

Systematic Theology 2.2

Man in the State of Sin

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*Part Two: The Doctrine of Man in Relation to God — Section 2: Man in the State
of Sin*

Editorial note

The text has been updated to UK English; gloss boxes have been added to explain technical terms; summaries have been included; and questions for further study have been added. We have also included a master outline with the part represented in this volume shown in bold.

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Berkhof's Systematic Theology: Master Outline

This six-part guide is designed for use at the beginning of each volume. The part represented in this volume is shown in bold.

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Man in the State of Sin

I. The Origin of Sin

Sin entered God's good creation through the rebellion of angels and the fall of humanity; it is neither created by God nor a necessary feature of human nature.

THE PROBLEM of the origin of the evil that is in the world has always been considered as one of the profoundest problems of philosophy and theology. It is a problem that naturally forces itself upon the attention of man, since the power of evil is both great and universal, is an ever present blight on life in all its manifestations, and is a matter of daily experience in the life of every man. Philosophers were constrained to face the problem and to seek an answer to the question as to the origin of all the evil, and particularly of the moral evil, that is in the world. To some it seemed to be so much a part of life itself that they sought the solution for it in the natural constitution of things. Others, however, were convinced that it had a voluntary origin, that is, that it originated in the free choice of man, either in the present or in some previous

existence. These are much closer to the truth as it is revealed in the Word of God.

A. Historical Views Respecting The Origin Of Sin.

GLOSS Theodicy: the question of how God's goodness and power relate to the reality of evil and sin in the world.

The earliest Church Fathers do not speak very definitely on the origin of sin, though the idea that it originated in the voluntary transgression and fall of Adam in paradise is already found in the writings of Irenæus. This soon became the prevailing view in the Church, especially in opposition to Gnosticism, which regarded evil as inherent in matter, and as such the product of the Demiurge. The contact of the human soul with matter at once rendered it sinful. This theory naturally robbed sin of its voluntary and ethical character. Origen sought to maintain this by his theory of pre-existentialism. According to him the souls of men sinned voluntarily in a previous existence, and therefore all enter the world in a sinful condition. This Platonic view was burdened with too many difficulties to meet with wide acceptance. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, it was advocated by Mueller and Rueckert, and by such philosophers as Lessing, Schelling, and J. H. Fichte. In general the Greek Church Fathers of the third and fourth centuries showed an inclination to discount the connection between the sin of Adam and those of his descendants, while the Latin Church Fathers taught with ever-increasing clearness that the present sinful condition of man finds its explanation in the first transgression of Adam in paradise. The teachings of the Eastern Church finally culminated in Pelagianism, which denied that there was any vital connection between the two, while those of the Western Church reached their culmination in Augustinianism which stressed the fact that we are both guilty and polluted in Adam. Semi-Pelagianism admitted the Adamic connection, but held that it accounted only for the pollution of sin. During the Middle Ages

the connection was generally recognised. It was sometimes interpreted in an Augustinian, but more often in a Semi-Pelagian manner. The Reformers shared the views of Augustine, and the Socinians those of Pelagius, while the Arminians moved in the direction of Semi-Pelagianism. Under the influence of Rationalism and evolutionary philosophy the doctrine of the fall of man and its fatal effects on the human race was gradually discarded. The idea of sin was replaced by that of evil, and this evil was explained in various ways. Kant regarded it as something belonging to the supersensible sphere, which he could not explain. For Leibnitz it was due to the necessary limitations of the universe. Schleiermacher found its origin in the sensuous nature of man, and Ritschl, in human ignorance, while the evolutionist ascribes it to the opposition of the lower propensities to a gradually developing moral consciousness. Barth speaks of the origin of sin as the mystery of predestination. Sin originated in the fall, but the fall was not a historical event; it belongs to superhistory (Urgeschichte). Adam was indeed the first sinner, but his disobedience cannot be regarded as the cause of the sin of the world. The sin of man is in some manner bound up with his creatureliness. The story of paradise simply conveys to man the cheering information that he need not necessarily be a sinner.

B. Scriptural Data Respecting The Origin Of Sin.

GLOSS Fall: the first human disobedience in Eden, through which sin entered human history.

In Scripture the moral evil that is in the world stands out clearly as sin, that is, as transgression of the law of God. Man ever appears in it as a transgressor by nature, and the question naturally arises, How did he acquire that nature? What does the Bible reveal on that point?

1. **GOD CANNOT BE REGARDED AS ITS AUTHOR.** God's eternal decree certainly rendered the entrance of sin into the world certain, but this may not be interpreted so as to make God the cause of sin in the sense of being its responsible author. This idea is clearly excluded by Scripture. "Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness, and from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity," Job 34:10. He is the holy God, Isa. 6:3, and there is absolutely no unrighteousness in Him, Deut. 32:4; Ps. 92:16. He cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempteth no man, Jas. 1:13. When He created man, He created Him good and in His image. He positively hates sin, Deut. 25:16; Ps. 5:4; 11:5; Zech. 8:17; Luke 16:15, and made provision in Christ for man's deliverance from sin. In the light of all this it would be blasphemous to speak of God as the author of sin. And for that reason all those deterministic views which represent sin as a necessity inherent in the very nature of things should be rejected. They by implication make God the author of sin, and are contrary, not only to Scripture, but also to the voice of conscience, which testifies to the responsibility of man.

2. **SIN ORIGINATED IN THE ANGELIC WORLD.** The Bible teaches us that in the attempt to trace the origin of sin, we must even go back of the fall of man as described in Gen. 3, and fix the attention on something that happened in the angelic world. God created a host of angels, and they were all good as they came forth from the hand of their Maker, Gen. 1:31. But a fall occurred in the angelic world, in which legions of angels fell away from God. The exact time of this fall is not designated, but in John 8:44 Jesus speaks of the devil as a murderer from the beginning (*kat' arches*), and John says in I John 3:8, that he sins from the beginning. The prevailing opinion is that this *kat' arches* means from the beginning of the history of man. Very little is said about the sin that caused the fall of the angels. From Paul's warning to Timothy, that no novice should be appointed as bishop, "lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil," I Tim. 3:6, we may in all probability conclude that it was the sin of pride, of aspiring to be like God in power and authority. And this idea would seem to find corroboration in Jude 6, where it is said that the

fallen angels “kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation.” They were not satisfied with their lot, with the government and power entrusted to them. If the desire to be like God was their peculiar temptation, this would also explain why they tempted man on that particular point.

3. THE ORIGIN OF SIN IN THE HUMAN RACE. With respect to the origin of sin in the history of mankind, the Bible teaches that it began with the transgression of Adam in paradise, and therefore with a perfectly voluntary act on the part of man. The tempter came from the spirit world with the suggestion that man, by placing himself in opposition to God, might become like God. Adam yielded to the temptation and committed the first sin by eating of the forbidden fruit. But the matter did not stop there, for by that first sin Adam became the bond-servant of sin. That sin carried permanent pollution with it, and a pollution which, because of the solidarity of the human race, would affect not only Adam but all his descendants as well. As a result of the fall the father of the race could only pass on a depraved human nature to his offspring. From that unholy source sin flows on as an impure stream to all the generations of men, polluting everyone and everything with which it comes in contact. It is exactly this state of things that made the question of Job so pertinent, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.” Job 14:4. But even this is not all. Adam sinned not only as the father of the human race, but also as the representative head of all his descendants; and therefore the guilt of his sin is placed to their account, so that they are all liable to the punishment of death. It is primarily in that sense that Adam’s sin is the sin of all. That is what Paul teaches us in Rom. 5:12: “Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned.” The last words can only mean that they all sinned in Adam, and sinned in such a way as to make them all liable to the punishment of death. It is not sin considered merely as pollution, but sin as guilt that carries punishment with it. God adjudges all men to be guilty sinners in Adam, just as He adjudges all believers to be righteous in Jesus Christ. That is what Paul means, when he says: “So then as through one trespass the judgment came

unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous," Rom. 5:18,19.

C. The Nature Of The First Sin Or The Fall Of Man.

GLOSS **Original sin:** the guilt and corruption inherited from Adam's fall, affecting every human being.

1. ITS FORMAL CHARACTER. It may be said that, from a purely formal point of view, man's first sin consisted in his eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We do not know what kind of tree this was. It may have been a date or a fig tree, or any other kind of fruit tree. There was nothing injurious in the fruit of the tree as such. Eating of it was not *per se* sinful, for it was not a transgression of the moral law. This means that it would not have been sinful, if God had not said, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat." There is no unanimous opinion as to the reason why the tree was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A rather common view is that the tree was so called, because the eating of it would impart a *practical* knowledge of good and evil; but this is hardly in keeping with the Scriptural representation that man by eating it would become *like God* in knowing good and evil, for God does not commit evil, and therefore has no *practical* knowledge of it. It is far more likely that the tree was so called, because it was destined to reveal (a) whether man's future state would be good or evil; and (b) whether man would allow God to determine for him what was good and evil, or would undertake to determine this for himself. But whatever explanation may be given of the name, the command given by God not to eat of the fruit of the tree simply served the purpose of testing the obedience of man. It was a test of pure obedience, since God did not in any

way seek to justify or to explain the prohibition. Adam had to show his willingness to submit his will to the will of his God with implicit obedience.

2. ITS ESSENTIAL AND MATERIAL CHARACTER. The first sin of man was a typical sin, that is, a sin in which the real essence of sin clearly reveals itself. The essence of that sin lay in the fact that Adam placed himself in opposition to God, that he refused to subject his will to the will of God, to have God determine the course of his life; and that he actively attempted to take the matter out of God's hand, and to determine the future for himself. Man, who had absolutely no claim on God, and who could only establish a claim by meeting the condition of the covenant of works, cut loose from God and acted as if he possessed certain rights as over against God. The idea that the command of God was really an infringement on the rights of man seems to have been present already in the mind of Eve when, in answer to the question of Satan, she added the words, "Neither shall ye touch it," Gen. 3:3. She evidently wanted to stress the fact that the command had been rather unreasonable. Starting from the pre-supposition that he had certain rights as over against God, man allowed the new centre, which he found in himself, to operate against his Maker. This explains his desire to be like God and his doubt of the good intention of God in giving the command. Naturally different elements can be distinguished in his first sin. In the intellect it revealed itself as unbelief and pride, in the will, as the desire to be like God, and in the affections, as an unholy satisfaction in eating of the forbidden fruit.

D. The First Sin Or The Fall As Occasioned By Temptation.

GLOSS Temptation: an enticement to depart from God's will; temptation itself is distinct from the sin of yielding to it.

1. THE PROCEDURE OF THE TEMPTER. The fall of man was occasioned by the temptation of the serpent, who sowed in man's mind the seeds of distrust and unbelief. Though it was undoubtedly the intention of the tempter to cause Adam, the head of the covenant, to fall, yet he addressed himself to Eve, probably because (a) she was not the head of the covenant and therefore would not have the same sense of responsibility; (b) she had not received the command of God directly but only indirectly, and would consequently be more susceptible to argumentation and doubt; and (c) she would undoubtedly prove to be the most effective agent in reaching the heart of Adam. The course followed by the tempter is quite clear. In the first place he sows the seeds of doubt by calling the good intention of God in question and suggesting that His command was really an infringement of man's liberty and rights. When he notices from the response of Eve that the seed has taken root, he adds the seeds of unbelief and pride, denying that transgression will result in death, and clearly intimating that the command was prompted by the selfish purpose of keeping man in subjection. He asserts that by eating from the tree man would become like God. The high expectations thus engendered induced Eve to look intently at the tree, and the longer she looked, the better the fruit seemed to her. Finally, desire got the upper hand, and she ate and also gave unto her husband, and he ate.

2. INTERPRETATION OF THE TEMPTATION. Frequent attempts have been made and are still being made to explain away the historical character of the fall. Some regard the whole narrative in Gen. 3 as an allegory, representing man's self-depravation and gradual change in a figurative way. Barth and Brunner regard the narrative of man's original state and of the fall as a myth. Creation and the fall both belong, not to history, but to super-history (Urgeschichte), and therefore both are equally incomprehensible. The story in Genesis merely teaches us that, though man is now unable to do any good and is subject to the law of death, this is not necessarily so. It is possible for a man to be free from sin and death by a life in communion with God. Such is the life portrayed for us in the story of paradise, and it prefigures the life that will be

granted to us in Him of whom Adam was but a type, namely, Christ. But it is not the kind of life that man now lives or ever has lived from the beginning of history. Paradise is not a certain locality to which we can point, but is there where God is Lord, and man and all other creatures are His willing subjects. The paradise of the past lies beyond the pale of human history. Says Barth: “When the history of man began; when man’s time had its beginning; when time and history commenced where man has the first and the last word, paradise had disappeared.” [*God’s Search for Man*, p. 98.] Brunner speaks in a similar vein when he says: “Just as in respect of the Creation we ask in vain. How, where and when has this taken place, so also is it with the Fall. The Creation and the Fall both lie behind the historical visible reality.” [*Man in Revolt*, p. 142.]

Others who do not deny the historical character of the narrative in Genesis, maintain that the serpent at least should not be regarded as a literal animal, but merely as a name or a symbol for covetousness, for sexual desire, for erring reason, or for Satan. Still others assert that, to say the least, the speaking of the serpent should be understood figuratively. But all these and similar interpretations are untenable in the light of Scripture. The passages preceding and following Gen. 3:1-7 are evidently intended as a plain historical narrative. That they were so understood by the Biblical authors, can be proved by many cross-references, such as Job 31:33; Eccl. 7:29; Isa. 43:27; Hos. 6:7; Rom. 5:12,18,19; I Cor. 5:21; II Cor. 11:3; I Tim. 2:14, and therefore we have no right to hold that these verses, which form an integral part of the narrative, should be interpreted figuratively. Moreover, the serpent is certainly counted among the animals in Gen. 3:1, and it would not yield good sense to substitute for “serpent” the word “Satan.” The punishment in Gen. 3:14,15 presupposes a literal serpent, and Paul conceives of the serpent in no other way, II Cor. 11:3. And while it may be possible to conceive of the serpent as saying something in a figurative sense by means of cunning actions, it does not seem possible to think of him as carrying on the conversation recorded in Gen. 3 in that way. The whole transaction, including the speaking of the serpent, undoubtedly

finds its explanation in the operation of some superhuman power, which is not mentioned in Gen. 3. Scripture clearly intimates that the serpent was but the instrument of Satan, and that Satan was the real tempter, who was working in and through the serpent, just as at a later time he worked in men and swine, John 8:44; Rom. 16:20; II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9. The serpent was a fit instrument for Satan, for he is the personification of sin, and the serpent symbolizes sin (a) in its cunning and deceptive nature, and (b) in its poisonous sting by which it kills man.

3. THE FALL BY TEMPTATION AND MAN'S SALVABILITY. It has been suggested that the fact that man's fall was occasioned by temptation from without, may be one of the reasons why man is salvable, in distinction from the fallen angels, who were not subject to external temptation, but fell by the promptings of their own inner nature. Nothing certain can be said on this point, however. But whatever the significance of the temptation in that respect may be, it certainly does not suffice to explain how a holy being like Adam could fall in sin. It is impossible for us to say how temptation could find a point of contact in a holy person. And it is still more difficult to explain the origin of sin in the angelic world.

E. THE EVOLUTIONARY EXPLANATION OF THE ORIGIN OF SIN.

Naturally, a consistent theory of evolution cannot admit the doctrine of the fall, and a number of liberal theologians have rejected it as incompatible with the theory of evolution. It is true, there are some rather conservative theologians, such as Denney, Gore, and Orr, who accept, though with reservations, the evolutionary account of the origin of man, and feel that it leaves room for the doctrine of the fall in some sense of the word. But it is significant that they all conceive of the story of the fall as a mythical or allegorical representation of an ethical experience or of some actual moral catastrophe at the beginning of history which resulted in suffering and death. This means that they do not accept the narrative of the fall as a real historical account of what occurred in the garden of Eden. Tennant in his Hulsean

Lectures on *The Origin and Propagation of Sin* [Chap. III.] gave a rather detailed and interesting account of the origin of sin from the evolutionary point of view. He realises that man could not very well derive sin from his animal ancestors, since these had no sin. This means that the impulses, propensities, desires, and qualities which man inherited from the brute cannot themselves be called sin. In his estimation these constitute only the *material* of sin, and do not become actual sins until the moral consciousness awakens in man, and they are left in control in determining the actions of man, contrary to the voice of conscience, and to ethical sanctions. He holds that in the course of his development man gradually became an ethical being with an indeterminate will, without explaining how such a will is possible where the law of evolution prevails, and regards this will as the only cause of sin. He defines sin “as an activity of the will expressed in thought, word, or deed contrary to the individual’s conscience. to his notion of what is good and right, his knowledge of the moral law and the will of God.” [p. 163.] As the human race develops, the ethical standards become more exacting and the heinousness of sin increases. A sinful environment adds to the difficulty of refraining from sin. This view of Tennant leaves no room for the fall of man in the generally accepted sense of the word. As a matter of fact, Tennant explicitly repudiates the doctrine of the fall, which is recognised in all the great historical confessions of the Church. Says W. H. Johnson: “Tennant’s critics are agreed that his theory leaves no room for that cry of the contrite heart which not only confesses to separate acts of sin, but declares; ‘I was shapen in iniquity; there is a law of death in my members.’” [*Can the Christian Now Believe in Evolution?* p. 136.]

F. THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST SIN.

The first transgression of man had the following results:

1. The immediate concomitant of the first sin, and therefore hardly a result of it in the strict sense of the word, was the total depravity of human nature. The contagion of his sin at once spread through the entire man, leaving no part of his nature untouched, but vitiating every power and faculty of body

and soul. This utter corruption of man is clearly taught in Scripture, Gen. 6:5; Ps. 14:3; Rom. 7:18. Total depravity here does not mean that human nature was at once as thoroughly depraved as it could possibly become. In the will this depravity manifested itself as spiritual inability.

2. Immediately connected with the preceding was the loss of communion with God through the Holy Spirit. This is but the reverse side of the utter corruption mentioned in the preceding paragraph. The two can be combined in the single statement that man lost the image of God in the sense of original righteousness. He broke away from the real source of life and blessedness, and the result was a condition of spiritual death, Eph. 2:1,5,12; 4:18.

3. This change in the actual condition of man also reflected itself in his consciousness. There was, first of all, a consciousness of pollution, revealing itself in the sense of shame, and in the effort of our first parents to cover their nakedness. And in the second place there was a consciousness of guilt, which found expression in an accusing conscience and in the fear of God which it inspired.

4. Not only spiritual death, but physical death as well resulted from the first sin of man. From a state of *posse non mori* he descended to a state of *non posse non mori*. Having sinned, he was doomed to return to the dust from which he was taken, Gen. 3:19. Paul tells us that by one man death entered the world and passed on to all men, Rom. 5:12, and that the wages of sin is death, Rom. 6:23.

5. This change also resulted in a necessary change of residence. Man was driven from paradise, because it represented the place of communion with God, and was a symbol of the fuller life and greater blessedness in store for man, if he continued steadfast. He was barred from the tree of life, because it was the symbol of the life promised in the covenant of works.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY. What different theories are there as to the origin of sin? What Scriptural proof is there that sin originated in the

angelic world? Can the allegorical interpretation of the narrative of the fall be maintained in the light of Scripture? Is there any place for the fall in the theory of evolution? Did God will the fall of man or did He merely permit it? Does our Reformed doctrine make God the author of sin? What objections are there to the notion that the souls of men sinned in a previous existence? Was God justified in making the spiritual state of mankind in general contingent on the obedience or non-obedience of the first man? What do Barth and Brunner mean when they speak of the fall of man as super-historical? Why is it that the doctrine of the covenant of works finds so little acceptance outside of Reformed circles? What accounts for the widespread neglect of this doctrine in our day? Why is it important to maintain this doctrine?

II. The Essential Character of Sin

Sin is not merely weakness or imperfection, but a culpable failure to conform to God's holy law and will.

Sin is one of the saddest but also one of the most common phenomena of human life. It is a part of the common experience of mankind, and therefore forces itself upon the attention of all those who do not deliberately close their eyes to the realities of human life. Some may for a time dream of the essential goodness of man and speak indulgently of those separate words and actions that do not measure up to the ethical standards of good society as mere foibles and weaknesses, for which man is not responsible, and which readily yield to corrective measures; but as time goes on, and all measures of external reform fail, and the suppression of one evil merely serves to release another, such persons are inevitably disillusioned. They become conscious of the fact that they have merely been fighting the symptoms of some deep-seated malady, and that they are confronted, not merely with the problem of sins, that is, of separate sinful deeds, but with the much greater and deeper problem of sin, of an evil that is inherent in human nature. This is exactly what we are beginning to witness at the present time. Many Modernists at present do not hesitate to

say that the doctrine of Rousseau respecting the inherent goodness of man has proved to be one of the most pernicious teachings of the Enlightenment, and now call for a greater measure of realism in the recognition of sin. Thus Walter Horton, who pleads for a realistic theology and believes that this calls for the acceptance of some Marxian principles, says: "I believe that orthodox Christianity represents a profound insight into the whole human predicament. I believe that the basic human difficulty *is* that perversion of the will, that betrayal of divine trust, which is called sin; and I believe that sin *is* in a sense a racial disease, transmissible from generation to generation. In affirming these things the Christian Fathers and the Protestant Reformers spoke as realists, and could have assembled masses of empirical evidence to support their views." [*Realistic Theology*, p. 56.] In view of the fact that sin is real and that no man can get away from it in this present life, it is no wonder that philosophers as well as theologians undertook to grapple with the problem of sin, though in philosophy it is known as the problem of evil rather than as the problem of sin. We shall briefly consider some of the most important philosophical theories of evil before we state the Scriptural doctrine of sin.

A. Philosophic Theories Respecting The Nature Of Evil.

GLOSS Moral evil: evil found in the sinful choices, dispositions, and actions of rational creatures.

1. THE DUALISTIC THEORY. This is one of the views that were current in Greek philosophy. In the form of Gnosticism it found entrance into the early Church. It assumes the existence of an eternal principle of evil, and holds that in man the spirit represents the principle of good, and the body, that of evil. It is objectionable for several reasons: (a) The position is philosophically untenable, that there is something outside of God that is eternal and independent of His will. (b) This theory robs sin of its ethical character by making it something purely physical and independent of the human will, and

thereby really destroys the idea of sin. (c) It also does away with the responsibility of man by representing sin as a physical necessity. The only escape from sin lies in deliverance from the body.

2. THE THEORY THAT SIN IS MERELY PRIVATION. According to Leibnitz the present world is the best possible one. The existence of sin in it must be considered as unavoidable. It cannot be referred to the agency of God, and therefore must be regarded as a simple negation or privation, for which no efficient cause is needed. The limitations of the creature render it unavoidable. This theory makes sin a necessary evil, since creatures are necessarily limited, and sin is an unavoidable consequence of this limitation. Its attempt to avoid making God the author of sin is not successful, for even if sin is a mere negation requiring no efficient cause, God is nevertheless the author of the limitation from which it results. Moreover, it tends to obliterate the distinction between moral and physical evil, since it represents sin as little more than a misfortune which has befallen man. Consequently, it has a tendency to blunt man's sense of the evil or pollution of sin, to destroy the sense of guilt, and to abrogate man's moral responsibility.

3. THE THEORY THAT SIN IS AN ILLUSION. For Spinoza, as for Leibnitz, sin is simply a defect, a limitation of which man is conscious; but while Leibnitz regards the notion of evil, arising from this limitation, as necessary, Spinoza holds that the resulting consciousness of sin is simply due to the inadequacy of man's knowledge, which fails to see everything *sub specie aeternitatis*, that is, in unity with the eternal and infinite essence of God. If man's knowledge were adequate, so that he saw everything in God, he would have no conception of sin; it would simply be non-existent for him. But this theory, representing sin as something purely negative, does not account for its terrible positive results, to which the universal experience of mankind testifies in the most convincing manner. Consistently carried through, it abrogates all ethical distinctions, and reduces such concepts as "moral character" and "moral conduct" to meaningless phrases. In fact, it reduces the whole life of

man to an illusion: his knowledge, his experience, the testimony of conscience, and so on, for all his knowledge is inadequate. Moreover, it goes contrary to the experience of mankind, that the greatest intellects are often the greatest sinners, Satan being the greatest of all.

4. THE THEORY THAT SIN IS A WANT OF GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS, DUE TO MAN'S SENSUOUS NATURE. This is the view of Schleiermacher. According to him man's consciousness of sin is dependent on his God-consciousness. When the sense of God awakens in man, he is at once conscious of the opposition of his lower nature to it. This opposition follows from the very constitution of his being, from his sensuous nature, from the soul's connection with a physical organism. It is therefore an inherent imperfection, but one which man feels as sin and guilt. Yet this does not make God the author of sin, since man wrongly conceives of this imperfection as sin. Sin has no objective existence, but exists only in man's consciousness. But this theory makes man constitutionally evil. The evil was present in man even in his original state, when the God-consciousness was not sufficiently strong to control the sensuous nature of man. It is in flagrant opposition to Scripture, when it holds that man wrongly adjudges this evil to be sin, and thus makes sin and guilt purely subjective. And though Schleiermacher wishes to avoid this conclusion, it does make God the responsible author of sin, for He is the creator of man's sensuous nature. It also rests upon an incomplete induction of facts, since it fails to take account of the fact that many of the most hateful sins of man do not pertain to his physical but to his spiritual nature, such as avarice, envy, pride, malice, and others. Moreover, it leads to the most absurd conclusions as, for instance, that asceticism, by weakening the sensuous nature, necessarily weakens the power of sin; that man becomes less sinful as his senses fail with age; that death is the only redeemer; and that disembodied spirits, including the devil himself, have no sin.

5. THE THEORY OF SIN AS WANT OF TRUST IN GOD AND OPPOSITION TO HIS KINGDOM, DUE TO IGNORANCE. Like Schleiermacher, Ritschl too

stresses the fact that sin is understood only from the standpoint of the Christian consciousness. They who are outside of the pale of the Christian religion, and they who are still strangers to the experience of redemption, have no knowledge of it. Under the influence of the redemptive work of God man becomes conscious of his lack of trust in God and of his opposition to the Kingdom of God, which is the highest good. Sin is not determined by man's attitude to the law of God, but by his relation to the purpose of God, to establish the Kingdom. Man imputes his failure to make the purpose of God his own to himself as guilt, but God regards it merely as ignorance, and because it is ignorance, it is pardonable. This view of Ritschl reminds us by way of contrast of the Greek dictum that knowledge is virtue. It fails completely to do justice to the Scriptural position that sin is above all transgression of the law of God, and therefore renders man guilty in the sight of God and worthy of condemnation. Moreover, the idea that sin is ignorance goes contrary to the voice of Christian experience. The man who is burdened with the sense of sin certainly does not feel that way about it. He is grateful, too, that not only the sins which he committed in ignorance are pardonable, but all the others as well, with the single exception of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

6. THE THEORY THAT SIN IS SELFISHNESS. This position is taken among others by Mueller and A. H. Strong. Some who take this position conceive of selfishness merely as the opposite of altruism or benevolence; others understand by it the choice of self rather than God as the supreme object of love. Now this theory, especially when it conceives of selfishness as a putting of self in the place of God, is by far the best of the theories named. Yet it can hardly be called satisfactory. Though all selfishness is sin, and there is an element of selfishness in all sin, it cannot be said that selfishness is the essence of sin. Sin can be properly defined only with reference to the law of God, a reference that is completely lacking in the definition under consideration. Moreover, there is a great deal of sin in which selfishness is not at all the governing principle. When a poverty-stricken father sees his wife and children

pine away for lack of food, and in his desperate desire to help them finally resorts to theft, this can hardly be called pure selfishness. It may even be that the thought of self was entirely absent. Enmity to God, hardness of heart, impenitence, and unbelief, are all heinous sins, but cannot simply be qualified as selfishness. And certainly the view that all virtue is disinterestedness or benevolence, which seems to be a necessary corollary of the theory under consideration, at least in one of its forms, does not hold. An act does not cease to be virtuous, when its performance meets and satisfies some demand of our nature. Moreover, justice, fidelity, humility, forbearance, patience, and other virtues may be cultivated or practiced, not as forms of benevolence, but as virtues inherently excellent, not merely as promoting the happiness of others, but for what they are in themselves.

7. THE THEORY THAT SIN CONSISTS IN THE OPPOSITION OF THE LOWER PROPENSITIES OF HUMAN NATURE TO A GRADUALLY DEVELOPING MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS. This view was developed, as we pointed out in the preceding, by Tennant in his Hulsean Lectures. It is the doctrine of sin constructed according to the theory of evolution. Natural impulses and inherited qualities, derived from the brute, form the material of sin, but do not actually become sin until they are indulged in contrary to the gradually awakening moral sense of mankind. The theories of McDowall and Fiske move along similar lines. The theory as presented by Tennant halts somewhat between the Scriptural view of man and that presented by the theory of evolution, inclining now to the one and anon to the other side. It assumes that man had a free will even before the awakening of his moral consciousness, so that he was able to choose when he was placed before a moral ideal; but does not explain how we can conceive of a free and indeterminate will in a process of evolution. It limits sin to those transgressions of the moral law, which are committed with a clear consciousness of a moral ideal and are therefore condemned by conscience as evil. As a matter of fact, it is merely the old Pelagian view of sin grafted into

the theory of evolution, and is therefore open to all the objections with which Pelagianism is burdened.

The radical defect in all these theories is that they seek to define sin without taking into consideration that sin is essentially a breaking away from God, opposition to God, and transgression of the law of God. Sin should always be defined in terms of man's relation to God and to His will as expressed in the moral law.

B. The Scriptural Idea Of Sin.

GLOSS Lawlessness: sin understood as rebellion against, or failure to live in accordance with, God's holy law.

In giving the Scriptural idea of sin it is necessary to call attention to several particulars.

1. **SIN IS A SPECIFIC KIND OF EVIL.** At the present time we hear a great deal about evil, and comparatively little about sin; and this is rather misleading. Not all evil is sin. Sin should not be confused with physical evil, with that which is injurious or calamitous. It is possible to speak not only of sin but also of sickness as an evil, but then the word "evil" is used in two totally different senses. Above the physical lies the ethical sphere, in which the contrast between moral good and evil applies, and it is only in this sphere that we can speak of sin. And even in this sphere it is not desirable to substitute the word "evil" for "sin" without any further qualification, for the latter is more specific than the former. Sin is a moral evil. Most of the names that are used in Scripture to designate sin point to its moral character. Chatta'th directs attention to it as an action that misses the mark and consists in a deviation from the right way. 'Avel and 'avon indicate that it is a want of integrity and rectitude, a departure from the appointed path. *Pesha'* refers to it as a revolt or a refusal of subjection to rightful authority, a positive transgression of the law,

and a breaking of the covenant. And *resha'* points to it as a wicked and guilty departure from the law. Furthermore, it is designated as guilt by '*asham*, as unfaithfulness and treason, by *ma'al*, as vanity, by '*aven*, and as perversion or distortion of nature (crookedness) by '*avah*. The corresponding New Testament words, such as *hamartia*, *adikia*, *parabasis*, *paraptoma*, *anomia*, *paranomia*, and others, point to the same ideas. In view of the use of these words, and of the way in which the Bible usually speaks of sin, there can be no doubt about its ethical character. It is not a calamity that came upon man unawares, poisoned his life, and ruined his happiness, but an evil course which man has deliberately chosen to follow and which carries untold misery with it. Fundamentally, it is not something passive, such as a weakness, a fault, or an imperfection, for which we cannot be held responsible, but an active opposition to God, and a positive transgression of His law, which constitutes guilt. Sin is the result of a free but evil choice of man. This is the plain teaching of the Word of God, Gen. 3:1-6; Isa. 48:8; Rom. 1:18-32; I John 3:4. The application of the philosophy of evolution to the study of the Old Testament led some scholars to the conviction that the ethical idea of sin was not developed until the time of the prophets, but this view is not borne out by the way in which the earliest books of the Bible speak of sin.

2. SIN HAS AN ABSOLUTE CHARACTER. In the ethical sphere the contrast between good and evil is absolute. There is no neutral condition between the two. While there are undoubtedly degrees in both, there are no gradations between the good and the evil. The transition from the one to the other is not of a quantitative, but of a qualitative character. A moral being that is good does not become evil by simply diminishing his goodness, but only by a radical qualitative change, by turning to sin. Sin is not a lesser degree of goodness, but a positive evil. This is plainly taught in the Bible. He who does not love God is thereby characterized as evil. Scripture knows of no position of neutrality. It urges the wicked to turn to righteousness, and sometimes speaks of the righteous as falling into evil; but it does not contain a single indication that either the one or the other ever lands in a neutral position. Man is either

on the right side or on the wrong side, Matt. 10:32,33; 12:30; Luke 11:23; Jas. 2:10.

3. SIN ALWAYS HAS RELATION TO GOD AND HIS WILL. The older dogmaticians realised that it was impossible to have a correct conception of sin without contemplating it in relation to God and His will, and therefore emphasized this aspect and usually spoke of sin as “lack of conformity to the law of God.” This is undoubtedly a correct *formal* definition of sin. But the question arises, Just what is the material content of the law? What does it demand? If this question is answered, it will be possible to determine what sin is in a *material* sense. Now there is no doubt about it that the great central demand of the law is *love to God*. And if from the material point of view moral goodness consists in love to God, then moral evil must consist in the opposite. It is separation from God, opposition to God, hatred of God, and this manifests itself in constant transgression of the law of God in thought, word, and deed. The following passages clearly show that Scripture contemplates sin in relation to God and His law, either as written on the tablets of the heart, or as given by Moses, Rom. 1:32; 2:12-14; 4:15; Jas. 2:9; I John 3:4.

4. SIN INCLUDES BOTH GUILT AND POLLUTION. Guilt is the state of deserving condemnation or of being liable to punishment for the violation of a law or a moral requirement. It expresses the relation which sin bears to justice or to the penalty of the law. But even so the word has a twofold meaning. It may denote an inherent quality of the sinner, namely, his demerit, ill-desert, or guiltiness, which renders him worthy of punishment. Dabney speaks of this as “potential guilt.” It is inseparable from sin, is never found in one who is not personally a sinner, and is permanent, so that once established, it cannot be removed by pardon. But it may also denote the obligation to satisfy justice, to pay the penalty of sin, “actual guilt,” as Dabney calls it. [*Christ Our Penal Substitute*, pp. 10 f.] It is not inherent in man, but is the penal enactment of the lawgiver, who fixes the penalty of the guilt. It may be removed by the satisfaction of the just demands of the law personally or vicariously. While

many deny that sin includes guilt, this does not comport with the fact that sin was threatened and is indeed visited with punishment, and clearly contradicts the plain statements of Scripture, Matt. 6:12; Rom. 3:19; 5:18; Eph. 2:3. By pollution we understand the inherent corruption to which every sinner is subject. This is a reality in the life of every individual. It is not conceivable without guilt, though guilt as included in a penal relationship, is conceivable without *immediate* pollution. Yet it is always followed by pollution. Every one who is guilty in Adam is, as a result, also born with a corrupt nature. The pollution of sin is clearly taught in such passages as Job 14:4; Jer. 17:9; Matt. 7:15-20; Rom. 8:5-8; Eph. 4:17-19.

5. SIN HAS ITS SEAT IN THE HEART. Sin does not reside in any one faculty of the soul, but in the heart, which in Scriptural psychology is the central organ of the soul, out of which are the issues of life. And from this centre its influence and operations spread to the intellect, the will, the affections, in short, to the entire man, including his body. In his sinful state the whole man is the object of God's displeasure. There is a sense in which it can be said that sin originated in the will of man, but then the will does not designate some actual volition as much as it does the volitional nature of man. There was a tendency of the heart underlying the actual volition when sin entered the world. This view is in perfect harmony with the representations of Scripture in such passages as the following: Prov. 4:23; Jer. 17:9; Matt. 15:19,20; Luke 6:45; Heb. 3:12.

6. SIN DOES NOT CONSIST EXCLUSIVELY IN OVERT ACTS. Sin does not consist only in overt acts, but also in sinful habits and in a sinful condition of the soul. These three are related to one another as follows: The sinful state is the basis of the sinful habits, and these manifest themselves in sinful deeds. There is also truth, however, in the contention that repeated sinful deeds lead to the establishment of sinful habits. The sinful acts and dispositions of man must be referred to and find their explanation in a corrupt nature. The passages referred to in the preceding paragraph substantiate this view, for

they clearly prove that the state or condition of man is thoroughly sinful. And if the question should still be raised, whether the thoughts and affections of the natural man, called “flesh” in Scripture, should be regarded as constituting sin, it might be answered by pointing to such passages as the following: Matt. 5:22,28; Rom. 7:7; Gal. 5:17,24, and others. In conclusion it may be said that sin may be defined as *lack of conformity to the moral law of God, either in act, disposition, or state.*

C. The Pelagian View Of Sin.

GLOSS Pelagianism: the view that human beings are born morally neutral and can obey God without the need for regenerating grace.

The Pelagian view of sin is quite different from that presented above. The only point of similarity lies in this that the Pelagian also considers sin in relation to the law of God, and regards it as a transgression of the law. But in all other particulars his conception differs widely from the Scriptural and Augustinian view.

1. STATEMENT OF THE PELAGIAN VIEW. Pelagius takes his startingpoint in the natural ability of man. His fundamental proposition is: God has commanded man to do that which is good; hence the latter must have the ability to do it. This means that man has a free will in the absolute sense of the word, so that it is possible for him to decide for or against that which is good, and also to do the good as well as the evil. The decision is not dependent on any moral character in man, for the will is entirely indeterminate. Whether a man will do good or evil simply depends on his free and independent will. From this it follows, of course, that there is no such thing as a moral development of the individual. Good and evil are located in the separate actions of man. From this fundamental position the doctrinal teaching of Pelagius respecting sin naturally follows. Sin consists only in the separate acts

of the will. There is no such thing as a sinful nature, neither are there sinful dispositions. Sin is always a deliberate choice of evil by a will which is perfectly free, and can just as well choose and follow the good. But if this is so, then the conclusion inevitably follows that Adam was not created in a state of positive holiness, but in a state of moral equilibrium. His condition was one of moral neutrality. He was neither good nor bad, and therefore had no moral character; but he chose the course of evil, and thus became sinful. Inasmuch as sin consists only in separate acts of the will, the idea of its propagation by procreation is absurd. A sinful nature, if such a thing should exist, might be passed on from father to son, but sinful acts cannot be so propagated. This is in the nature of the case an impossibility. Adam was the first sinner, but his sin was in no sense passed on to his descendants. There is no such thing as original sin. Children are born in a state of neutrality, beginning exactly where Adam began, except that they are handicapped by the evil examples which they see round about them. Their future course must be determined by their own free choice. The universality of sin is admitted, because all experience testifies to it. It is due to imitation and to the habit of sinning that is gradually formed. Strictly speaking, there are, on the Pelagian standpoint, no sinners, but only separate sinful acts. This makes a religious conception of the history of the race utterly impossible.

2. OBJECTIONS TO THE PELAGIAN VIEW. There are several weighty objections to the Pelagian view of sin, of which the following are the most important:

a. The fundamental position that man is held responsible by God only for what he is able to do, is absolutely contrary to the testimony of conscience and to the Word of God. It is an undeniable fact that, as a man increases in sin, his ability to do good decreases. He becomes in an ever greater measure the slave of sin. According to the theory under consideration this would also involve a lessening of his responsibility. But this is equivalent to saying that sin itself gradually redeems its victims by relieving them of their responsibility. The

more sinful a man, the less responsible he is. Against this position conscience registers a loud protest. Paul does not say that the hardened sinners, which he describes in Rom. 1:18-32 were virtually without responsibility, but regards them as worthy of death. Jesus said of the wicked Jews who gloried in their freedom, but manifested their extreme wickedness by seeking to kill Him, that they were bond-servants of sin, did not understand His speech, because they could not hear His word, and would die in their sins, John 8:21,22,34,43. Though slaves of sin, they were yet responsible.

b. To deny that man has by nature a moral character, is simply bringing him down to the level of the animal. According to this view everything in the life of man that is not a conscious choice of the will, is deprived of all moral quality. But the consciousness of men in general testifies to the fact that the contrast between good and evil also applies to man's tendencies, desires, moods, and affections, and that these also have a moral character. In Pelagianism sin and virtue are reduced to superficial appendages of man, in no way connected with his inner life. That the estimate of Scripture is quite different appears from the following passages: Jer. 17:9; Ps. 51:6,10; Matt. 15:19; Jas. 4:1,2.

c. A choice of the will that is in no way determined by man's character, is not only psychologically unthinkable, but also ethically worthless. If a good deed of man simply happens to fall out as it does, and no reason can be given why it did not turn out to be the opposite, in other words, if the deed is not an expression of man's character, it lacks all moral value. It is only as an exponent of character that a deed has the moral value that is ascribed to it.

d. The Pelagian theory can give no satisfactory account of the universality of sin. The bad example of parents and grandparents offers no real explanation. The mere abstract possibility of man's sinning, even when strengthened by the evil example, does not explain how it came to pass that all men actually sinned. How can it be accounted for that the will invariably

turned in the direction of sin, and never in the opposite direction? It is far more natural to think of a general disposition to sin.

D. The Roman Catholic View Of Sin.

GLOSS **Concupiscence:** disordered desire in fallen humanity, especially discussed in relation to original sin.

Though the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent are somewhat ambiguous in the doctrine of sin, the prevailing Roman Catholic view of sin may be expressed as follows: Real sin always consists in a conscious act of the will. It is true that the dispositions and habits that are not in accord with the will of God, are of a sinful character; yet they cannot be called sins in the strict sense of the word. The indwelling concupiscence, which lies back of sin, gained the upper hand in man in paradise, and thus precipitated the loss of the *donum superadditum* of original righteousness, cannot be regarded as sin, but only as the *fomes* or fuel of sin. The sinfulness of Adam's descendants is primarily only a negative condition, consisting in the absence of something that ought to be present, that is, of original righteousness, which is not essential to human nature. Something essential is wanting only if, as some hold, the *justitia naturalis* was also lost.

The objections to this view are perfectly evident from what was said in connection with the Pelagian theory. A bare reminder of them would seem to be quite sufficient. In so far as it holds that real sin consists only in a deliberate choice of the will and in overt acts, the objections raised against Pelagianism are pertinent. The idea that original righteousness was supernaturally added to man's natural constitution, and that its loss did not detract from human nature, is an un-Scriptural idea, as was pointed out in our discussion of the image of God in man. According to the Bible concupiscence is sin, real sin, and

the root of many sinful actions. This was brought out when the Biblical view of sin was considered.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY. Has philosophy succeeded in explaining the origin of sin? Does Scripture bear out the view that sin originally had no ethical quality? What objection is there to the view that sin is mere privation? Must we conceive of sin as a substance? With whose name is this view associated? Does this sin exist apart from the sinner? How can we prove that sin must always be judged by the law of God? Did Paul favour the old Greek dualism, when he spoke of “the body of sin” and used the term “flesh” to denote man’s sinful nature? Is the present tendency to speak of ‘evil’ rather than of ‘sin’ commendable? What is meant by the social interpretation of sin? Does this recognise sin for what it is fundamentally?

III. The Transmission of Sin

The universality of sin is bound to Adam’s representative relation to humanity, so that the fall has consequences for the whole race.

Scripture and experience both teach us that sin is universal, and according to the Bible the explanation for this universality lies in the fall of Adam. These two points, the universality of sin, and the connection of Adam’s sin with that of mankind in general, now call for consideration. While there has been rather general agreement as to the universality of sin, there have been different representations of the connection between the sin of Adam and that of his descendants.

A. Historical Review.

GLOSS Federal headship: the representative role of Adam, whose disobedience has consequences for those he represents.

1. BEFORE THE REFORMATION. The writings of the Apologists contain nothing definite respecting original sin, while those of Irenaeus and Tertullian clearly teach that our sinful condition is the result of Adam's fall. But the doctrine of the direct imputation of Adam's sin to his descendants is foreign even to them. Tertullian had a realistic conception of mankind. The whole human race was potentially and numerically present in Adam, and therefore sinned when he sinned and became corrupt when he became corrupt. Human nature as a whole sinned in Adam, and therefore every individualization of that nature is also sinful. Origen, who was profoundly influenced by Greek philosophy, had a different view of the matter, and scarcely recognised any connection between the sin of Adam and that of his descendants. He found the explanation of the sinfulness of the human race primarily in the personal sin of each soul in a pre-temporal state, though he also mentions some mystery of generation. Augustine shared the realistic conception of Tertullian. Though he also spoke of "imputation," he did not yet have in mind the direct or immediate imputation of the guilt of Adam to his posterity. His doctrine of original sin is not entirely clear. This may be due to the fact that he hesitated to choose between Traducianism and Creationism. While he stresses the fact that all men were seminally present in Adam and actually sinned in him, he also comes very close to the idea that they sinned in Adam as their representative. However, his main emphasis was on the transmission of the *corruption of sin*. Sin is passed on by propagation, and this propagation of Adam's sin is at the same time a punishment for his sin. Wiggers states the idea very briefly in these words: "The corruption of human nature, in the whole race, was the righteous punishment of the transgression of the first man, in whom all men already existed." [*Augustinism and Pelagianism*, p. 88.] Augustine's great opponent, Pelagius, denied such a connection between the sin of Adam and those of his posterity. As he saw it, the propagation of sin by generation involved the Traducianist theory of the origin of the soul, which he regarded as a heretical error; and the imputation of Adam's sin to anyone but himself would be in conflict with the divine rectitude.

The Pelagian view was rejected by the Church, and the Scholastics in general thought along the lines indicated by Augustine, the emphasis all the while being on the transmission of the pollution of Adam's sin rather than on that of his guilt. Hugo St. Victor and Peter the Lombard held that actual concupiscence stains the semen in the act of procreation, and that this stain in some way defiles the soul on its union with the body. Anselm, Alexander of Hales, and Bonaventura stressed the realistic conception of the connection between Adam and his posterity. The whole human race was seminally present in Adam, and therefore also sinned in him. His disobedience was the disobedience of the entire human race. At the same time generation was regarded as the *sine qua non* of the transmission of the sinful nature. In Bonaventura and others after him the distinction between original guilt and original pollution was more clearly expressed. The fundamental idea was, that the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to all his descendants. Adam suffered the loss of original righteousness, and thereby incurred the divine displeasure. As a result all his descendants are deprived of original righteousness, and as such the objects of divine wrath. Moreover, the pollution of Adam's sin is in some way passed on to his posterity, but the manner of this transmission was a matter of dispute among the Scholastics. Since they were not Traducianists, and therefore could not say that the soul, which is after all the real seat of evil, was passed on from father to son by generation, they felt that something more had to be said to explain the transmission of inherent evil. Some said that it is passed on through the body, which in turn contaminates the soul as soon as it comes in contact with it. Others, sensing the danger of this explanation sought it in the mere fact that every man is now born in the state in which Adam was before he was endowed with original righteousness, and thus subject to the struggle between the unchecked flesh and the spirit. In Thomas Aquinas the realistic strain again appears rather strongly, though in a modified form. He pointed out that the human race constitutes an organism, and that, just as the act of one bodily member — say, the hand — is regarded as the act of the

person, so the sin of one member of the organism of humanity is imputed to the whole organism.

2. AFTER THE REFORMATION. While the Reformers did not agree with the Scholastics as to the nature of original sin, their view of its transmission did not contain any new elements. The ideas of Adam as the representative of the human race, and of the “immediate” imputation of his guilt to his descendants are not yet clearly expressed in their works. According to Luther we are accounted guilty by God because of the indwelling sin inherited from Adam. Calvin speaks in a somewhat similar vein. He holds that, since Adam was not only the progenitor but the root of the human race, all his descendants are born with a corrupt nature; and that both the guilt of Adam’s sin and their own inborn corruption are imputed to them as sin. The development of the federal theology brought the idea of Adam as the representative of the human race to the foreground, and led to a clearer distinction between the transmission of the guilt and of the pollution of Adam’s sin. Without denying that our native corruption also constitutes guilt in the sight of God, federal theology stressed the fact that there is an “immediate” imputation of Adam’s guilt to those whom he represented as the head of the covenant.

Socinians and Arminians both rejected the idea of the imputation of Adam’s sin to his descendants. Placeus, of the school of Saumur, advocated the idea of “mediate” imputation. Denying all immediate imputation, he held that because we inherit a sinful nature from Adam, we are deserving of being treated as if we had committed the original offense. This was something new in Reformed theology, and Rivet had no difficulty in proving this by collecting a long line of testimonies. A debate ensued in which “immediate” and “mediate” imputation were represented as mutually exclusive doctrines; and in which it was made to appear as if the real question was, whether man is guilty in the sight of God solely on account of Adam’s sin, imputed to him, or solely on account of his own inherent sin. The former was not the doctrine of the Reformed Churches,

and the latter was not taught in them before the time of Placeus. The teachings of the latter found their way into New England theology, and became especially characteristic of the New School (New Haven) theology. In modern liberal theology the doctrine of the transmission of sin from Adam to his posterity is entirely discredited. It prefers to seek the explanation of the evil that is in the world in an animal inheritance, which is not itself sinful. Strange to say, even Barth and Brunner, though violently opposed to liberal theology, do not regard the universal sinfulness of the human race as the result of Adam's sin. Historically, the latter occupies a unique place merely as the first sinner.

B. The Universality Of Sin.

GLOSS **Universality of sin:** the biblical teaching that every human being, apart from Christ, is affected by sin.

Few will be inclined to deny the presence of evil in the human heart, however much they may differ as to the nature of this evil and as to the way in which it originated. Even Pelagians and Socinians are ready to admit that sin is universal. This is a fact that forces itself upon the attention of every one.

1. THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS AND OF PHILOSOPHY TESTIFY TO IT. The history of religions testifies to the universality of sin. The question of Job, "How shall a man be just with God?" is a question that was asked not merely in the realm of special revelation, but also outside of it in the Gentile world. The heathen religions testify to a universal consciousness of sin and of the need of reconciliation with a Supreme Being. There is a general feeling that the gods are offended and must be propitiated in some way. There is a universal voice of conscience, testifying to the fact that man falls short of the ideal and stands condemned in the sight of some higher Power. Altars reeking with the blood of sacrifices, often the sacrifices of dear children, repeated

confessions of wrongdoing, and prayers for deliverance from evil, — all point to the consciousness of sin. Missionaries find this wherever they go. The history of philosophy is indicative of the same fact. Early Greek philosophers were already wrestling with the problem of moral evil, and since their day no philosopher of name was able to ignore it. They were all constrained to admit the universality of it, and that in spite of the fact they were not able to explain the phenomenon. There was, it is true, a superficial optimism in the eighteenth century, which dreamt of the inherent goodness of man, but in its stupidity flew in the face of the facts and was sharply rebuked by Kant. Many liberal theologians were induced to believe and to preach this inherent goodness of man as gospel truth, but to-day many of them qualify it as one of the most pernicious errors of the past. Surely, the facts of life do not warrant such optimism.

2. THE BIBLE CLEARLY TEACHES IT. There are direct statements of Scripture that point to the universal sinfulness of man, such as I Kings 8:46; Ps. 143:2; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:1-12,19,20,23; Gal. 3:22; Jas. 3:2; I John 1:8,10. Several passages of Scripture teach that sin is the heritage of man from the time of his birth, and is therefore present in human nature so early that it cannot possibly be considered as the result of imitation, Ps. 51:5; Job 14:4; John 3:6. In Ephesians 2:3 Paul says of the Ephesians that they “were *by nature* children of wrath, even as the rest.” In this passage the term “by nature” points to something inborn and original, as distinguished from what is subsequently acquired. Sin, then, is something original, in which all men participate, and which makes them guilty before God. Moreover, according to Scripture, death is visited even upon those who have never exercised a personal and conscious choice, Rom. 5:12-14. This passage implies that sin exists in the case of infants prior to moral consciousness. Since infants die, and therefore the effect of sin is present in their case, it is but natural to assume that the cause is also present. Finally, Scripture also teaches that all men are under condemnation and therefore need the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Children are never made an exception to this rule, cf. the preceding passages and also John 3:3,5; I

John 5:12. This is not contradicted by those passages which ascribe a certain righteousness to man, such as, Matt. 9:12,13; Acts 10:35; Rom. 2:14; Phil. 3:6; I Cor. 1:30, for this may be either civil righteousness, ceremonial or covenant righteousness, the righteousness of the law, or the righteousness which is in Christ Jesus.

C. The Connection Of Adam’S Sin With That Of The Race.

GLOSS Imputation: the reckoning or accounting of Adam’s guilt to those whom he represented.

1. THE DENIAL OF THIS CONNECTION. Some deny the causal connection of the sin of Adam with the sinfulness of the human race either wholly or in part.

a. Pelagians and Socinians deny absolutely that there is any necessary connection between our sin and the sin of Adam. The first sin was Adam’s sin only and does not concern his posterity in any way. The most they will admit is that the evil example of Adam led to imitation.

b. Semi-Pelagians and the earlier Arminians teach that man inherited a natural inability from Adam, but is not responsible for this inability, so that no guilt attaches to it, and it may even be said that God is somewhat under obligation to provide a cure for it. The Wesleyan Arminians admit that this inborn corruption also involves guilt.

c. The New School (New Haven) theory teaches that man is born with an inherent tendency to sin, in virtue of which his moral preference is invariably wrong; but that this tendency cannot itself be called sin, since sin always consists exclusively in conscious and intentional transgression of the law.

d. The Theology of crisis stresses the solidarity of sin in the human race, but denies that sin originated in an act of Adam in paradise. The fall belongs to pre- or super-history, and is already a thing of the past when the historical Adam appears upon the scene. It is the secret of God's predestination. The story of the fall is a myth. Adam appears as the type of Christ in so far as it can be seen in him that life without sin is possible in communion with God. Says Brunner: "In Adam all have sinned — that is the Biblical statement; but how? The Bible does not tell us that. The doctrine of original sin is read into it." [*Man in Revolt*, p. 142.]

2. DIFFERENT THEORIES TO EXPLAIN THE CONNECTION.

a. *The realistic theory.* The earliest method of explaining the connection between the sin of Adam and the guilt and pollution of all his descendants was the realistic theory. This theory is to the effect that human nature constitutes, not only generically but numerically as well, a single unit. Adam possessed the whole human nature, and in him it corrupted itself by its own voluntary apostatizing act in Adam. Individual men are not separate substances, but manifestations of the same general substance; they are numerically one. This universal human nature became corrupt and guilty in Adam, and consequently every individualization of it in the descendants of Adam is also corrupt and guilty from the very beginning of its existence. This means that all men *actually* sinned in Adam before the individualization of human nature began. This theory was accepted by some of the early Church Fathers and by some of the Scholastics, and was defended in more recent times by Dr. Shedd. However, it is open to several objections: (1) By representing the souls of men as individualizations of the general spiritual substance that was present in Adam, it would seem to imply that the substance of the soul is of a material nature, and thus to land us inevitably in some sort of materialism. (2) It is contrary to the testimony of consciousness and does not sufficiently guard the interests of human personality. Every man is conscious of being a separate personality, and therefore far more than a mere passing wave in the general

ocean of existence. (3) It does not explain why Adam's descendants are held responsible for his first sin only, and not for his later sins, nor for the sins of all the generations of forefathers that followed Adam. (4) Neither does it give an answer to the important question, why Christ was not held responsible for the *actual* commission of sin in Adam, for He certainly shared the same human nature, the nature that *actually* sinned in Adam.

b. *The doctrine of the covenant of works.* This implies that Adam stood in a twofold relationship to his descendants, namely, that of the natural head of all mankind, and that of the *representative head* of the entire human race in the covenant of works. (1) *The natural relationship.* In his natural relationship Adam was the father of all mankind. As he was created by God he was subject to change, and had no rightful claim to an unchangeable state. He was in duty bound to obey God, and this obedience did not entitle him to any reward. On the other hand, if he sinned, he would become subject to corruption and to punishment, but the sin would be only his own, and could not be placed to the account of his descendants. Dabney holds that, according to the law that like begets like, his corruption would have passed on to his descendants. But however this may be — and it is rather useless to speculate about it — they certainly could not have been held responsible for this corruption. They could not have been considered guilty in Adam merely in virtue of the natural relationship in which Adam stood to the race. The usual Reformed representation is a different one. (2) *The covenant relationship.* To the natural relationship in which Adam stood to his descendants God graciously added a covenant relationship containing several positive elements: (a) *An element of representation.* God ordained that in this covenant Adam should not stand for himself only, but as the representative of all his descendants. Consequently, he was the head of the race not only in a parental, but also in a federal sense. (b) *An element of probation.* While apart from this covenant Adam and his descendants would have been in a continual state of trial, with a constant danger of sinning, the covenant guaranteed that persistent perseverance for a fixed period of time would be rewarded with the establishment of man in a

permanent state of holiness and bliss. (c) *An element of reward or punishment.* According to the terms of the covenant Adam would obtain a rightful claim to eternal life, if he fulfilled the conditions of the covenant. And not only he, but all his descendants as well would have shared in this blessing. In its normal operation, therefore, the covenant arrangement would have been of incalculable benefit for mankind. But there was a possibility that man would disobey, thereby reversing the operation of the covenant, and in that case the results would naturally be correspondingly disastrous. Transgression of the covenant commandment would result in death. Adam chose the course of disobedience, corrupted himself by sin, became guilty in the sight of God, and as such subject to the sentence of death. And because he was the federal representative of the race, his disobedience affected all his descendants. In His righteous judgment God imputes the guilt of the first sin, committed by the head of the covenant, to all those that are federally related to him. And as a result they are born in a depraved and sinful condition as well, and this inherent corruption also involves guilt. This doctrine explains why only the first sin of Adam, and not his following sins nor the sins of our other forefathers, is imputed to us, and also safeguards the sinlessness of Jesus, for He was not a human person and therefore not in the covenant of works.

c. *The theory of mediate imputation.* This theory denies that the guilt of Adam's sin is *directly* imputed to his descendants, and represents the matter as follows: Adam's descendants derive their innate corruption from him by a process of natural generation, and only on the basis of that inherent depravity which they share with him are they also considered guilty of his apostasy. They are not born corrupt because they are guilty in Adam, but they are considered guilty because they are corrupt. Their condition is not based on their legal status, but their legal status on their condition. This theory, first advocated by Placeus, was adopted by the younger Vitranga and Venema, by several New England theologians, and by some of the New School theologians in the Presbyterian Church. This theory is objectionable for several reasons: (1) A thing cannot be mediated by its own consequences. The inherent depravity

with which the descendants of Adam are born is already the result of Adam's sin, and therefore cannot be considered as the basis on which they are guilty of the sin of Adam. (2) It offers no objective ground whatsoever for the transmission of Adam's guilt and depravity to all his descendants. Yet there must be some objective legal ground for this. (3) If this theory were consistent, it ought to teach the mediate imputation of the sins of all previous generations to those following, for their joint corruption is passed on by generation. (4) It also proceeds on the assumption that there can be moral corruption that is not at the same time guilt, a corruption that does not in itself make one liable to punishment. (5) And finally, if the inherent corruption which is present in the descendants of Adam can be regarded as the *legal* ground for the explanation of something else, there is no more need of any mediate imputation.

IV. Sin in the Life of the Human Race

Original sin includes both inherited guilt and corruption, while actual sin appears in the thoughts, desires, words, and deeds of fallen people.

A. Original Sin.

GLOSS **Total depravity:** the teaching that sin affects every aspect of human nature, not that every person is as evil as possible.

The sinful state and condition in which men are born is designated in theology by the name *peccatum originale*, which is literally translated in the English "original sin." This term is better than the Holland name "erfzonde," since the latter, strictly speaking, does not cover all that belongs to original sin. It is not a proper designation of original guilt, for this is not inherited but imputed to us. This sin is called "original sin," (1) because it is derived from the original root of the human race; (2) because it is present in the life of every individual from the time of his birth, and therefore cannot be regarded as the

result of imitation; and (3) because it is the inward root of all the actual sins that defile the life of man. We should guard against the mistake of thinking that the term in any way implies that the sin designated by it belongs to the original constitution of human nature, which would imply that God created man as a sinner.

1. HISTORICAL REVIEW. The early Church Fathers contain nothing very definite about original sin. According to the Greek Fathers there is a physical corruption in the human race, which is derived from Adam, but this is not sin and does not involve guilt. The freedom of the will was not affected directly by the fall, but is affected only indirectly by the inherited physical corruption. The tendency apparent in the Greek Church finally culminated in Pelagianism, which flatly denied all original sin. In the Latin Church a different tendency appeared especially in Tertullian, according to whom the propagation of the soul involves the propagation of sin. He regarded original sin as a hereditary sinful taint or corruption, which did not exclude the presence of some good in man. Ambrose advanced beyond Tertullian by regarding original sin as a state and by distinguishing between the inborn corruption and the resulting guilt of man. The free will of man was weakened by the fall. It is especially in Augustine that the doctrine of original sin comes to fuller development. According to him the nature of man, both physical and moral, is totally corrupted by Adam's sin, so that he cannot do otherwise than sin. This inherited corruption or original sin is a moral punishment for the sin of Adam. It is such a quality of the nature of man, that in his natural state, he can and will do evil only. He has lost the material freedom of the will, and it is especially in this respect that original sin constitutes a punishment. In virtue of this sin man is already under condemnation. It is not merely corruption, but also guilt. Semi-Pelagianism reacted against the absoluteness of the Augustinian view. It admitted that the whole human race is involved in the fall of Adam, that human nature is tainted with hereditary sin, and that all men are by nature inclined to evil and not able, apart from the grace of God, to complete any good work; but denied the *total* depravity of man, the guilt of

original sin, and the loss of the freedom of the will. This became the prevalent view during the Middle Ages, though there were some prominent Scholastics who were on the whole Augustinian in their conception of original sin. Anselm's view of original sin was altogether in harmony with that of Augustine. It represents original sin as consisting of the guilt of nature (the nature of the entire human race), contracted by a single act of Adam, and the resulting inherent corruption of human nature, handed down to posterity and manifesting itself in a tendency to sin. This sin also involves the loss of the power of self-determination in the direction of holiness (material freedom of the will), and renders man a slave of sin. The prevailing opinion among the Scholastics was that original sin is not something positive, but rather the absence of something that ought to be present, particularly the privation of original righteousness, though some would add a positive element, namely, an inclination to evil. Thomas Aquinas held that original sin, considered in its material element, is concupiscence, but considered in its formal element, is the privation of original justice. There is a dissolution of the harmony in which original justice consisted, and in this sense original sin can be called a languor of nature. Speaking generally, the Reformers were in agreement with Augustine, though Calvin differed from him especially on two points, by stressing the fact that original sin is not something purely negative, and is not limited to the sensuous nature of man. At the time of the Reformation the Socinians followed the Pelagians in the denial of original sin, and in the seventeenth century the Arminians broke with the Reformed faith, and accepted the Semi-Pelagian view of original sin. Since that time various shades of opinion were advocated in the Protestant Churches both in Europe and in America.

2. THE TWO ELEMENTS OF ORIGINAL SIN. Two elements must be distinguished in original sin, namely:

a. *Original guilt.* The word "guilt" expresses the relation which sin bears to justice or, as the older theologians put it, to the penalty of the law. He who is

guilty stands in a penal relation to the law. We can speak of guilt in a twofold sense, namely, as *reatus culpae* and as *reatus poenae*. The former, which Turretin calls “potential guilt,” is the intrinsic moral ill-desert of an act or state. This is of the essence of sin and is an inseparable part of its sinfulness. It attaches only to those who have themselves committed sinful deeds, and attaches to them permanently. It cannot be removed by forgiveness, and is not removed by justification on the basis of the merits of Jesus Christ, and much less by mere pardon. Man’s sins are inherently ill-deserving even after he is justified. Guilt in this sense cannot be transferred from one person to another. The usual sense, however, in which we speak of guilt in theology, is that of *reatus poenae*. By this is meant desert of punishment, or obligation to render satisfaction to God’s justice for self-determined violation of the law. Guilt in this sense is not of the essence of sin, but is rather a relation to the penal sanction of the law. If there had been no sanction attached to the disregard of moral relations, every departure from the law would have been sin, but would not have involved liability to punishment. Guilt in this sense may be removed by the satisfaction of justice, either personally or vicariously. It may be transferred from one person to another, or assumed by one person for another. It is removed from believers by justification, so that their sins, though inherently ill-deserving, do not make them liable to punishment. Semi-Pelagians and the older Arminians or Remonstrants deny that original sin involves guilt. The guilt of Adam’s sin, committed by him as the federal head of the human race, is imputed to all his descendants. This is evident from the fact that, as the Bible teaches, death as the punishment of sin passes on from Adam to all his descendants. Rom. 5:12-19; Eph. 2:3; I Cor. 15:22.

b. *Original pollution*. Original pollution includes two things, namely, the absence of original righteousness, and the presence of positive evil. It should be noted: (1) That original pollution is not merely a disease, as some of the Greek Fathers and the Arminians represent it, but sin in the real sense of the word. Guilt attaches to it; he who denies this does not have a Biblical conception of original corruption. (2) That this pollution is not to be regarded

as a substance infused into the human soul, nor as a change of substance in the metaphysical sense of the word. This was the error of the Manichæans and of Flacius Illyricus in the days of the Reformation. If the substance of the soul were sinful, it would have to be replaced by a new substance in regeneration; but this does not take place. (3) That it is not merely a privation. In his polemic with the Manichæans, Augustine not merely denied that sin was a substance, but also asserted that it was merely a privation. He called it a *privatio boni*. But original sin is not merely negative; it is also an inherent positive disposition toward sin. This original pollution may be considered from more than one point of view, namely, as total depravity and as total inability.

c. *Total depravity*. In view of its pervasive character, inherited pollution is called total depravity. This phrase is often misunderstood, and therefore calls for careful discrimination. Negatively, it does not imply: (1) that every man is as thoroughly depraved as he can possibly become; (2) that the sinner has no innate knowledge of the will of God, nor a conscience that discriminates between good and evil; (3) that sinful man does not often admire virtuous character and actions in others, or is incapable of disinterested affections and actions in his relations with his fellow-men; nor (4) that every unregenerate man will, in virtue of his inherent sinfulness, indulge in every form of sin; it often happens that one form excludes the other. Positively, it does indicate: (1) that the inherent corruption extends to every part of man's nature, to all the faculties and powers of both soul and body; and (2) that there is no spiritual good, that is, good in relation to God, in the sinner at all, but only perversion. This total depravity is denied by Pelagians, Socinians, and seventeenth century Arminians, but is clearly taught in Scripture, John 5:42; Rom. 7:18,23; 8:7; Eph. 4:18; II Tim. 3:2-4; Tit. 1:15; Heb. 3:12.

d. *Total inability*. With respect to its effect on man's spiritual powers, it is called total inability. Here, again, it is necessary to distinguish. By ascribing total inability to the natural man we do not mean to say that it is impossible for him to do good in any sense of the word. Reformed theologians generally

say that he is still able to perform: (1) natural good; (2) civil good or civil righteousness; and (3) externally religious good. It is admitted that even the unrenewed possess some virtue, revealing itself in the relations of social life, in many acts and sentiments that deserve the sincere approval and gratitude of their fellow-men, and that even meet with the approval of God to a certain extent. At the same time it is maintained that these same actions and feelings, when considered in relation to God, are radically defective. Their fatal defect is that they are not prompted by love to God, or by any regard for the will of God as requiring them. When we speak of man's corruption as total inability, we mean two things: (1) that the unrenewed sinner cannot do any act, however insignificant, which *fundamentally* meets with God's approval and answers to the demands of God's holy law; and (2) that he cannot change his fundamental preference for sin and self to love for God, nor even make an approach to such a change. In a word, he is unable to do any spiritual good. There is abundant Scriptural support for this doctrine: John 1:13; 3:5; 6:44; 8:34; 15:4,5; Rom. 7:18,24; 8:7,8; 1 Cor. 2:14; II Cor. 3:5; Eph. 2:1,8-10; Heb. 11:6. Pelagians, however, believe in the plenary ability of man, denying that his moral faculties were impaired by sin. Arminians speak of a gracious ability, because they believe that God imparts His common grace to all men, which enables them to turn to God and believe. The New School theologians ascribe to man natural as distinguished from moral ability, a distinction borrowed from Edwards' great work *On the Will*. The import of their teaching is that man in his fallen state is still in possession of all the natural faculties that are required for doing spiritual good (intellect, will, etc.), but lacks moral ability, that is, the ability to give proper direction to those faculties, a direction well-pleasing to God. The distinction under consideration is advanced, in order to stress the fact that man is *wilfully sinful*, and this may well be emphasized. But the New School theologians assert that man would be able to do spiritual good if he only wanted to do it. This means that the "natural ability" of which they speak, is after all an ability to do real spiritual good.[Cf. Hodge, *Syst. Theol.* II, p. 266.] On the whole it may be said that the distinction between natural and

moral ability is not a desirable one, for: (1) it has no warrant in Scripture, which teaches consistently that man is not able to do what is required of him; (2) it is essentially ambiguous and misleading: the possession of the requisite faculties to do spiritual good does not yet constitute an ability to do it; (3) “natural” is not a proper antithesis of “moral,” for a thing may be both at the same time; and the inability of man is also natural in an important sense, that is, as being incident to his nature in its present state as naturally propagated; and (4) the language does not accurately express the important distinction intended; what is meant is that it is moral, and not either physical or constitutional; that it has its ground, not in the want of any faculty, but in the corrupt moral state of the faculties, and of the disposition of the heart.

3. ORIGINAL SIN AND HUMAN FREEDOM. In connection with the doctrine of the total inability of man the question naturally arises, whether original sin then also involves the loss of freedom, or of what is generally called the *liberum arbitrium*, the free will. This question should be answered with discrimination for, put in this general way, it may be answered both negatively and positively. In a certain sense man has not, and in another sense he has, lost his liberty. There is a certain liberty that is the inalienable possession of a free agent, namely, the liberty to choose as he pleases, in full accord with the prevailing dispositions and tendencies of his soul. Man did not lose any of the constitutional faculties necessary to constitute him a responsible moral agent. He still has reason, conscience, and the freedom of choice. He has ability to acquire knowledge, and to feel and recognise moral distinctions and obligations; and his affections, tendencies, and actions are spontaneous, so that he chooses and refuses as he sees fit. Moreover, he has the ability to appreciate and do many things that are good and amiable, benevolent and just, in the relations he sustains to his fellow-beings. But man did lose his material freedom, that is, the rational power to determine his course in the direction of the highest good, in harmony with the original moral constitution of his nature. Man has by nature an irresistible bias for evil. He is not able to apprehend and love spiritual excellence, to seek and do

spiritual things, the things of God that pertain to salvation. This position, which is Augustinian and Calvinistic, is flatly contradicted by Pelagianism and Socinianism, and in part also by Semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism. Modern liberalism, which is essentially Pelagian, naturally finds the doctrine, that man has lost the ability to determine his life in the direction of real righteousness and holiness, highly offensive, and glories in the ability of man to choose and do what is right and good. On the other hand the dialectical theology (Barthianism) strongly reasserts the utter inability of man to make even the slightest move in a Godward direction. The sinner is a slave of sin and cannot possibly turn in the opposite direction.

4. THE THEOLOGY OF CRISIS AND ORIGINAL SIN. It may be well at this point to define briefly the position of the Theology of Crisis or of Barthianism with respect to the doctrine of original sin. Walter Lowrie correctly says: “Barth has much to say about the Fall — but nothing about ‘original sin.’ That man is *fallen* we can plainly see; but the Fall is not an event we can point to in history, it belongs decidedly to pre-history, *Urgeschichte*, in a metaphysical sense.”[*Our Concern with the Theology of Crisis*, p. 187.] Brunner has something to say about it in his recent work on *Man in Revolt*. [Chap. 6.] He does not accept the doctrine of original sin in the traditional and ecclesiastical sense of the word. The first sin of Adam was not and could not be placed to the account of all his descendants; nor did this sin result in a sinful state, which is passed on to his posterity, and which is now the fruitful root of all actual sin. “Sin is never a state, but it is always an act. Even being a sinner is not a state but an act, because it is being a person.” In Brunner’s estimation the traditional view has an undesirable element of determinism in it, and does not sufficiently safeguard the responsibility of man. But his rejection of the doctrine of original sin does not mean that he sees no truth in it at all. It rightly stresses the solidarity of sin in the human race, and the transmission “of the spiritual nature, of the ‘character,’ from parents to children.” However, he seeks the explanation of the universality of sin in something else than in “original sin.” The man whom God created was not simply some one man, but a responsible

person created in and for community with others. The isolated individual is but an abstraction. “In the Creation we are an individualized, articulated unity, one body with many members.” If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. He goes on to say: “If that is our origin, then our opposition to this origin cannot be an experience, an act, of the individual as an individual.... Certainly each individual is a sinner as an individual; but he is at the same time the whole in its united solidarity, the body, actual humanity as a whole.” There was therefore solidarity in sinning; the human race fell away from God; but it belongs to the very nature of sin that we deny this solidarity in sin. The result of this initial sin is that man is now a sinner; but the fact that man is now a sinner should not be regarded as the cause of his individual sinful actions. Such a causal connection cannot be admitted, for every sin which man commits is a fresh decision against God. The statement that man is a sinner does not mean that he is in a state or condition of sin, but that he is actually engaged in rebellion against God. As Adam we turned away from God, and “he who commits this apostasy can do no other than repeat it continually, not because it has become a habit, but because this is the distinctive character of this act.” Man cannot reverse the course, but continues to sin right along. The Bible never speaks of sin except as the act of turning away from God. “But in the very concept of ‘being a sinner’ this act is conceived as one which determines man’s whole existence.” There is much in this representation that reminds one of the realistic representation of Thomas Aquinas.

5. OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY AND TOTAL INABILITY.

a. *It is inconsistent with moral obligation.* The most obvious and the most plausible objection to the doctrine of total depravity and total inability, is that it is inconsistent with moral obligation. It is said that a man cannot be held justly responsible for anything for which he has not the required ability. But the general implication of this principle is a fallacy. It may hold in cases of disability resulting from a limitation which God has imposed on man’s nature;

but it certainly does not apply in the sphere of morals and religion, as already pointed out in the preceding. We should not forget that the inability under consideration is self-imposed, has a moral origin, and is not due to any limitation which God has put upon man's being. Man is unable as a result of the perverted choice made in Adam.

b. *It removes all motives for exertion.* A second objection is that this doctrine removes all motives for exertion and destroys all rational grounds for the use of the means of grace. If we know that we cannot accomplish a given end, why should we use the means recommended for its accomplishment? Now it is perfectly true that the sinner, who is enlightened by the Holy Spirit and is truly conscious of his own natural inability, ceases from work-righteousness. And this is exactly what is necessary. But it does not hold with respect to the natural man, for he is thoroughly self-righteous. Moreover, it is not true that the doctrine of inability naturally tends to foster neglect in the use of the means of grace ordained by God. On this principle the farmer might also say, I cannot produce a harvest; why should I cultivate my fields? But this would be utter folly. In every department of human endeavor the result depends on the co-operation of causes over which man has no control. The Scriptural grounds for the use of means remain: God commands the use of means; the means ordained by God are adapted to the end contemplated; ordinarily the end is not attained, except by the use of the appointed means; and God has promised to bless the use of those means.

c. *It encourages delay in conversion.* It is also asserted that this doctrine encourages delay in conversion. If a man believes that he cannot change his heart, cannot repent and believe the gospel, he will feel that he can only passively abide the time when it will please God to change the direction of his life. Now there may be, and experience teaches that there are, some who actually adopt that attitude; but as a rule the effect of the doctrine under consideration will be quite different. If sinners, to whom sin has grown very dear, were conscious of the power to change their lives at will, they would be

tempted to defer it to the last moment. But if one is conscious of the fact that a very desirable thing is beyond the compass of his own powers, he will instinctively seek help outside of himself. The sinner who feels that way about salvation, will seek help with the great Physician of the soul, and thus acknowledge his own disability.

B. Actual Sin.

GLOSS Actual sin: sins committed in personal thought, desire, word, or deed, flowing from the fallen human condition.

Roman Catholics and Arminians minimized the idea of original sin, and then developed doctrines, such as those of the washing away of original sin (though not only that) by baptism, and of sufficient grace, by which its seriousness is greatly obscured. The emphasis is clearly altogether on actual sins. Pelagians, Socinians, modern liberal theologians, and — strange as it may seem — also the Theology of Crisis, recognise only actual sins. It must be said, however, that this theology does speak of sin in the singular as well as in the plural, that is, it does recognise a solidarity in sin, which some of the others have not recognised. Reformed theology has always given due recognition to original sin and to the relation in which it stands to actual sins.

1. THE RELATION BETWEEN ORIGINAL AND ACTUAL SIN. The former originated in a free act of Adam as the representative of the human race, a transgression of the law of God and a corruption of human nature, which rendered him liable to the punishment of God. In the sight of God his sin was the sin of all his descendants, so that they are born as sinners, that is in a state of guilt and in a polluted condition. Original sin is both a state and an inherent quality of pollution in man. Every man is guilty in Adam, and is consequently born with a depraved and corrupt nature. And this inner corruption is the unholy fountain of all actual sins. When we speak of actual sin or *peccatum*

actuale, we use the word “actual” or “actuale” in a comprehensive sense. The term “actual sins” does not merely denote those external actions which are accomplished by means of the body, but all those conscious thoughts and volitions which spring from original sin. They are the individual sins of act in distinction from man’s inherited nature and inclination. Original sin is one, actual sin is manifold. Actual sin may be interior, such as a particular conscious doubt or evil design in the mind, or a particular conscious lust or desire in the heart; but they may also be exterior, such as deceit, theft, adultery, murder, and so on. While the existence of original sin has met with widespread denial, the presence of actual sin in the life of man is generally admitted. This does not mean, however, that people have always had an equally profound consciousness of sin. We hear a great deal nowadays about the “loss of the sense of sin,” though Modernists hasten to assure us that, while we have lost the sense of *sin*, we have gained the sense of *sins*, in the plural, that is, of definite actual sins. But there is no doubt about it that people have to an alarming extent lost the sense of the heinousness of sin, as committed against a holy God, and have largely thought of it merely as an infringement on the rights of one’s fellow-men. They fail to see that sin is a fatal power in their lives which ever and anon incites their rebellious spirits, which makes them guilty before God, and which brings them under a sentence of condemnation. It is one of the merits of the Theology of Crisis that it is calling attention once more to the seriousness of sin as a revolt against God, as a revolutionary attempt to be like God.

2. CLASSIFICATION OF ACTUAL SINS. It is quite impossible to give a unified and comprehensive classification of actual sins. They vary in kind and degree, and can be differentiated from more than one point of view. Roman Catholics make a well-known distinction between venial and mortal sins, but admit that it is extremely difficult and dangerous to decide whether a sin is mortal or venial. They were led to this distinction by the statement of Paul in Gal. 5:21 that they “who do such things (as he has enumerated) shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” One commits a mortal sin when one willfully

violates the law of God in a matter which one believes or knows to be important. It renders the sinner liable to eternal punishment. And one commits a venial sin when one transgresses the law of God in a matter that is not of grave importance, or when the transgression is not altogether voluntary. Such a sin is forgiven more easily, and even without confession. Forgiveness for mortal sins can be obtained only by the sacrament of penance. The distinction is not a Scriptural one, for according to Scripture every sin is essentially *anomia* (unrighteousness), and merits eternal punishment. Moreover, it has a deleterious effect in practical life, since it engenders a feeling of uncertainty, sometimes a feeling of morbid fear on the one hand, or of unwarranted carelessness on the other. The Bible does distinguish different kinds of sins, especially in connection with the different degrees of guilt attaching to them. The Old Testament makes an important distinction between sins committed presumptuously (with a high hand), and sins committed unwittingly, that is, as the result of ignorance, weakness, or error, Num. 15:29-31. The former could not be atoned by sacrifice and were punished with great severity, while the latter could be so atoned and were judged with far greater leniency. The fundamental principle embodied in this distinction still applies. Sins committed on purpose, with full consciousness of the evil involved, and with deliberation, are greater and more culpable than sins resulting from ignorance, from an erroneous conception of things, or from weakness of character. Nevertheless the latter are also real sins and make one guilty in the sight of God, Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:18; I Tim 1:13; 5:24. The New Testament further clearly teaches us that the degree of sin is to a great extent determined by the degree of light possessed. The heathen are guilty indeed, but they who have God's revelation and enjoy the privileges of the gospel ministry are far more guilty, Matt. 10:15; Luke 12:47,48; 23:34; John 19:11; Acts 17:30; Rom. 1:32; 2:12; I Tim. 1:13,15,16.

3. THE UNPARDONABLE SIN. Several passages of Scripture speak of a sin that cannot be forgiven, after which a change of heart is impossible, and for which it is not necessary to pray. It is generally known as the sin or

blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The Saviour speaks of it explicitly in Matt. 12:31,32 and parallel passages; and it is generally thought that Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26,27, and John 5:16 also refer to this sin.

a. *Unwarranted opinions respecting this sin.* There has been quite a variety of opinions respecting the nature of the unpardonable sin. (1) Jerome and Chrysostom thought of it as a sin that could be committed only during Christ's sojourn on earth, and held that it was committed by those who were convinced in their hearts that Christ performed His miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit, but in spite of their conviction refused to recognise these miracles as such and ascribed them to the operation of Satan. However, this limitation is entirely unwarranted, as the passages in Hebrews and I John would seem to prove. (2) Augustine, the Melanchtonian dogmaticians of the Lutheran Church, and a few Scottish theologians (Guthrie, Chalmers) conceived of it as consisting in *impoenitentia finalis*, that is, impenitence persisted in to the end. A related view is that expressed by some in our own day, that it consists in continued unbelief, a refusal up to the very end to accept Jesus Christ by faith. But on this supposition it would follow that every one who died in a state of impenitence and unbelief had committed this sin, while according to Scripture it must be something of a very specific nature. (3) In connection with their denial of the perseverance of the saints, later Lutheran theologians taught that only regenerate persons could commit this sin, and sought support for this view in Heb. 6:4-6. But this is an un-Scriptural position, and the Canons of Dort reject, among others, also the error of those who teach that the regenerate can commit the sin against the Holy Spirit.

b. *The Reformed conception of this sin.* The name "sin against the Holy Spirit" is too general, for there are also sins against the Holy Spirit that are pardonable, Eph. 4:30. The Bible speaks more specifically of a "speaking against the Holy Spirit," Matt. 12:32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10. It is evidently a sin committed during the present life, which makes conversion and pardon impossible. The sin consists in the conscious, malicious, and willful rejection

and slandering, against evidence and conviction, of the testimony of the Holy Spirit respecting the grace of God in Christ, attributing it out of hatred and enmity to the prince of darkness. It presupposes, objectively, a revelation of the grace of God in Christ, and a powerful operation of the Holy Spirit; and, subjectively, an illumination and intellectual conviction so strong and powerful as to make an honest denial of the truth impossible. And then the sin itself consists, not in doubting the truth, nor in a simple denial of it, but in a contradiction of it that goes contrary to the conviction of the mind, to the illumination of the conscience, and even to the verdict of the heart. In committing that sin man willfully, maliciously, and intentionally attributes what is clearly recognised as the work of God to the influence and operation of Satan. It is nothing less than a decided slandering of the Holy Spirit, an audacious declaration that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of the abyss, that the truth is the lie, and that Christ is Satan. It is not so much a sin against the person of the Holy Spirit as a sin against His official work in revealing, both objectively and subjectively, the grace and glory of God in Christ. The root of this sin is the conscious and deliberate hatred of God and of all that is recognised as divine. It is unpardonable, not because its guilt transcends the merits of Christ, or because the sinner is beyond the renewing power of the Holy Spirit, but because there are also in the world of sin certain laws and ordinances, established by God and maintained by Him. And the law in the case of this particular sin is, that it excludes all repentance, sears the conscience, hardens the sinner, and thus renders the sin unpardonable. In those who have committed this sin we may therefore expect to find a pronounced hatred to God, a defiant attitude to Him and all that is divine, delight in ridiculing and slandering that which is holy, and absolute unconcern respecting the welfare of their soul and the future life. In view of the fact that this sin is not followed by repentance, we may be reasonably sure that they who fear that they have committed it and worry about this, and who desire the prayers of others for them, have not committed it.

c. *Remarks on the passages in the Epistles that speak of it.* Except in the Gospels, this sin is not mentioned by name in the Bible. Thus the question arises, whether the passages in Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26,27,29, and I John 5:16 also refer to it. Now it is quite evident that they all speak of an unpardonable sin; and because Jesus says in Matt. 12:31, “Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven,” thereby indicating that there is but one unpardonable sin, it is but reasonable to think that these passages refer to the same sin. It should be noted, however, that Heb. 6 speaks of a specific form of this sin, such as could only occur in the apostolic age, when the Spirit revealed itself in extraordinary gifts and powers. The fact that this was not borne in mind, often led to the erroneous opinion that this passage, with its unusually strong expressions, referred to such as were actually regenerated by the Spirit of God. But Heb. 6:4-6, while speaking of experiences that transcend those of the ordinary temporal faith, yet do not necessarily testify to the presence of regenerating grace in the heart.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY. What objections are raised to the idea of the federal headship of Adam? What Scriptural ground is there for the imputation of Adam’s sin to his descendants? Was Placeus’ theory of mediate imputation in any way connected with Amyraldus’ view of universal atonement? What objection does Dabney raise to the doctrine of immediate imputation? Is the doctrine of inherited evil the same as the doctrine of original sin, and if not, how do they differ? How do Pelagians, Semi-Pelagians, and Arminians differ in their view of original sin? How does the doctrine of original sin affect the doctrine of infant salvation? Does the Bible teach that one can be lost purely as the result of original sin? What is the connection between the doctrine of original sin and that of baptismal regeneration? What becomes of the doctrine of original sin in modern liberal theology? How do you account for the denial of original sin in Barthian theology? Can you name some additional classes of actual sins?

V. The Punishment of Sin

God's punishment of sin is righteous and purposeful, displaying His holiness while also serving the moral order of His creation.

Sin is a very serious matter, and is taken seriously by God, though men often make light of it. It is not only a transgression of the law of God, but an attack on the great Lawgiver Himself, a revolt against God. It is an infringement on the inviolable righteousness of God, which is the very foundation of His throne (Ps. 97:2), and an affront to the spotless holiness of God, which requires of us that we be holy in all manner of living (I Pet. 1:16). In view of this it is but natural that God should visit sin with punishment. In a word of fundamental significance He says: "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me," Ex. 20:5. The Bible abundantly testifies to the fact that God punishes sin both in this life and in the life to come.

A. Natural And Positive Penalties.

GLOSS Penalty: the just consequence or punishment due to sin under God's moral government.

A rather common distinction applied to the punishments for sin, is that between natural and positive penalties. There are punishments which are the natural results of sin, and which men cannot escape, because they are the natural and necessary consequences of sin. Man is not saved from them by repentance and forgiveness. In some cases they may be mitigated and even checked by the means which God has placed at our disposal, but in other cases they remain and serve as a constant reminder of past transgressions. The slothful man comes to poverty, the drunkard brings ruin upon himself and his

family, the fornicator contracts a loathsome and incurable disease, and the criminal is burdened with shame and even when leaving the prison walls finds it extremely hard to make a new start in life. The Bible speaks of such punishments in Job 4:8; Ps. 9:15; 94:23; Prov. 5:22; 23:21; 24:14; 31:3. But there are also positive punishments, and these are punishments in the more ordinary and legal sense of the word. They presuppose not merely the natural laws of life, but a positive law of the great Lawgiver with added sanctions. They are not penalties which naturally result from the nature of the transgression, but penalties which are attached to the transgressions by divine enactments. They are superimposed by the divine law, which is of absolute authority. It is to this type of punishment that the Bible usually refers. This is particularly evident in the Old Testament. God gave Israel a detailed code of laws for the regulation of its civil, moral, and religious life, and clearly stipulated the punishment to be meted out in the case of each transgression, cf. Ex. 20-23. And though many of the civil and religious regulations of this law were, in the form in which they were couched, intended for Israel only, the fundamental principles which they embody also apply in the New Testament dispensation. In a Biblical conception of the penalty of sin we shall have to take into account both the natural and necessary outcome of wilful opposition to God and the penalty legally affixed and adjusted to the offense by God. Now there are some Unitarians, Universalists, and Modernists who deny the existence of any punishment of sin, except such consequences as naturally result from the sinful action. Punishment is not the execution of a sentence pronounced by the divine Being on the merits of the case, but simply the operation of a general law. This position is taken by J. F. Clarke, Thayer, Williamson, and Washington Gladden. The latter says: "The old theology made this penalty (penalty of sin) to consist in suffering inflicted upon the sinner by a judicial process in the future life . . . The penalty of sin, as the new theology teaches, consists in the natural consequences of sin. . . . The penalty of sin is sin. Whatsoever a man soweth *that* shall he also reap." [*Present Day Theology*, pp. 78-80.] The idea is not new; it was present to the mind of Dante, for in his

famous poem the torments of hell symbolize the consequences of sin; and Schelling had it in mind, when he spoke of the history of the world as the judgment of the world. It is abundantly evident from Scripture, however, that this is an entirely un-Biblical view. The Bible speaks of penalties, which are in no sense the natural result or consequences of the sin committed, for instance in Ex. 32:33; Lev. 26:21; Num. 15:31; I Chron. 10:13; Ps. 11:6; 75:8; Isa. 1:24,28; Matt. 3:10; 24:51. All these passages speak of a punishment of sin by a direct act of God. Moreover, according to the view under consideration there is really no reward or punishment; virtue and vice both naturally include their various issues. Furthermore, on that standpoint there is no good reason for considering suffering as punishment, for it denies guilt, and it is exactly guilt that constitutes suffering a punishment. Then, too, it is in many cases not the guilty that receives the severest punishment, but the innocent as, for instance, the dependents of a drunkard or a debauchee. And, finally, on this view, heaven and hell are not places of future punishment, but states of mind or conditions in which men find themselves here and now. Washington Gladden expresses this very explicitly.

B. Nature And Purpose Of Punishments.

GLOSS Divine justice: God's righteous commitment to uphold what is holy and judge what is evil.

The word "punishment" is derived from the Latin poena, meaning punishment, expiation, or pain. It denotes pain or suffering inflicted because of some misdeed. More specifically, it may be defined as that pain or loss which is directly or indirectly inflicted by the Lawgiver, in vindication of His justice outraged by the violation of the law. It originates in the righteousness or punitive justice of God, by which He maintains Himself as the Holy One and necessarily demands holiness and righteousness in all His rational creatures. Punishment is the penalty that is naturally and necessarily due from the

sinner because of his sin; it is, in fact, a debt that is due to the essential justice of God. The punishments of sin are of two different kinds. There is a punishment that is the necessary concomitant of sin, for in the nature of the case sin causes separation between God and man, carries with it guilt and pollution, and fills the heart with fear and shame. But there is also a kind of punishment that is superimposed on man from without by the supreme Lawgiver, such as all kinds of calamities in this life and the punishment of hell in the future.

Now the question arises as to the object or the purpose of the punishment of sin. And on this point there is considerable difference of opinion. We should not regard the punishment of sin as a mere matter of vengeance and as inflicted with the desire to harm one who has previously done harm. The following are the three most important views respecting the purpose of punishment.

1. TO VINDICATE DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS OR JUSTICE. Turretin says: "If there be such an attribute as justice belonging to God, then sin must have its due, which is punishment." The law requires that sin be punished because of its inherent demerit, irrespective of all further considerations. This principle applies in the administration of both human and divine laws. Justice requires the punishment of the transgressor. Back of the law stands God, and therefore it may also be said that punishment aims at the vindication of the righteousness and holiness of the great Lawgiver. The holiness of God necessarily reacts against sin, and this reaction manifests itself in the punishment of sin. This principle is fundamental to all those passages of Scripture that speak of God as a righteous Judge, who renders unto every man according to his deserts. "He is the rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He," Deut. 32:4. "Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity. For the work of a man shall He render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways," Job.

34:10,11. “Thou renderest to every man according to his work,” Ps. 62:12. “Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments,” Ps. 119:37. “I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth,” Jer. 9:24. “And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgest according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear,” I Pet. 1:17. The vindication of the righteousness and holiness of God, and of that just law which is the very expression of His being, is certainly the primary purpose of the punishment of sin. There are two other views, however, which erroneously put something else in the foreground.

2. TO REFORM THE SINNER. The idea is very much in the foreground at the present time that there is no punitive justice in God which inexorably calls for the punishment of the sinner, and that God is not angry with the sinner but loves him, and only inflicts hardships upon him, in order to reclaim him and to bring him back to his Father’s home. This is an un-Scriptural view, which obliterates the distinction between punishment and chastisement. The penalty of sin does not proceed from the love and mercy of the Lawgiver, but from His justice. If reformation follows the infliction of punishment, this is not due to the penalty as such, but is the fruit of some gracious operation of God by which He turns that which is in itself an evil for the sinner into something that is beneficial. The distinction between chastisement and punishment must be maintained. The Bible teaches us on the one hand that God loves and chastens His people, Job 5:17; Ps. 6:1; Ps. 94:12; 118:18; Prov. 3:11; Isa. 26:16; Heb. 12:5-8; Rev. 3:19; and on the other hand, that He hates and punishes evil-doers, Ps. 5:5; 7:11; Nah. 1:2; Rom. 1:18; 2:5,6; 11 Thess. 1:6; Heb. 10:26,27. Moreover, a punishment must be recognised as just, that is, as according to justice, in order to be reformatory. According to this theory a sinner who has already reformed could no more be punished; nor could one beyond the possibility of reformation, so that there could be no punishment for Satan; the death penalty would have to be abolished, and eternal punishment would have no reason for existence.

3. TO DETER MEN FROM SIN. Another theory rather prevalent in our day is that the sinner must be punished for the protection of society, by deterring others from the commission of similar offenses. There can be no doubt about it that this end is often secured in the family, in the state, and in the moral government of the world, but this is an incidental result which God graciously effects by the infliction of the penalty. It certainly cannot be the ground for the infliction of the penalty. There is no justice whatever in punishing an individual simply for the good of society. As a matter of fact the sinner is always punished for his sin, and incidentally this may be for the good of society. And here again it may be said that no punishment will have a deterring effect, if it is not just and right in itself. Punishment has a good effect only when it is evident that the person on whom it is afflicted really deserves punishment. If this theory were true, a criminal might at once be set free, if it were not for the possibility that others might be deterred from sin by his punishment. Moreover, a man might rightly commit a crime, if he were only willing to bear the penalty. According to this view punishment is in no sense grounded in the past, but is wholly prospective. But on that supposition it is very hard to explain how it invariably causes the repentant sinner to look back and to confess with contrite heart the sins of the past, as we notice in such passages as the following: Gen. 42:21; Num. 21:7; I Sam. 15:24,25; II Sam. 12:13; 24:10; Ezra 9:6,10, 13; Neh. 9:33-35; Job 7:21; Ps. 51:1-4; Jer. 3:25. These examples might easily be multiplied. In opposition to both of the theories considered it must be maintained that the punishment of sin is wholly retrospective in its primary aim, though the infliction of the penalty may have beneficial consequences both for the individual and for society.

C. The Actual Penalty Of Sin.

GLOSS **Spiritual death:** alienation from God, the source of life, which lies at the heart of sin's judgment.

The penalty with which God threatened man in paradise was the penalty of death. The death here intended is not the death of the body, but the death of man as a whole, death in the Scriptural sense of the word. The Bible does not know the distinction, so common among us, between a physical, a spiritual, and an eternal death; it has a synthetic view of death and regards it as separation from God. The penalty was also actually executed on the day that man sinned, though the full execution of it was temporarily stayed by the grace of God. In a rather un-Scriptural way some carry their distinction into the Bible, and maintain that physical death should not be regarded as the penalty of sin, but rather as the natural result of the physical constitution of man. But the Bible knows of no such exception. It acquaints us with the threatened penalty, which is death in the comprehensive sense of the word, and it informs us that death entered the world through sin (Rom. 5:12), and that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). The penalty of sin certainly includes physical death, but it includes much more than that. Making the distinction to which we have grown accustomed, we may say that it includes the following:

1. SPIRITUAL DEATH. There is a profound truth in the saying of Augustine that sin is also the punishment of sin. This means that the sinful state and condition in which man is born by nature form part of the penalty of sin. They are, it is true, the immediate consequences of sin, but they are also a part of the threatened penalty. Sin separates man from God, and that means death, for it is only in communion with the living God that man can truly live. In the state of death, which resulted from the entrance of sin into the world, we are burdened with the guilt of sin, a guilt that can only be removed by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. We are therefore under obligation to bear the sufferings that result from transgression of the law. The natural man carries the sense of the liability to punishment with him wherever he goes. Conscience is a constant reminder of his guilt, and the fear of punishment often fills the heart. Spiritual death means not only guilt, but also pollution. Sin is always a corrupting influence in life, and this is a part of our death. We are by nature not only unrighteous in the sight of God, but also unholy. And

this unholiness manifests itself in our thoughts, in our words, and in our deeds. It is always active within us like a poisoned fountain polluting the streams of life. And if it were not for the restraining influence of the common grace of God, it would render social life entirely impossible.

2. THE SUFFERINGS OF LIFE. The sufferings of life, which are the result of the entrance of sin into the world, are also included in the penalty of sin. Sin brought disturbance in the entire life of man. His physical life fell a prey to weaknesses and diseases, which result in discomforts and often in agonizing pains; and his mental life became subject to distressing disturbances, which often rob him of the joy of life, disqualify him for his daily task, and sometimes entirely destroy his mental equilibrium. His very soul has become a battle-field of conflicting thoughts, passions, and desires. The will refuses to follow the judgment of the intellect, and the passions run riot without the control of an intelligent will. The true harmony of life is destroyed, and makes way for the curse of the divided life. Man is in a state of dissolution, which often carries with it the most poignant sufferings. And not only that, but with and on account of man the whole creation was made subject to vanity and to the bondage of corruption. The evolutionists especially have taught us to look upon nature as “red in tooth and claw.” Destructive forces are often released in earthquakes, cyclones, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, and floods, which bring untold misery on mankind. Now there are many, especially in our day, who do not see the hand of God in all this, and do not regard these calamities as a part of the penalty of sin. And yet that is exactly what they are in a general sense. However, it will not be safe to particularize, and to interpret them as special punishments for some grievous sins committed by those who live in the stricken areas. Neither will it be wise to ridicule the idea of such a causal connection as existed in the case of the Cities of the Plain (Sodom and Gomorrah), which were destroyed by fire from heaven. We should always bear in mind that there is a collective responsibility, and that there are always sufficient reasons why God should visit cities, districts or nations with dire calamities. It is rather a wonder that He does not more often visit them in His

wrath and in His sore displeasure. It is always well to bear in mind what Jesus once said to the Jews who brought to Him the report of a calamity which had befallen certain Galileans, and evidently intimated that these Galileans must have been very sinful: “Think ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they have suffered these things? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Luke 13:2-5.

3. PHYSICAL DEATH. The separation of body and soul is also a part of the penalty of sin. That the Lord had this in mind also in the threatened penalty is quite evident from the explication of it in the words, “dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return,” Gen. 3:19. It also appears from the whole argument of Paul in Rom. 5:12-21 and in I Cor. 15:12-23. The position of the Church has always been that death in the full sense of the word, including physical death, is not only the consequence but the penalty of sin. The wages of sin is death. Pelagianism denied this connection, but the North African General Synod of Carthage (418) pronounced an anathema against any man who says “that Adam, the first man, was created mortal, so that whether he sinned or not he would have died, not as the wages of sin, but through the necessity of nature.” Socinians and Rationalists continued the Pelagian error, and in even more recent times it was reproduced in the systems of those Kantian, Hegelian, or Ritschlian theologians who virtually make sin a necessary moment in man’s moral and spiritual development. Their views found support in present day natural science, which regards physical death as a natural phenomenon of the human organism. Man’s physical constitution is such that he necessarily dies. But this view does not commend itself in view of the fact that man’s physical organism is renewed every seven years, and that comparatively few people die in old age and from complete exhaustion. By far the greater number of them die as the result of sickness and accidents. It is also contrary to the fact that

man does not feel that death is something natural, but fears it as an unnatural separation of that which belongs together.

4. ETERNAL DEATH. This may be regarded as the culmination and completion of spiritual death. The restraints of the present fall away, and the corruption of sin has its perfect work. The full weight of the wrath of God descends on the condemned. Their separation from God, the source of life and joy, is complete, and this means death in the most awful sense of the word. Their outward condition is made to correspond with the inward state of their evil souls. There are pangs of conscience and physical pain. And the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever. Rev. 14:11. The further discussion of this subject belongs to eschatology.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY. Why do many modern liberals deny all positive punishments for sin? Is the position at all tenable that the punishments of sin consist exclusively in the natural consequences of sin? What objections do you have to this position? How do you account for the widespread aversion to the idea that the punishment of sin is a vindication of the law and of the righteousness of God? Do the punishments of sin also serve as deterrents, and as means of reformation? What is the Biblical conception of death? Can you prove from Scripture that it includes physical death? Is the doctrine of eternal death consistent with the idea that the punishment of sin serves merely as a means of reformation, or as a deterrent?