered that the word sometimes refers to the Adamic nature, and sometimes to evil resulting from that nature. Sin, as a nature, is the source of sin which is committed. Sin is the root which bears its own fruit in sin which is evil conduct. Sin is what the individual is by birth, while sins are the things he does in life.

There is abundant Biblical testimony to the fact that the “flesh,” the “old man,” or “sin,” is the source of evil. The child of God has a blessed “treasure” in the possession of the “new man” indwelling him, but he has this treasure in an earthen vessel. The earthen vessel is the “body of our humiliation” (2 Cor. 4:7; Phil. 3:21, R.V.).

Personality—the ego—remains the same individuality through all the operations of grace, though it experiences the greatest possible advancement, transformation, and regeneration from its lost estate in Adam, to the positions and possessions of a son of God in Christ. That which was, is said to be forgiven, justified, saved, and receives the new divine nature which is eternal life. That which was, is born again and becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus, though it remains the same personality which was born of certain parents after the flesh. Like physical death, the Adamic nature, which is the perpetuator of spiritual death, is not now dismissed, but, in the case of the redeemed, it is subject to gracious divine provisions whereby its injuries may be restrained. Salvation from the power of sin for the Christian, like salvation from the penalty of sin for the unsaved, depends upon two factors, namely, the divine provision and the human appropriation.
a. THE DIVINE PROVISIN. In each of these aspects of salvation the righteous basis for the divine provision is found in the death of Christ. That lost men might be saved from the penalty of sin and unto eternal glory, “Christ died for our sins” (I Cor. 15:3); that regenerated men might be saved from the power of sin unto a holy walk, Christ “died unto sin” (Rom. 6:10). Christ’s death for sin provides a finished work of God upon which He is able to remain just while He justifies the one who believes on Christ. (Rom. 3:26). Christ’s death unto sin provides a finished work of God upon which He is able, by the unceasing energy of His Spirit, to advance the sanctification of those from among the saved who “walk in the Spirit.” Since Christ died for sin, there is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who believe, their standing and safety being perfected forever in Christ. Since Christ died unto sin, there is a walk upon a new principle made possible for those who are saved whereby their present state and sanctity may be according to the will of God for them.

The New Creation, organic union between the resurrected Christ and the believer, is based, according to the Scriptures, upon the substitutionary work of Christ in all its aspects and is accomplished by the regenerating work of the Spirit whereby Christ is begotten in the believer and by the baptizing work of the Spirit whereby the believer is placed in Christ. The words of Christ, “ye in me, and I in you” (John 14:20), announce both aspects of the Spirit’s ministry in relation to the New Creation. These great transformations are wrought by the Spirit at the moment of, and as a part of, salvation. Concerning the placing of the believer in Christ, it is said: “For by one Spirit are we all [including each and every one] baptized into one body…and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (I cor. 12:13); and, again, “For as many of you [with reference to all who are saved] as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

When seeking to apprehend what is wrought by the Spirit’s baptizing ministry, it is essential to determine the precise meaning of Bantilw. This is one of the great words of the New Testament and is used in relation to both real and ritual baptism-that is, both Spirit and water baptism. Being thus employed, whatever meaning is assigned to it in the one case should, reasonably, be assigned to it in the other case. Like Barrw (used but twice in its primary meaning-to dip-Luke 16:24; John 13:26, and but once in its secondary meaning-to stain, or dye, by whatever means-Rev. 19:13; cf. Isa. 63:3 where the same event and situation is described), Barrw is subject to both a primary and a secondary usage, and not a few exegetes contend that its New Testament usage is restricted to its secondary meaning. The primary meaning, according to practically all authorities, is to submerge in a physical envelopment, or an intusposition, while the secondary may imply no more than that a person, a thing, or a power exercises a dominating or transforming influence over the object it is said to baptize. Thus, quite apart from an actual intusposition, it is possible for one to be baptized into repentance, into the remission of sins, into a name, into Moses, or into Christ. Baptism by the Spirit into Christ is far removed from a physical envelopment. Barrw, like its English equivalent-to dip-implies both a putting in an a taking out, while Barrilw, like its English equivalent-to submerge, or immerse-implies only a putting in; and, in the case of a baptism into Christ, no removal is either desirable or possible.
The one thus joined to Christ partakes of all that Christ is, with respect to meritorious standing, and all that Christ has done, with respect to substitution—His crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection. Christ being the righteousness of God, the believer, when thus joined to Him, is “made” the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21), and, therefore, is “made” accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 2:13). Likewise, when, in His judgment of the believer’s sin nature, Christ has been crucified, has died, has been buried, and has been raised from the dead, the child of God, for whom Christ has thus wrought, is said to have been crucified, to have died, to have been buried, and to have been raised from the dead in His Substitute, and as completely as though he had himself personally experienced each feature of that judgment. This context (Rom. 6:1-14) is the central passage on sanctification, which is by the Spirit on the ground of Christ’s death unto the sin nature. In ascertaining the precise facts concerning the basis upon which God is free to control the old nature, too much emphasis cannot be put upon the truth that the old nature in each believer is already judged in the death of Christ. The unregenerate man is dead in sins (Eph. 2:1), but the regenerate man is dead to sin (Rom. 6:2).

The passage open thus: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin [we who have died to sin; so, also, vss. 7-8, 11; Col. 2:20; 3:3], live any longer therein?” It would not become the Christian as a child of God to do so, and it is not necessary for him to do so since he is now “dead to sin.” He cannot plead the power of a tendency over which there is no control. He still has the tendency, and it is more than he can control; but God has provided the possibility of a deliverance from its power both by judging the old nature and by giving him the presence and power of the Spirit. The believer is dependent upon God alone for deliverance by His Spirit, but He could not deliver until the sin nature is righteously judged. This judgment He has accomplished, and He has also given to Christians the Spirit who is ever present and wholly able. Thus the necessity to sin is broken and saved ones are free to move on another plane and in the power of His resurrection life. The argument in this passage is based on this vital union by which believers are organically united to Christ through their baptism into His body. The passage continues, “Know ye not [or, are ye ignorant], that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? As certainly as Christians are in Him they partake of the value of His death.

So, also, the passage states: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death” (cf. Col. 2:12). Thus the saved are actually partakers of His crucifixion (vs. 6), death (vs.8), burial (vs. 4), and resurrection (vss. 4-5,8) and as essentially as they would partake had they been crucified, dead, buried, and raised. Being baptized into Jesus Christ is the substance of which crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection are attributes. One is the cause, while the others are the effects. All this is unto the realization of one great divine purpose. “That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life;” or by a new life-principle. The Christian’s walk, then, is the divine objective. Christ died in the believer’s stead. The judgment belonged to him, but Christ became his Substitute. The child of God is thus counted as a copartner in all that his Substitute did.
What He did forever satisfied the righteous demands of God against the “old man” and opened the way for a walk well-pleasing to God (cf. 2 Cor. 5:15).

As the passage proceeds, this truth of copartnership in Christ is presented again and with greater detail: “For if [as] we have been planted [conjoined, united, grown together; the word is used but once in the New Testament] together in the likeness [i.e., oneness; see Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:7] of his death, we shall be [now, and forever] also in likeness of his resurrection.” Those saved are already conjoined to Christ by the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13), which places them 2positionally beyond the judgments of sin and they are therefore free to enter the experience of the eternal power and victory of His resurrection. “Knowing this [because we know this], that our old man is [was] crucified with him [for the same divine purpose as stated before], that the body of sin might be destroyed [our power of expression is through the body. This fact is used as a figure concerning the manifestation of sin. The body is not destroyed, but sin’s power and means of expression may be annulled. See vs. 12], that henceforth we should not serve [be bondslaves to] sin [the ‘old man’]. For he that is dead is freed [justified] from sin [they who have once died to sin, as we have in our Substitute, now stand free from its legal claims]. Now if we be dead with Christ [or, as we died with Christ], we believe that we shall also live with him [not only in heaven, but now. There is as much certainty for the life in Him as there is certainty for the death in Him]: knowing [or, because we know] that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him [we are thereby encouraged to believer as much concerning ourselves]. For in that he died, he died unto sin [the nature] once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God” (and so the believer may live unto God.

As certainly as this passage does not enjoin self-crucifixion, self-death, self-burial, or self-resurrection, so certainly it does not enjoin a re-enactment of two out of four of these divine accomplishments-burial and resurrection-by an ordinance, regardless of the meaning with which the ordinance is supposed to be invested. The only thing the believer is enjoined to do, in view of Christ’s death unto the sin nature, is to reckon himself to be dead unto it; not, indeed, to reckon the nature to be dead, but to reckon himself, being in Christ and a partaker of all that Christ wrought in judgment of that nature, to be dead unto it. Apart from such reckoning, it is clearly implied that sin, as a living force, will reign in the mortal body (Rom. 6:11-12).

The fact that the sin nature is judged is a revelation of supreme importance and speaks of God’s faithfulness in behalf of His saved ones, but He also reveals to them the knowledge of His measureless provision for their sanctification and daily life. The record concerning Christ’s death unto the sin nature is not given merely to enlarge the individual’s knowledge of historical facts; it is given that he may assured that there is deliverance from the reigning power of sin, as once unbelievers were assured through the revelation of the fact that Christ died for their sins that there is salvation from the penalty of sin. The death of Christ unto sin is the ground of a great confidence. Thus it may be concluded that the divine provision for the believer’s deliverance
from the domination of the sin nature is twofold, namely, (a) a legal and righteous judgment of the sin nature and (b) the gift of the indwelling, victorious Spirit of God.

b. THE BELIEVER’S RESPONSIBILITY. In gaining a deliverance from the power of sin, the believer’s responsibility is stated in one word—faith (a faith which not only reckons one to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God—Rom. 6:11—and which yields one’s self unto God—Rom. 6:13). Naught else remains for him to do since, as above stated, God has provided the righteous ground upon which the deliverance may be wrought by the Spirit and has caused that same victorious Spirit to indwell the believer for this very purpose. The requirement is not an act of faith, such as once secured regeneration; it is an attitude of faith, which is renewed and pursued in every succeeding day. To walk by means of, or in dependence on, the Spirit is to be delivered from the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). Here, as a life principle of procedure, faith is, as always, opposite to human works. The Apostle testified that the result of his struggle, when he strove in his own strength to realize spiritual ideals, was utter failure and he could only conclude that to will was present with him, but how to perform that which is good he found not (Rom. 7:18).

Before quoting this Scripture in Romans which reports the Apostle’s contest, it should be noted that there is no erroneous supposition more universal and misleading than that a Christian can, in his own strength, command and control the old nature. The Apostle’s experience and failure along this line are given in this Scripture as a warning to all Christians. No mention of the Spirit appears in this passage. The conflict is not between the indwelling Spirit and the flesh; it is rather a conflict between the new “I” and the old “I”. The new “I” is the regenerated man, who, for the moment, is hypothetically isolated from the normal relationship to, and dependence on, the Spirit, and is seen in unaided human strength to be confronting the whole law, or will, of God (vs. 16), the vitiated flesh (vs. 18), and the humanly impossible demands for a holy life which are properly expected of every regenerate person (vss. 22-23,25). The Apostle’s experience answers the vital question, namely, Can the regenerate man, apart from dependence on the Spirit, do the will of God, even though he delight in that will (vs. 22)? In tracing the salient features of the Apostle’s conflict and defeat, for clearer identification of the combatants, the Apostle’s two names will be employed—Saul, the man of the flesh, and Paul, the regenerate man. The passage, with some comments, is as follows: “For that which I [Saul] do I [Paul] allow not: for what I [Paul] would, that do I [Saul] not; but what I [Paul] hate, that do I [Saul]. If then I [Saul] do that which I [Paul] would not, I consent unto the law [or will of God for me] that it is good. Now then it is no more I [Paul] that do it, but sin [Saul] that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me [Saul] (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I [Paul] would I [Saul] do not: but the evil which I [Paul] would not, that I [Saul] do. Now if I [Saul] do that I [Paul] would not, it is no more I [Paul] that do it, but sin [Saul] that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I [Paul] would do good, evil [Saul] is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members [Saul], warning against the law of my mind [Paul, who delights in the law of God], and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin [Saul] which is in my
members. O wretched [Christian] man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:15-24).

The answer to this great question and cry of distress with which the above passage closes is given in a following verse (Rom. 8:2): “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” This is more than a deliverance from the Law of Moses: it is the immediate deliverance from sin (Saul) and death (its results, cf. Rom. 6:23). The effects of this deliverance is indicated by the blessedness recorded in the eighth chapter, as in contrast to the wretchedness recorded in the seventh chapter. The helpless and defeated “I” is in evidence in the one case, and the sufficient and victorious “I” by the Spirit, is in evidence in the other. The Christian is, then, to be delivered by the “law” [or power] of the Spirit.” But attention must be called to the fact, stated in 7:25, that it is “through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Christian is delivered by the Spirit, but the deliverance is made righteously possible through Jesus Christ our Lord, because of the believer’s union with Him in His crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

Similarly, two natures were still in evidence in the Apostle’s experience since with the mind he desired to serve the law of God, but with the flesh he desired to serve the law of sin (rom. 7:25). He did not remain a defeated Christian for he found the faith principle of life, and this he states in Romans 8:4, which passage, with verse 3, is a consummation of all that has gone before from the beginning of chapter six: “That the righteousness of the law [the whole will of God for each believer to the last detail in every moment of life] might be fulfilled in us.” It could never be fulfilled by us. This victory, he goes on to state, is only for those who walk not in dependence on the flesh but in dependence on the Spirit. Deliverance from the power of the old nature, it is thus discovered, is in no way dependent on human effort other than the effort which is required to maintain an attitude of faith. There is a “fight”…of faith,” and in this conflict the combatant seeks by divine enablement to preserve only an unbroken reliance upon the Spirit of God.

Nor is a freedom from the power of the sin nature secured on the part of the Christian by a supposed eradication of that nature through a falsely imagined, second work of grace. Though embraced by multitudes of earnest people, there is no Scriptural basis for either the rationalistic notion of eradication or for a supposed second work of grace, arguments for which are drawn almost wholly from mere human experience—of all things most uncertain. The unscriptural character of these theories is obvious: (a) Eradication is not the divine method of dealing with the Christian’s foes. There is no eradication of the world, or of the flesh, or of the devil, nor is physical death, so closely related to spiritual death, eradicated in this life. In every case, including the Adamic nature, the believer has but one assured way of deliverance-dependence upon the indwelling Spirit. (b) Were the claims of the eradicationists true, there would be no reason for the maintenance of a faith position and the great body of Scripture which directs the believer into the realization of the victory which comes alone by faith would be rendered meaningless. The two phrases-not able to sin and able not to sin- represent widely divergent ideas. The Word of God teaches that, by the power of the indwelling Spirit, the child of God,
though ever and always beset in this life by an evil disposition, may be, for a given moment and under a specific situation, able not to sin. Such, indeed, is the power of the indwelling Spirit; but no word of the Scripture sanctions the notion that any Christian ever attains to a place where he is not able to sin. The consciousness of sinfulness, or of a tendency to sin, has been the experience of the most spiritual saints of all generations and especially as they have come into closer fellowship with God. Having drawn near to God, Job, the upright in heart, abhorred self; and Daniel, against whom no sin is recorded, under like circumstances, said, ‘My comeliness was turned in me into corruption.’ Galatians 5:16-17 describes the method by which spiritually has ever been attained by any member of this fallen race. This passage reads: ‘This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.’ The method is not one if ignoring the power of the sin nature, much less supposing it to be eradicated; it is rather in discovering the counter agency for victory which is provided in the indwelling Spirit. “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die [or are in the way of death]; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify [reckon to be dead] the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (or, are in the way of life-Rom. 8:12-13). The opposite of spiritual death is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. In spite of the presence of the sin nature, every Christian is “alive unto God,” having passed from death unto life; and, by the indwelling Spirit, every Christian is fully equipped unto every good work.

In *The Principles of Theology*, Dr. W.H. Griffith Thomas, writing on Article IX of the Thirty-Nine Articles and of “the Permanence of Original Sin,” declares:

This question of the permanence of original sin in the regenerate is important on two grounds: (a) in its opposition to all forms of what is called “sinless perfection”; (b) on the other hand, against any yielding to defeat and accepting it as inevitable. Something must be said on each of these two points.

(a) It is important to consider the relation of sin to our nature. The ultimate capacity in human nature is the capacity for feeling, for vivid impressions of pain and pleasure. There are called the primary sensibilities and have been disordered through sin, and are never entirely rectified in this life, though the Atonement covers their defeat. Then come secondary sensibilities, leading to desires on the one hand and aversions on the other. It is at this point that Divine grace comes in. If the will does not consent there is no personal sin, but there is a disorder below the will which is sinful and needs to be dealt with. Personal responsibility is concerned only with that which the will determines. Atonement covers the rest, including incapacity and defect. It is also important to note the distinction between Adam and ourselves. He had the liability, but not the tendency to sin. We have both, and the tendency is what the Article calls the “corruption of the nature,” “infection of nature,” “concupiscence.” The weakness of what is known as the Methodist doctrine of “Perfect Love” is that it teaches that grace meets all the needs of human nature in the
sense of eradication. But is does not. Scripture continually distinguishes between sin and sins, between the root and fruit, but though the root remains, as stated by the Article, there is no need for it to bring forth fruit.

(b) But the presence of inborn sinfulness in the regenerate, while real and powerful, is no excuse, still less justification for sinning. The Apostle clearly teaches that the redemptive work of Christ was intended to render inert or inoperative the evil principle within (Rom. vi.6, Greek). And thus we may say that while Scripture teaches something that is very near eradication, in order that we may not be satisfied with anything less than the highest type of Christian living, on the other hand, it as clearly teaches that the evil principle has not been removed. It loses its power over the believer, though the believer does not lose its presence. To the same effect is the Apostle’s word: “Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin” (Rom. vi. 11). He thereby teaches that while we are to be dead to it, it is not dead to us. Sin is not dead, but we are to keep on reckoning ourselves to be dead to it. Such language would have been impossible if sin has been entirely removed. It is impossible to avoid noticing at this point the striking affinity between the Roman Catholic and Methodist doctrine of making sinfulness inhere in the will only. Our Article, in harmony with the Protestant Confessions of the sixteenth century goes much deeper, and shows that sin has affected the nature long before the will commences to act.

The question is vital to many of the most practical and important aspects of living, for if we are wrong here we are liable to be wrong everywhere. Superficial views of sin inevitably tend towards superficial views of the redemptive work of Christ. We must, therefore, be on our guard against the two extremes: on the one hand we must insist that even in the regenerate the evil principle remains and will remain to the end of this life; on the other hand, we must be clear that this evil principle need not and ought not to produce evil results in practice, since the grace of God has been provided to meet and overcome it-Pp. 173-75.

VII. THE CHRISTIAN’S RELATION TO IMPUTED SIN

Physical death, as has been observed, is the penalty of imputed sin, and though for the Christian its judgment aspects is wholly repealed, the experience of death as the only way of departure from this world is the portion of all believers until the return of Christ. The penalty or judgment feature of death has been so perfectly abrogated that it can be said of all believers, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1, R.V.; cf. John 3:18; Rom. 8:38-39; I Cor. 11:32). The Apostle also declares, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 15:55-57). It is asserted that a mighty triumph has been gained over both death and the grave. “The sting of death is sin,” but death’s power to injure is canceled by the death of Christ. “The strength of sin is the law,” but the entire merit system is terminated by Christ in His death. He met the demands for merit by releasing His own perfect merit to all who believe. The strength of sin is seen in the truth that it is lawlessness; yet the strength of the law as a means of righteousness is turned to feebleness
because of the weakness of the flesh (Rom. 8:3). Thanks, indeed, be unto God for this victory over the judgment aspect of death, which victory is gained by the Lord Jesus Christ. The only effectual cure for death is life, and though the wages of sin—the first Adamic sin—is death, the gift of God is eternal life “through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

VIII. THE CHRISTIAN’S RELATION TO MAN’S ESTATE UNDER SIN

This relationship is only a memory. The Apostle, writing to the Ephesian believers of this very thing, says, “Wherefore remember” (Eph. 2:11). The change from the lost estate under sin to the saved estate under grace could not be adequately estimated by any mind or fully described by any tongue. What was once a complete demerit is exchanged for the infinitely perfect merit of Christ; a place in the cosmos has been exchanged for a place in the kingdom of the Son of His love; and the doom of sin’s judgment has been exchanged for an immutable position in the sovereign grace of God-grace that not only super-abounds but never ceases. Those under sin are said to be without Christ, having no hope, without God, in the cosmos (Eph. 2:12); those that are under grace are described with respect to their unchanging estate by the words, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

CHAPTER XXIII

PUNISHMENT

The general theme of punishment, in its broad application, is divided into chastisement, scourging, and retribution. Of these, the first two relate to God’s way of dealing with impenitent Christians, and the last to God’s final dealing with the unsaved. These separate doctrines are to be treated more fully later in this work on theology. Only a brief outline will be introduced here.

I. CHASTISEMENT

The doctrine of chastisement is closely related to that of the Christian’s suffering, though all suffering is not chastisement. When God uses suffering to correct His own, it becomes chastisement. Representing this line of truth as it obtained in the Old Testament, David said: “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee” (Ps. 32:8-9). The harsh bit is applied to the willful, otherwise that one might be guided by His eye. In the same Psalm, David relates his own experience as a result of withholding his confession to God. He declares, “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer” (vss. 3-4). The harsh bit is applied to the willful, otherwise that one might be guided by His eye. In the same Psalm, David relates his own experience as a result of withholding his confession to God. He declares, “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer” (vss. 3-4). Following this he made his confession and was restored. Of this he says, “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD: and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (vs. 5). There is a form of correction which may be avoided by
confession. Of this it is written, “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (I Cor. 11:31-32). Confession is self-judgment and it serves to obviate painful discipline which must be inflicted upon the rebellious that they be not condemned with the cosmos world. None will be so afflicted who is not at the same time conscious that he is resisting God and of the reason why he is under correction. Discipline in one form or another is the universal experience of all who are saved; even the fruit-bearing branch is pruned that it may bear more fruit (John 15:2). The testimony of the central passage of the Bible on chastisement (Heb. 12:4-15) is to the effect that every son is disciplined.

II. SCOURGING

The experience of scourging is closely related to that of chastisement, but seems, from the one passage in which it occurs (Heb. 12:6), to differ from chastisement, It is reasonably concluded that scourging refers to the conquering of the will and results in a surrendered life. It may be wrought but once in a believer’s lifetime. On the other hand, chastisement may be repeated many times before the work of scourging is consummated. God is not satisfied with anarchy in His household.

III. RETRIBUTION

As every form of discipline has for its object the improvement or development of its subject with a view to the realization of the high and holy purposes which God has determined for those that are saved, there is no training or instruction intended in the retribution of the lost. The two classes are identified in two of the passages already cited. In I Corinthians 11:31-32, one class is preserved and the other is condemned. Similarly, in Hebrews 12:6-8, one class is addressed as “sons,” while the other class is designated “not sons.” In each case God is seen to be working for the betterment of one group, but only condemning the other group. No improvement is anticipated in God’s dealings with those condemned, who are also called “not sons.” Judgment falls on them as a vindication of the dignity of the One to whom every creature owes his existence and whose will has been revealed, which will has been outraged by sin. It is well to remember that every member of the human family was once in the same condemnation and ever would be but for divine redemption. It is equally to be pondered that the offer of saving grace is now extended to the whole lost world. Punishment of the unregenerate is inflicted as a requital of offense against God, and thus becomes more than an imposition of sin’s consequences. The moral order of the universe must be, and will be, upheld; but far beyond that is the vindication of the dishonor done to the Person of God. If the truth be recognized that the most enlightened of men are incapable of understanding the true nature of sin or its effect upon the One who is infinitely holy, it should be admitted by all that vindicating punishment is beyond human understanding. It is clearly disclosed in the Bible and more on the lips of Christ than any other. The revelation stands not only on the authority with which the Bible speaks, but is stands, also, on the basis of the truth that no man is in a position to dispute it.
“Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19, R.V.). In this text, God asserts, first, His own reaction toward sin by the words Vengeance belongeth unto me; but He also implies the necessity for penalty when He says, I will recompense. The recompense or penalty is more than a mere abandonment of the sinner. It is true that the “second death,” which is eternal, is a separation from God and that that eternal estate is an immeasurable penalty in the light of the fact that the lost soul must know what grace might have wrought. The penalty is a definite imposition over and above the natural course of events—a retribution which corresponds to the punishment required. It is as certain as the character of God that whatever is imposed will be just and right, and it will be so recognized by all. God will not in this, any more than in any other undertaking, be the author of that which is evil.

Chastisement is a demonstration of divine love, but retribution is a manifestation of divine wrath. God has never proposed the amendment of sinners now, nor will He in eternity. He has provided at infinite cost a perfect regeneration and new creation through faith in Christ. This may be received or rejected by men. There is no word in the Bible which corresponds to extinction. The estate of the lost is both conscious and endless. Even physical death, on which they might depend for some relief, will have been destroyed and banished forever.

The dark picture of human failure and sorrow is drawn only that the good news of the gospel may be more readily received. All of God’s unveiling of the destiny of the lost is with the appeal that men turn to Him and live in His grace forever.

A very perplexing problem arises when retribution and redemption are not fully distinguished. It is whether punishment is remedial; if it is, why should there be redemption? At this point sincere men have lost their way and drifted into the rationalistic theories of Universalism and Restitutionism. Two extended quotations will throw light on this problem:

The distinctive purpose of divine punishment cannot be the improvement of the person punished, because this is the object of redemption. If punishment were the means appropriate to this end, there would be no need for redemption; or rather, if this object is attained by redemption, of what use is the severity of punishment? Are we to suppose that when redemption proves ineffectual for the improvement of man, punishment must be resorted to, to attain the object? It would then follow that punishment is more effectual for man’s regeneration than redemption. The conflict between the sphere of punishment and that of redemption becomes all the more perplexing, when we recollect that the main feature of redemption is the doing away with punishment by the forgiveness of sins. If punishment is remedial, is it a kindness to free man from it before it has accomplished its work? And how is it possible that redemption, which is the removal of punishment, should renovate, if punishment itself does so also? And yet the influence of punishment in preserving, and re-establishing the power of moral goodness in the sufferer, must not be wholly denied. Punishment, on the one hand, acts as a barrier against the desolating inroads of sin by reasserting the fixed ordinances of the law; and, on the other hand, it bears witness to the sinner of the crushing power wherewith evil recoils upon himself, and
makes him tremble when he surrenders himself to it. In these two ways, it prepares man for the work of redemption. But in its own distinctive nature, it is not adapted or calculated to produce a true improvement, an inward renovation of the sinner. On the contrary, the two spheres, that of redemption, which alone can accomplish a true renewal, and that of punishment, mutually exclude one another. Whenever a living participation in the blessings of redemption begins, punishment, properly so called—Sikn, EKoiknois, tywpia—ceases; but, so long as man continues to be the subject of God’s righteous punishment, he is excluded from those blessings, John 3. 36. DR. JULIUS MULLER, The Christian Doctrine of Sin, I, 246

Punishment is not a proper means of reformation; for true reformation can issue only from free self-determination. It is voluntary in its nature. But a self-determination that is brought about by the fear of pain would not be moral, and of the nature of virtue. Any reformation effected from a selfish motive is not genuine reformation. Furthermore if true reformation could be produced by punishment, why should not the legal and punitive method of the Old Testament have been the only one? The old economy was full of threatenings and penalties, and of fearful examples of their actual execution. Why did God send his Son, and make a new covenant and economy of mercy? Of what use is redemption, or the remission of punishment, if punishment is in itself healing and remedial? The Scriptures never represent punishment as reformatory. The proper punishment of sin is death. Rom. 6:23. As temporal death, which is the extreme penalty in human legislation, is not intended to reform the criminal, and reinstate him in human society, but forever cuts him off from it, so eternal death, in the Biblical representation, is not intended to be a means of educating the sinner and fitting him for the kingdom of heaven, but forever banishes and excludes him from it.-AUGUSTUS D. TWESTEN, Dogmatik, Th. II, Par. 39, both cited by W.G.T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, II, 738-39.

Akin to these problems is the one of the divine attitude toward the countless multitudes who have died having never heard the gospel of redemption. Again a temptation—too strong for many—is developed, and men contend that the heathen will be saved on the ground of their ignorance or that they will be saved if they have lived up to the light they have. These conclusions are grounded in the fallacy that man needs no regeneration which is based on efficacious blood. The nature of the plan of salvation is such that it does not incorporate partial compliance, nor can it be executed on the ground of good intentions. The problem assumes a deeper aspect when it is claimed that God, being sovereign, is able to do whatsoever He pleases to do. This idea relates redemption to sovereignty, whereas it is correctly related to righteousness. Even God cannot redeem apart from the blood of His Son. Should He do so, He would be unrighteous; for no other satisfaction exists which answers the wickedness of creatures. If it be claimed that God is free to save through Christ whom He will, the answer is discovered at once in the Word of God. There His saving grace is always (apart from infants who die) a matter of a personal reception of it. The element of faith is never wanting: “He that believeth on him in not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). If it were true that the heathen are saved by ignorance or their
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faithfulness to such light as they have, there would be no call for a missionary program. In fact, the very act of taking the gospel to those who are saved by something within themselves is an imposition of colossal proportions; for by such an undertaking the heathen who are supposedly safe in their own virtues, are transferred to a system wherein they may, and probably will, be lost forever through the rejection of the gospel.

The heathen are pictured as utterly lost until the gospel is received by them. Without that truth every commission recorded in the New Testament is a useless enterprise, calculated to injure rather than help those to whom the message goes. The gospel does engender a responsibility and becomes for those who reject it a “savour of death unto death,” as its reception is a “savour of life unto life.”

At the root of these difficulties lies the rationalistic notion that all men are divinely appointed to be saved, and, if they are not, God has failed to that degree in His purpose. The clarifying truth is that He has an elect company from all nations and that not one of these will fail to hear and respond to the gospel. The larger problem of His purpose in other ages must be reserved for a later consideration.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FINAL TRIUMPH OVER ALL SIN

REVELATION AND reason unite in one testimony that evil is a temporary thing in the universe of God. Reason declares that, since God is infinitely holy and the Designer and creator of the Universe, evil must have begun its manifestation subsequent to creation by His permission and is to serve a purpose compatible with His righteousness. Reason also anticipates that, when that purpose is accomplished, evil will be dismissed from the universe of God, and that God, having undertaken to deal with evil, will complete His task to that degree of perfection which characterizes all His works. On the other hand, revelation predicts a coming victory over evil which no unaided finite mind can grasp. The student would do well again to pause and reflect on the marvelous character of a Book which with absolute accuracy and without hesitation unveils the eternity to come as it unveils the eternity past. This incomparable Book is given by divine inspiration to the end that the man of God (and how little it serves any other!) may be perfect, both in knowledge and in character, by its sanctifying power, and “thoroughly” furnished unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Certain major passages are indicated when the final triumph of God is in view:

1 Corinthians 15:25-28. This portion of the Scriptures, which has the character of a parenthesis in the midst of the one exhaustive revelation concerning resurrection, presents the divine program for the purification of the universe in preparation for the eternal glory. Having declared that resurrection is common to all men and that there is an order or succession in resurrection-(1) Christ the First-Fruits, (2) they that are Christ’s at His coming, and (3) the end or consummating resurrection-the Apostle indicates that the second resurrection in this order, which resurrection is
to occur at Christ’s coming, will be of a group designated as “they that are Christ’s.” This disclosure corresponds with the statement in I Thessalonians 4:16, which is that the dead in Christ are to be raised first, and the declaration in Revelation 20:4-6, where it is indicated that those upon whom the divine seal of blessing rests are raised before the thousand years begin, while “the rest of the dead” are to be raised after the thousand years are ended. In John 5:25-29 Christ’s own words are recorded in which He states that there are two groups in resurrection, but no mention is made by Him of the time that intervenes. According to Christ, these two groups are raised within that prophetic “hour” which has already continued almost two thousand years and, according to prophecy, will continue a thousand years after Christ returns. The notion that there is one general, all-inclusive, simultaneous resurrection within one hour is more a product of Romish theology than a doctrine of the Scriptures.

In the period between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the company designated “they that are Christ’s,” there must be the securing of the complete number of those, the elect company, who comprise this group. At His coming for His own, Christ not only take this company to Himself both by resurrection and translation, but He then terminates this specific divine undertaking. Similarly, the period between the resurrection of Christ’s own and the “end” resurrection is characterized by the exercise of power and authority on the part of Christ. This period, according to Revelation 20:4-6, is a millennium of years. At the end of this period and by virtue of His reign, Christ, it is asserted, will “deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father.” The kingdom referred to here represents the larger sphere of divine authority, for by His authority and power “all enemies”-angelic and human-will be put under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. By divine permission, this larger domain of government has come to be in a state of rebellion. A vast company of angels kept not their first estate and almost the whole human family have been or now are at enmity with God. Death, which was foreign to the first estate of man, has wrought its blight over the earth throughout all generations. In that millennial period, Christ, we are told, will put down all rebellion and restore to God the Father an undivided kingdom. The word nàpadidwui is well translated by deliver up provided no intimation is superimposed on it which would imply that the Son ceases His own authoritative reign. This He could not do in the light of His eternal occupancy of the Davidic throne (Luke 1:32-33; cf. Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 7:14). It should hardly be expected of those who see nothing in prophecy of Israel’s future and who fail to recognize the unending earthly reign of Christ, that they would observe the import of this passage. That his precise meaning may be understood, the Apostle goes on to state that all authority has been committed to the Son by the Father, with the all-important and reasonable exception that the Father who gave the authority to the Son is not Himself under the otherwise universal rule of the Son. Thus the Son, having put down all enemies, having destroyed death, and having presented a conquered universe to the Father, will continue, then as now, His everlasting reign. There will never again be an opposing voice in the universal kingdom of God; but God-Father, Son, and Spirit-as at the beginning shall be “all in all.”
In its eschatological bearing, few passages are of greater import than this. Three determining facts appear in this context (I Cor. 15:24-28): (a) During the period between the resurrection of those who are Christ’s and the end resurrection the vast authority of the Son will be exercised to the end that all opposing rule and authority will be put down. All enemies are to be put under Christ’s feet. Even “the last enemy”—death—shall be destroyed (Karapyew, which same word is in verse 24 translated put down; cf. 2 Tim. 1:10, where by the use of the same word it is asserted that Christ hath already abolished death for the believer; and Heb. 2:14, where it is disclosed that by His death Christ will yet destroy him that had the power of death; and 2 Cor. 3:13, where, with Rom. 7:4, the old order is said by Christ’s death to have been abolished; and Eph. 2:15, where the enmity between Jew and Gentile is declared to be abolished by the same death; and finally, Rom. 6:6, where it is said that on the ground Christ’s death the “body of sin” may be disannulled). (b) All authority being given to the Son by the Father (first, as Creator-Col. 1:16-second, as Preserver-Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17-and third, as Ruler, by specific divine decree-Matt. 28:18—though the Father reserves certain powers to Himself—Acts 1:7), the Father is Himself excepted as not being at any time subject to the authority He has given to the Son (cf. Heb. 2:8). And (c) the Son, having exercised His power to the extent that all enemies to the authority of God have been put under His feet, continues His reign, then as now, by the unrevokeable authority of the Father. The construction, according to worthy exegetes, does not necessitate the conclusion that in presenting a restored order to the Father (vs. 24) or that by continuing to reign in future ages by the authority of the Father, as He does now (vs. 28), the Son will resign His rule. This He could not do in the light of the many predictions that His reign will be everlasting. He whose relation to Israel and to this earth is that of a king and whose kingdom is everlasting, will, indeed, reign until the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; but this is not the end, for of Him it is also said that “he shall reign for ever and ever” (Isa. 9:7; Luke 1:33; rev. 11:15). Thus, by this important passage, the final triumph of God over all evil is disclosed.

Revelation 20:11-22:7. Of the several passages of Scripture bearing on the final triumph of God there is none more vital or exhaustive than the one now to be considered. A word-by-word exegesis of this entire context is a desideratum, but only a slight reference can be made to this passage.

When Christ said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions” John 14:2), He made reference, it would seem, to the entire universe in which there are various abodes. The passage under consideration indicates four such dwelling places: (1) the new heaven, the abode of God; (2) the celestial city, which is distinctly identified as separate from the new heaven in that it comes down out of heaven (Rev. 21:2, 10); (3) the new earth, which is inhabited by glorified Israel, which nation is always related to the earthly sphere and whose existence is, by Jehovah’s covenant, everlasting, and with Israel on the earth are “the nations of them which are saved” who bring their glory and honor into the city; and (4) the abode of those who are “without,” whose characters and estates are rendered unchangeable and separate from God forever. Of these
abodes, (1) the new heaven, the home of the Triune God, is shared by the Church (John 14:3) and the holy angels. Comparatively little is revealed regarding the specific character of the new heaven that is to be, and probably for the reason that no finite mind would be able to comprehend it. Much, however, is written concerning (2) the celestial city which is said to come down from God out of heaven—its character, its dimensions, its inhabitants or those who frequent its portals, the material which enters into its structure, and its glory. The patriarchs anticipated this city. Abraham, the tent-dweller, looked for “a city which hath foundations” (Heb, 11:10, 16). The city is cosmopolitan—a place frequented and enjoyed by those of other abodes. In fact, the Bride, whose name is so evidently to be in the new heaven where Christ will be, is so completely a part of this city that it bears the name, “The bride, the Lamb’s wife.” The presence and privilege of the Church in that city is also indicated by the fact that its twelve foundations bear the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Into this city enter, also, the angels, Israel, and the nations; for at the gates are twelve angels and its very portals are named after the twelve tribes of Israel. Likewise, the nations of them which are saved will bring their glory and honor into it. This city, even to its streets, is built of pure gold like unto crystal. Its length is twelve thousand furlongs, which according to present computation is fifteen hundred miles. Its length and its breadth and its height are said to equal. The city will be aflame with the Shekinah light and glory of God. (3) The new earth will be the abode of the earthly peoples who are under the everlasting covenant of God. And (4) the final place where the unredeemed must abide.

Hebrews 12:22-24. Again the celestial city is described, but only in relation to its inhabitants, or those who pass its portals. It will be observed that, as there are various abodes in the Father’s house, there are at least six classifications of the creatures of God—the holy angels, the Church, Israel, the nations of them which are saved, the fallen angels who with Satan are consigned to everlasting fire (Matt. 25:41; cf. Rev. 20:10), and unregenerate men who, because their names were not written in the Lamb’s book of life, are likewise cast into the Lake of fire (Rev. 20:15; 21:8; cf. 21:27). The unregenerate, in relation to the abode of those who are under the eternal blessing of God, are also said to be “without” (Rev. 22:15).

According to Revelation 20:11-22:7, those within the celestial city are: God the Father, God the Son (mentioned under the suggestive title of the Lamb), the angels, the Church, and the earth-dwellers—both Israel and the nations. In Hebrews 12:22-24, the passage now under consideration, the same enumeration of inhabitants appears—“God the Judge of all”; “Jesus the mediator of the new covenant”; “an innumerable company of angels”; “the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven”; and “the spirits of just men made perfect,” which last designation is evidently of Israel and the nations who will then have been purified by divine grace and on the ground of Christ’s redemption and who are dwellers in the new earth. The redeeming blood of Christ is ever in view. In the enumeration of inhabitants given in the Revelation, Christ appears as the Lamb; and, in the enumeration given in Hebrews, He appears as the Mediator of a new covenant with its blood speaking “better things than that of Abel.” From
this evident emphasis upon the blood of Christ, it may be concluded that all God shall have wrought will have been based upon the value of that blood.

2 Peter 3:7-13. Two essential facts are presented in this passage, namely, (1) There is to be a new heaven and a new earth. The present heaven, being on fire, shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. This same scene is described in Hebrews 1:10-12, where it is written that the heavens and the earth shall perish. They shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture they will be folded up and changed. Concerning the passing of the old, it is stated in Revelation 20:11 that the earth and the heaven are to flee away from the face of Him that sits upon the great white throne, and no place will be found for them any more. Peter also testifies, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” This expectation may be based as well upon the Old Testament. In Isaiah 65:17 we read: “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” So surpassing will this new creation be, that the present order will never again be remembered. Likewise, in Isaiah 66:22, R.V., it is predicted: “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain.” According to this prophecy, there is to be not only a new heaven and a new earth, but Israel will abide to share in that glory as long as the new creation endures.

Returning to the passage under consideration, we observe that Peter dates the time of this great transformation as occurring in connection with “the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Pet. 3:7), and this coincides precisely with the record given in Revelation 20:11-15, where it is said that, when the wicked dead are gathered before God for final judgment, the old order then passes away from the face of Him who sits upon the throne. Those dwellers in heaven and those dwellers on earth who are appointed of God to inhabit the new creation must stand aside in space and observe one of the most stupendous creative acts of God—“He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

Though little is recorded in the Bible about the character of the new heavens, much, as has been pointed out, is disclosed concerning the character of the city which comes out of the new heaven. Similarly, there are important revelations, though limited, concerning the new earth. The one extended passage bearing on the conditions which are to obtain on the new earth is as follows: “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men [an earthly designation], and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:3-4). Evidence that this is a description only of conditions in the new earth is twofold: (a) Tears, death, sorrow, crying, and pain, described as “the former things,” belong only to the old earth and these will have “passed away.” (b) God is seen to be dwelling among men. There He makes His tabernacle and they are said to be His
people, and He shall be with them and be their God. He will dwell then as now with the holy angels (Matt. 22:30), and He will dwell with the saints in light (Col. 1:12); but marvelous indeed is the revelation that God will be in unhindered and unbroken communion with the dwellers of the earth. The new earth will be as holy as the new heaven. Peter states that there will be “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13). Thus it is declared that the three spheres of eternal glory—the new heaven, the celestial city, and the new earth—are each and all to be as pure as God is pure, and He abides in each forever. In like manner, the three orders of created beings—the unfallen angels, the Church of the firstborn, and the earth dwellers composed of Israel and the nations that are saved, will be accorded complete and unending fellowship with God. Since no word of God can fail, every word of prophecy will be fulfilled and the final triumph of God over will be as perfect as are all His works.

The Scriptures thus predict a glorious, universal. Divine triumph which is yet to be—a triumph on the plane of infinity and including the disposition of sin as a principle. Even a feeble analysis, such as a finite mind might undertake, must disclose the fact that, concealed in this aspect of the sin question, is the most important reason the human mind has ever discovered why sin was permitted to enter this universe with its injury to creation and its measureless imposition of sacrifice upon the Son of God. It is true that the grace of God cannot be manifested except as there are fallen creatures in existence who, because of the corruption of sin, are objects of grace, and the demonstration of divine grace, the inestimable glory of which is observable not in time but in eternity (Eph.2:7), constitutes an obvious reason for the permission of sin; but more far-reaching and all-inclusive is the fact that the principle of evil, as opposed to good, is brought out of that abstract form in which it existed before creation, and, upon the ground of its concrete fruitage in and through creation, is subject to divine judgment and to be dismissed forever. Incomprehensible, indeed, is the triumph of God when, through the cross of Christ, one lost soul is redeemed and by His saving power is so transformed as to appear in heaven conformed to the image of His Son; and every victory over sin in any of its forms must redound to His everlasting praise. Yet how exceeding in its infinite glory is the judgment and banishment of sin itself! How transcendentally blessed will be that holy peace which will yet reign throughout the universe of God! More wonderful, it would seem, will it be than the peace which reigned in the eternal past, since to hold the experience and judgment of sin in retrospect is more conductive to peace than to hold them in prospect. Being engulfed in the din and darkness of the immediate phase of the conflict, the mind of man cannot extricate itself from its injuries and surroundings and thus fails to apprehend the assured divine triumph which God has determined and which He will execute with that perfection which characterizes all His works. Of all the marvels of divine achievement, none could surpass in glory the oncoming, sin-free universe in which righteousness is seen, not contending and suffering as now, nor even reigning as in the yet future earthly kingdom, but dwelling throughout the whole vast field of God’s creation, except in the abode of fallen angels and lost men.
God, being infinitely holy, can sustain no relation to sin other than to judge it by that white flame of righteousness which He is. The death of Christ as the Father’s provided Lamb not only reveals the measureless love of God for sinners, but opens the way whereby God, because of the judgment of sin which Christ wrought, is free to act without restraint in behalf of the wider field of the universe itself.

A key to the understanding of God’s ways in the ages of time is the fact that He is pleased to put every challenge to an experimental test. This method, without doubt, will secure the desideratum when every mouth will be stopped. It is reasonable to believe that evil in its abstract form and as an opposing principle, at whatever time it began to exist, was itself a challenge to God and that, on the largest conceivable scale, its claims are being subjected to a demonstration which will not only set forth the character of evil in all its magnitude but will also set forth the holy character of God—a revelation of surpassing import—and the exceeding grace of God. To this end it was necessary to permit sin to assume concrete form and run its course to its end. Under the permissive will of God, sin has wrought measureless injury within angelic spheres. It has wrought the complete ruin of the human race, apart from redeeming grace. But sin’s incomputable cost is the blood of the Son of God which alone could provide a righteous ground for the judgments of God against evil in all its aspects, establish forever His holy character, and secure an accomplished redemption for those whom He had chosen from before the foundation of the world, through whom, also, He might show forth the unsearchable riches of His grace.

Little, indeed, did the eyewitnesses of the death of Christ realize the stupendous thing that was transpiring before their vision. The cross was the complete verdict against sin for the individual believer; it reaches to Israel, to the Gentiles, to creation, to things in heaven, to angelic spheres, and to the very root of evil itself in its unlikeness to God. The triumph of God will be perfect and eternal.

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”