

V. Man and Man's Sin.

We believe that God gave to man, as He did not to the lower creatures, capacity to share His thought and purpose, and freedom to choose whether he would or would not love and serve Him.

We believe that man has used his freedom of choice for low and selfish ends, thus estranging himself from God and his brother man, and bringing upon himself the judgment and wrath of God, so that he lives in a world of confusion and distress, and is unable of himself to fulfil God's high purpose for him.

So we acknowledge man's sin, God's righteous judgment, and man's helplessness and need.

CHAPTER V. MAN AND MAN'S SIN

What Is Man?

"Many a wonder lives and moves, but the wonder of all is man." So Lewis Campbell renders a famous line of Sophocles.¹ The chorus goes on to celebrate the triumphs of man: his conquest of the swelling seas, the subduing of the land to the ploughshare, his skill in capturing and training to his service the beasts of the forest, his power of speech and "windswift thought," and the genius that has created the city and social life. One thing alone baffles man's ingenuity—he has no means of escape from death.

Such is the voice of confident human civilization, the note of a proud and adventurous age like the Elizabethan in England which yields the Shakespearean parallel: "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!" But there too proud man acknowledges his limitation: "And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me; no, nor woman neither." The Greek and the English dramatists are alike humanists. But each sees his hero haunted by a spectre—death and disillusionment.

And now what has the Hebrew to say? In Psalm 8 the poet pays tribute to the true greatness of the human race: "a little lower than the angels," so very near the divine plane. He has dominion over the created world, all things under his feet, the beasts of the field, of the air, of the sea. And he has no note of sadness at the close, but rather praise: "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Why this sustained elevation that neither Greek nor English poet enjoys? Because the Hebrew begins and ends his meditation in God. It is His glory that he sees above the heavens. It is against the splendour of the shining firmament, of sun and moon and stars, that he sets man. It is not by his own wit that man has won dominion over sea and land: it was God who

¹ *Antigone*, line 332.

gave; what glory and honour he enjoys is God's giving to him. So with pride is mingled a most humble gratitude, awe, and reverence: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" It is not surprising that the Hebrews did not write tragedies: they had the tragic in their history, plenty of it, in a Saul, an Elijah, a Jeremiah; but they did not, like the Greek, find purgation of soul by gazing upon the stage-set drama of another's pain. The only purgation they knew was forgiveness, and that can be given only on a scene where there are two actors, the Father and the prodigal son.

We have just emerged from an era when men were not bothering about their sins: sin was only a falling upward on the evolutionary road of inevitable progress. It was the mood of a scientific age intoxicated with the overflowing splendour of discovery after discovery, an age that had seen man's advancing conquest in so many fields and enjoyed comparative peace and plenty, even profusion. But today we are the scared survivors of the hideous nightmare of unexampled totalitarian war, and we are not so sure that we can pick ourselves up and assert that we have just stumbled upwards. There is a biting ache in the conscience that tells we are but paying the penalty for sins of exploitation and unbrotherliness in international relations, the sin of drawing ourselves apart in self-righteous isolation and callously asking "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Sin in Scripture stands out naked and unconcealed. It is revealed in its true colour of blackness and darkness. But life never ends in the sombre note of Greek or English tragedy—in baffling death or utter world-weariness. Scripture opens with man expelled from Paradise; but it goes on to the restoration of even the nameless penitent thief. "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Genesis confronts us with the fruit of the forbidden tree and all the woe that came from it; but the Apocalypse brings us to the garden once more, beside trees with leaves for the healing of the nations. It is a revelation in which mercy mingles with judgment—never the one without the other, because either alone is a half-truth. It keeps reminding us that it is never wise to look upon the human scene in isolation. We must needs call to mind the injunction of Jean Paul: "No day should close without a look at the stars."

God Gave . . . To Share His Thought and Purpose. Gen. 1: 26 to 2: 7; Ps. 8; Ps. 19: 7-14; Ex. 20; Matt. 10: 28-31; Matt. 12: 10-13; Mark 8: 35-37.

God created man in His own image (Gen. 1: 27). What do we mean by this proud claim? The Psalmist thought he had entered into the meaning of that word when he went out under the stars and "considered" the heavens (Ps. 8: 3). That splendour of flaming glory stirred something in the spirit. He felt the trivial concerns of the flying moments drop from his mind like a pack from his shoulders, and his soul soared out in thought. It was as if a voice out of the glory addressed him and he answered. The beauty that was in the creative mind of the Master artist touched his soul, and he was sure that he understood in some small measure why this firmament was made. That it should so stir his inmost being meant that he had entered into God's thought, he was sharing His love of the glory and light. The great Creator was communicating with His creature. So did Abraham feel that contact when the word came to him to go out from the home of his fathers and seek another country. Moses felt it when from the burning bush there came a command upon his conscience, a concern for the people he had left behind in the agony of Egypt. Ezekiel felt it when the word came: "Son of man, stand upon thy feet!" Man is conscious that he can be addressed by God and that he can answer back. There is a language that comes from the Yonder, a language of the soul, that invades the mind, stabs the heart, strikes the imagination, pierces to the conscience. Far down the centuries the wandering Bedouin had this correspondence with heaven, something that his faithful steed or his passive camel could not share. Even the cave-dweller must have had glimmerings and wonderings as he stood in his rocky shelter awed by the thunder and lightning of some sweeping hurricane or the flaming up of volcano on his landscape; he must have reached out vaguely for help, and the fact that he clung to life and developed the art of living under the passing terrors means that help was given and dim hopes passed into assurance that relationship with the Beyond could be sustained.

The Psalmist looking up into the bowl of night was not just a passive receiver: he "considered"; he followed up his impressions and analyzed his thought about the mysterious universe. This power the other creatures did not have. He was impelled to reach

out and penetrate to a meaning in things. As the light steals in at the window of a morning and persuades the eyes to open and the senses to respond to the delights of the sun and air, garden and flowers, so there was a something from beyond the beauty and mystery that touched the mind and quickened the imagination, and led him out to acknowledge a Yonder, a spiritual universe into which he was ushered. There was more than his own will in all this. It was as if an unseen visitor had crossed the threshold and, all unbidden, had constrained him to receive company. There was a Gracious One who had been mindful of him and had visited him with good news from afar. There came about an interchange, a sharing, a feeling of having entered into the will and thought of Another, that Other who in the shaping of things must have intended that out of His handiwork should come such encounters, such joyous quiverings in the depths of His creatures. God had written the poem of the flaming firmament, and man had read it with delight and understanding.

For all behind the starry sky,
 Behind the world so broad,
 Behind men's hearts and souls doth lie
 The infinite of God.

So far we have considered man under pressure of awe and wonder before the splendour and majesty of the outer glory of God—the universe that invades through the gateways of the senses. The mysterious and the terrible smote upon the spirit of the observer, and the sense of an undiscovered Yonder thrilled and troubled him. But that experience must often have been paralyzing, leaving but a vague and undefined awareness of the reality beyond. When and how did reality take shape and character?

Consider an old story from Herodotus. It comes from the days when Corinth was ruled by a few men of a family who married and inter-married. Of these a lame daughter, Labda, had to go outside for a husband, Eetion of Petra. An oracle proclaimed that justice would fall on Corinth through a son of Labda, and so ten men of the clan banded together to destroy the child. They came to the courtyard of Labda and asked for the child, having agreed that the first man who handled the child should dash it to the ground. The unsuspecting princess brought

the child and gave it to one of the men. As he took it, "by a divine chance" the child smiled up into his face. Compassion gripped his heart and he hastily handed the little one to the second and he again to the third, till all ten had passed the child on unharmed and back to the mother.

Here we see how the *moral* sense has laid hold of man. How did it come to be? Experiencing the affections of fatherhood, how did they come to extend these affections to another child? How did the defenceless one come by the disarming smile? How did rude and cruel men come by that nobler prompting from within? How did the law of the family come to be the law for those outside? How did the law and custom of the tribe become the moral code in a wider sphere? So many questions we can ask and cannot answer.

But the Hebrew was sure of the answer to this problem. He had in his heritage the line of Moses and the prophets. They had experienced an unveiling of the mystery behind the chain of events: the Word of God came to them. They pioneered—or rather were led—in applying the justice they knew in the national sphere to the universal, the international sphere. The God whom they expected to punish their enemies for unrighteousness must on the same principle punish the favoured nation as well. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you" (Amos 3: 2). There could not be one law of righteousness for one nation and a different law for another. Jehovah the Vindicator of righteousness within their own borders came to be seen as the upholder of justice for all men. Alongside Psalm 8 we read Psalm 19. There by an inspiration from above two poems are woven together into one. The God of creation is sung in the opening section:

The heavens declare the glory of God;
 and the firmament sheweth his handywork.
 Day unto day uttereth speech,
 and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

Then in the second section the God of the moral law is celebrated:

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul:
 the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
 The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart:
 the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

The inevitable comment on this conjunction is the utterance of Immanuel Kant: "There are two things that fill my soul with holy reverence and ever-growing wonder—the spectacle of the starry sky that virtually annihilates us as physical beings and the moral law which raises us to infinite dignity as intelligent agents."³

The Hebrew conception of man as the crown of creation carries over into Christianity. Jesus sets infinite value on man, testifying confidently to God's care over him. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows," He assures us (or, if one might dare to emend the text, "you are on a different plane from sparrows"). And yet even these are treasured by the Creator's love. Not one falls to earth unnoticed by Him. So much more may we have faith that all happenings to us men are of account to Him. The very hairs of our head are all numbered (Matt. 10: 31; 12: 12; Luke 12: 7). Still more startling is the declaration that even the whole world is not to be set in the balance over against the human soul (Mark 8: 36). And though Jesus stands in the tradition of Israel and values her holy institutions, He would set aside the claim of even the hallowed Sabbath before a human need (Mark 2: 27). No teacher ever so unwearyingly gave himself to individuals, as if each single soul was worth His tarrying or journeying.

It is typical of Jesus that He is less the spokesman of God's spectacular glory in the firmament than He is of those more intimate beauties that stir the spirit of man. He speaks of the flowers in the garden or the grass at our feet rather than of the stars. He turns His interest on the common sparrow or the silly sheep rather than on the splendid eagle or the strutting peacock. But the merciful heart of a good Samaritan on the roadway or a humble housewife grieving over a lost coin or a widow at the offering box—these evidences of the moral nature of mankind are the real objects of His concern. For Him these are the witnesses to the godlike in man.

And is not Jesus in His very self the proof, final and complete, of the image of God in man? On what other ground was the Incarnation possible? Before God could come to tabernacle in flesh and blood there must needs have been in our nature the

³ This section owes much to Rufus M. Jones, *The Testimony of the Soul*.

potentiality of that glory and splendour. In a Hosea or a Jeremiah the candle glowed and went out, and men saw in them the dim and brief foreshadowing. The Word of God shone out and lit the path in crucial moments of history—and that light blazed always from the soul of a man. Then at last Grace and Truth flashed out into history with a radiance that was never to die away. The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory. The Father found His interpreter in one who was bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, because from the beginning God had given to man the capacity to share His thought and purpose.

Freedom to Love and Serve Him. Mark 12: 28-31; Matt. 5: 3-16; Matt. 25: 34-40; 1 Cor. 13; Col. 3: 1-4; Phil. 4: 4-9.

What then is the measure and stature of Christ, the mould and temper that expresses the image of God?

1. It is a life that puts God first. It keeps an ear ever open to the diviner harmonies of a higher world, that world where His will is done and His purposes are the over-ruling concern. The soul will be lifted to God in prayer with each dawning day and it will fold up the busyness of the hours before the mercy-seat. God may send health or He may appoint sickness: both can be borne for His glory. He may set us in days of peace or days of war: the place of honour and the concentration camp are likewise calls to witness to eternal truth. There will be choices where the love of home and country will be set in the balance against other loyalties, and we may have to tread the wine-press alone for the honour of a conviction. There will be pressed on us separations from the society of our brethren where we have been nourished, and it may not be clear whether we are playing the part of a Paul or of a Judas: yet there can be only one law for us, the praise of God rather than of man. We are but pilgrims and sojourners, men of unclean lips and living among a people of unclean lips, and yet we must be prepared, if the vision comes, to offer ourselves in causes where we may never see success. Such a life is other-worldly in the best sense—that it reckons not at all on the glittering prizes that men covet and strive for, but seeks always to lift the eyes above the temporal to the far horizon of the eternal beauty, to leave the soul open to those imponder-

ables, the things that cannot be bought with a price and do not die with death. There is a rare serenity given to those who thus concentrate their all to witness to the truth. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever."

2. It is a life that is pre-occupied with the human and the personal. Jesus lived for the eternal realm, but it was for that end that He took a towel and girded Himself among men and gave Himself, a ransom. Ours is an existence frankly bounded by time; yet surely the tasks of the passing day that God wills for us become luminous with meaning because they fit into His grander universe of personal values. We are not just hithering and thithering on twopence-halfpenny errands; but, just as the trivial services of the apprentice fit into the smooth operation of a large business and gain dignity thereby, so are our citizen's duties in a democratic world seen as glorified by their contribution to the Kingdom of God into which all our national endeavours are combined by the over-ruling providential hand. The Zaccheus who had entertained Jesus saw his intercourse with toll-booths and custom dues thereafter as no mere avenue to one man's comfort and aggrandisement, but as an affair where human beings can testify to the eternal principles of right and justice and grow together in amity and mutual esteem to the well-being of the perfect state. A centurion who built for the Jews a synagogue was doubtless a man who understood that morale as well as brawn and muscle went to the making of a soldier; and after his contact with Jesus we may surmise that there was a temper in his personal relationships with the members of his company that turned a hireling's trade into a vocation of honour and integrity. It is not a mere case of always living as ever in the great Task-master's eye with a suspicion of fear in it all. It implies a recognition of other than temporal measurements. There are but *twelve* hours in the day, but time is not an issue when a great physician has to deal with the soul of a man or a great artist has to set on canvas a vision of imperishable beauty for the enrichment of his fellows. There is an economic side to things; but our world is one where Mary may break her alabaster box just because love bids her. State services depend on income tax; but there are geniuses who can only pay in poetry and impractical generosity and gifts of laughter or consolation. There is virtue

untold in organized religion; but there are souls who become inflamed with the truths of God and prophesy with Shavian eccentricity in circles beyond the orthodox. "Quench not the Spirit" was a Pauline injunction. It was not Jesus who would call down fire from heaven on those who walk not with us. Nothing human is alien to the Christian, because the humanity where once tabernacled grace and truth is ever being used of God as the veil from which His radiance streams again and yet again.

Did not our Lord sum up the whole duty of the Christian man in the two commandments "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour as thyself" (Mark 12: 28-31)?

But is it not chimerical to set before man such a picture of manhood? Is it not an emotional ideal and not a practical proposition? Man, it is claimed from many quarters, is not free so to love and to serve. Are we not enmeshed in a chain of causality, the helpless victims of the forces and the fevers of all the yesterdays? Does not heredity determine our physical structure and our mental equipment, and is not environment, economic and social, a clamping and entangling power which has fixed our potentialities before ideals and ambitions vainly fire the soul? Does not the psycho-analyst show us that our minds are poisoned by noxious influences from the subconscious, and fears, grown monstrous, haunt us from the hidden experiences of childhood so that today our decisions are rendered impotent by baneful legacies from long ago? Are we not just day-dreamers and opium-eaters playing with fancies and figments of the imagination when we talk of God and immortality? Are not our feet of clay set in an economic universe where the only values are material and our only service is the labour we can give to the common good? Are we not by blood and soil appointed some to be hewers of wood and drawers of water while others are a chosen and superior folk born to rule and to be served? Have not God's eternal decrees pre-determined our lot, some to damnation, others to eternal joys: how can there be a power over us and beyond us, controlling and directing all the forces and figures of history and yet leaving to us the possibility of free choice?

We can only cut ruthlessly through these cobwebs of argument by applying the keen edge of experience. We know that

when a certain temptation swept up we *could* have said "No" to it: we *deliberately* spoke to our friend the bitter wounding word while all the time an inner voice appealed against it; we *chose* not to run in that contest because we feared the sweat and the toil and the humiliating defeat (James 1: 14-15). Heredity may have laid a horrid hand upon our shoulder, but we also have seen the awful example of what *yielding* to inherited tendencies can mean: we are fore-warned, and by grace can throw off the hindrance. We are more than the mere sum of all the yesterdays. Abraham Lincolns are not produced with mathematical exactitude from a commingling of heredity and environment. We have more than can be bought and sold in the labour market. We are no superior folk: we are sinners like our brethren, and our own hearts condemn us. We are not placed in this world to be run down like clocks: there are renewing and recreative energies within us that clocks never knew. And the God and Father of Jesus Christ sent Him into places of crisis and decision, into flesh and blood with all its weakness and limitations, and yet He sinned not. Under that same God we pass out into that field of trial and testing where character is made by the very process of striving and overcoming. As the physical man comes to strength and maturity by continuous exercise of all the muscles and functions of the body, so out of the heights and depths of the emotions, out of the flights and fancies of the mind, out of the advances and repentances of the soul, out of the interplay of all the spiritual energies within us, there is a personality growing, and it is only in the atmosphere of freedom that persons know they are more than things. We are free to love and serve Him.

But How Has Man Used that Freedom? Ps. 51; Is. 1; Is. 59; Jer. 2; Rom. 3: 9-23; Rom. 7; 1 John 1: 1-10.

Scripture testifies that in the experience of man sin is universal. "Surely there is not a righteous man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccles. 7: 20). "No living man is acquitted before thee" (Ps. 143: 2). "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (Prov. 20: 9). From Genesis to Revelation the facts of man's daily fallings are not hidden. The reign of sin begins with Adam, continues with Cain, comes to a first crisis in the flood, only to renew itself from

age to age in spite of judgment and warning. It is the tragedy even in the great: the flaw in Saul, the scarlet in the ideal King David. The chosen race remains a sinful stock: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51: 5). As the vision of God grows more luminous the conscience becomes more laden. It is for pardon that the deepest petition rises, and there is exultant gratitude when it is granted: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: . . . who forgiveth all thine iniquities" (Ps. 103). The very nearness of this people to God but deepens the cleft that sin makes between them. The progress of revelation is the story of God's striving with individual and with nation to warn and to deliver from the thralldom of sin.

And so in the New Testament. Jesus steps upon the national scene amidst hosts of penitents crying for release; His first combat is with the Tempter, and the last cry of dereliction (Mark 15: 34) hints that the conflict with sin is carried on to the bitter end. The ministry of love has to sound finally the stern trumpet note of condemnation against hypocrisy in the seat of piety (Matt. 23); against His innocence and purity the black heart of a Judas, the shiftiness of a Pilate, the cant of a Caiaphas, stand out in dreadful clarity. He who has pled with the Master of the vineyard for patience till the tree had still another chance must needs break out into a "Woe" of sad yet searching doom over the favoured but unheeding city (Luke 13: 6ff., 19: 41ff.). If final proof were needed of the blackness of darkness in the human heart, that Cross on Calvary stands out stark and stern in naked protest against a graciousness spurned and a love unrequited. No wonder that with this depth of iniquity so recently plumbed Paul has no reservation to make: all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Weighing the forces of flesh against spirit, he declares that these are contraries (Gal. 5: 17) irreconcilably opposed; and the Apocalypse is very sure there is a seat of Satan to be overthrown, a key to be turned on the abyss before peace can come to humanity and victory to God.

Do we need to call witness outside Scripture? What is the vast literature of tragedy but the picture of men fascinated by the sinister, the inevitable flaw in the best? What says any man's conscience as the lid is lifted on forgotten years? What nation can point to history and say, "See! The record is clean"? What

about the tragic waste of our time, the incredible horrors wrought in Poland, in concentration camps, in desolate London streets, in the wreckage on the seas, on the plains, hurtling through the air? To this is science fallen, to this has humanity's proud culture descended. Reason given of God is pledged to brutish butchery.

How Does Sin Come to Be Universal? Gen. 3; Rom. 5: 12-21.

The answer is given in the story of the Fall in Genesis 3. That vivid portrayal of the first man set in his Eden before the Tree of Knowledge has a human and arresting quality, and it is by deduction from this that Christian dogma has been constructed. The story itself can be variously interpreted. It has been read as a picture of man's *disappointment over civilization*: "much knowledge increaseth sorrow;" human culture has not brought happiness, but rather disillusionment. We may construct the splendour of a Babylon; but to what purpose since we have lost our Eden of guileless innocence? The most obvious and direct meaning of the story, however, is that all our woe comes from man's sin and disobedience against God: it testifies to the age-old *fact of conscience*. The Oriental mind rejoiced in the psychological penetration of the narrative, but it did not go on to build dogma upon it. In fact the Old Testament has no further direct reference to the Fall, and in describing the activities of men the assumption throughout the sacred books is, not that man is the helpless victim of the fall of his first parent, but that men are free agents, and their sins, from Cain's downwards, are their own responsibility. It is in the later literature of the Hebrews, in books *outside* the canon of Scripture, that allusion and theorising about the Fall appear. In Esdras 4: 30 we read: "A grain of evil seed was sown in the heart of Adam from the beginning." We are not told who sowed that seed, but evidently the evil tendency is thought of as being in Adam before the Fall, in the nature he derived from God. In another passage the writer insists that somehow we all share in the sin and unhappy doom of Adam: "O thou Adam, what hast thou done? for though it was thou who sinned, the evil is not fallen on thee alone, but upon all of us who come of thee. For what profit is it unto us, if there be promised an immortal time, whereas we have done the works that bring death?" (7: 46). Another writer

in the Apocalypse of Baruch strikes a different note. "If Adam did sin first and bring untimely death upon all, yet those too who were born of him each prepared for his own soul its future torment, and again each of them chose for himself his future glory . . . Adam is therefore not the cause, save only of his own soul, but each one of us hath been the Adam of his own soul" (54: 15-19). Thus there would appear to be two strands of thought: (1) that we are all somehow involved in the sin of Adam, and (2) yet each man is his own Adam, responsible for his own sin. Jesus does not refer to this conception; but evidently Paul was familiar with it. "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15: 22). "As through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and so death extended to all men, for that all sinned" (Rom. 5: 12ff.). But Paul does not there make clear whether all sinned on their own responsibility, each his own Adam, or whether without any act of their own all sinned, each being born into the evil legacy of the race. The Apostle then has no theory of the *origin* of sin; he affirms simply the *fact* of experience that the whole race of men are involved in sin.

There is thus no compulsion from Scripture to accept the traditional doctrine of the total corruption of our human nature: "that we are utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all good and wholly inclined to all evil."¹ It was chiefly Augustine who drew the Church towards this sombre view. There were contributory factors in his own environment. He had memories of his own evil-doing and hopeless struggle in youth; he accepted a line of thought that regarded the flesh as completely evil; he was leaning away backwards from the rival teaching of Pelagius, a monk who took too rosy a view of man's possibilities for good; he wrote in the darkening days of the fall of Rome. There is a similar dark horizon before us today. The failure of man's moral nature to keep pace with his machines, the inhumanity of large industrial combinations that set profits above the welfare of workers, the corrupt practices that raise their heads in our wealthy democracies, and finally the world's lapse back into the horrors of totalitarian war—these and many other evils becloud our time. To read the history of the world between 1918 and

¹ *Westminster Confession*, vi. 4.

1938 is to feel that man's best endeavours are perverted by powers almost demonic: the very movements towards a good like disarmament are factors that hellish forces twist to their fell purposes. Amid the ruin of so much of the world's beauty and the blasting of our fairest hopes it is easy to turn to the view that man is totally corrupt. But what the seeing eyes of Jesus discerned was a world where there was a movement toward penitence, where tax-gatherers who had compromised with conscience were not irretrievably lost, where Magdalenes had their finer moments, where even the rude soldier's trade did not kill out the tender emotions, where there were many fumbling disciples but only one traitor. He had reasons for complete pessimism about human nature on the Cross, yet He prayed for His enemies as men who did not know, not as men who *could* not know any better. Paul lost his Demas, but he recovered his John Mark and he had his faithful Luke, and he went confidently to the synagogue first in every city because there were better elements there, consciences stirred even under Judaism, and he found the stuff everywhere of which "saints" are made. Of course we assign all these works of transformation to the unstinted grace of God, but must not grace find a lodgment, each good seed a potentiality in the soil? It is in the decadent Infancy Gospels that we read of Jesus making clay pigeons live: in the actual ministry it was never dead clay but living flesh on which He wrought His miracles. The prodigal son remains a son even in the far country. To impute guilt there must be in man a sporting chance to do right. In his incisive way Dr. John Baillie⁴ has clinched the matter thus: a totally corrupt being would be as incapable of sin as would a totally illogical being of fallacious argument.

Does Evolution Explain? Matt. 15: 10-20; Matt. 21: 28-32; Luke 15: 17-21; Luke 16: 27-31; James 1: 12-27.

The theory of evolution gave a new slant to the discussion on the origin of sin. If we are descended from an animal ancestry, then are not our evil instincts a carry over from the ape and the tiger within us, the growing pains of evolving humanity? We inherit impulses, appetites, before we develop wills and moral

⁴ *Our Knowledge of God*, p. 33. Every student should read this most clarifying book.

sense. Thus every human being has in his make-up instincts and passions which in themselves are not wrong, but morally neutral: they pass into sins only when he fails to control them for moral ends. They are the raw material out of which come our virtues as well as our vices.

Objections to this view readily occur: (1) Granted that we have these natural impulses, why is it that we *all* fail to subdue them? Why is it that each man can point to this occasion and that when he slipped, let go the better and chose the worse? (2) Again, though we might dimly see in that line of thought how we stumble into the gross and bestial sins, how do we come by the sins of the spirit? Can pride or Pharisaism be derived from animal nature? (3) But the most serious difficulty is this—that to explain all should be to forgive all. If we are but the victims of the beast within us, why do we not forgive ourselves? Why is there in each one of us a sense of guilt, a conscience burning with the knowledge that we knew better than yield to that appetite, give way to this impulse? The theory does not go far enough. It is like explaining that a child has inherited a father's eyes and a mother's mouth, but not why these eyes flash with sudden anger and why that little mouth should pout.

Against Thee, Thee Only. Matt. 23; Rom. 1: 17-32.

Sin is, beyond all else, a fact of the *religious* life, the black cloud that comes between us and the face of God. It is the spurning of love, the refusing of His righteous way. What stands out in Adam's story is that, having received so much in the loveliness of the garden, he should reach out after the one thing more, putting appetite above God's one wish. What renders inexcusable Israel's making of the golden calf is that they had experienced so lavishly of grace and deliverance and now spurned the hand that gave. What came to consciousness in the prodigal son was the "bread enough and to spare" in his father's house, and yet he had asked life on his own. "Father"—and how much lies in that word of address—"Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." "Son" was a name that summed up the love that had lit up the years, the love that had poured out extravagantly and unstintedly all that a father had, the love that had been

brushed aside to gratify a pride and a selfish wish to control one's own. As Dr. Whale⁵ sums it up: "Man's 'Yes' was to be a response, not to 'Thou shalt,' but to 'I have created and called thee; thou art mine.'" We are made in the divine image; but instead of gratefully living in the light of that glory, we kindle our own mean little candles and grovel in the semi-darkness of the cave we have hollowed out for ourselves. That men and women and little children today are living, not on the broad open plains with all the breezes from the sea and the mountains blowing in upon them, but in bomb-proof shelters and miserable dug-outs—that is a picture of what sin has done for man. We have seen the little child turn his back on the sea to play in his own small puddle. It is human perversity at an early stage.

Estrangement, Judgment, Wrath.

All this means estrangement from God. He does not change: His love remains towards the prodigal. But sin puts more than distance between God and His children. We shun the eyes of those we have offended. There may be kindness lurking there to smile back upon us yet, but we turn away and stay away. There is a graciousness that might be playing about our lives, but we will not suffer it. We put up a wall of reserve and misunderstanding. The reason for our avoiding a wounded friend is that we know that we have put ourselves in the wrong in his sight. We have set judgment in those rebuking eyes of his. In a moral world when we wrong the one who loves us we pass sentence on ourselves, we place ourselves in the prisoner's dock. So it is in our dealings with our best friend, the God who has loved us with an everlasting love, the God who at infinite cost has redeemed us. Under His righteous gaze we know we stand judged.

The sinner inevitably falls under the wrath of God. As One whose nature is holy, God must be actively hostile to evil. He is aflame with moral passion, and therefore "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10: 31). The complacent human father may forgive and forget in a shallow-hearted way; but a father of supersensitive integrity confronted by a daughter who has dishonoured his name must needs quiver with pain even though he finds grace to forgive. So, if we may dare

⁵J. S. Whale, *Christian Doctrine*, p. 44.

to liken our human emotions to the divine, the pure and holy God cannot but resent that His creatures should play fast and loose with the moral law. His universe is set in an order in which truth and right must prevail. We can trace His laws in the physical world: to abuse the noble functions of our human bodies is to reap disease and shame. And in the world of the mind we see how pride and swelling self-esteem can breed a madness and confusion in the brain. This sensitive universe He has created is quivering with His own aliveness; the principles of retribution run through the structure like nerves in the human body. When sin jars that universe, there is that quick reaction that declares His wrath. Our God is a consuming fire. It is from Love that cares terribly that wrath flashes out.*

Even from the gentle Jesus we have words and moods that declare this terrible wrath. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke 12: 4-5). "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (13: 3, 5). "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see . . . yourselves thrust out" (13: 28). What was that suggestion of majesty about Him that made Peter call out "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5: 8)? Was there not a flash of condemnation in "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men" (Mark 8: 33)? What was it in His glance that made Peter go out and weep bitterly (Luke 22: 62)? What austerity was there in His face on the way to Jerusalem: "And Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid" (Mark 10: 32)? In more than one of the parables there is a portrayal of sternness in the end (Matt. 25: 45). There is the finality of the irreparable in His sad "Woe" over Jerusalem "that killest the prophets" (Matt. 23: 37; Luke 19: 41). "If thou hadst known!" And His tears said more than His words. When the would-be accusers brought before Him the woman taken in adultery, He wrote on the ground in a silence that told both His hate of sin and His abhorrence of

* Cf. Rom. 1: 18, with note in Moffatt Commentary of C. H. Dodd; Plato, *Laws*, 905.

a cruelty that made men value a quibbler's victory above a human soul (John 8: 6).

Sin cannot be contained and gathered into harmless channels. That is one great reason for the divine wrath. It sunders man from brother man and corrodes the fellowship of the human family. Hebrew thought had a strong sense of the solidarity of the race: what evil one did passed as a poison into the life of the community: the theft of Achan was a blight on the whole army, the act of a bad king made all Israel to sin, the selfish extravagance and dissipation of the rich wrought havoc on the poor (Amos); corruption penetrated the body politic, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it" (Is. 1: 5f.).

Jesus is never more stern than when He delivers His "Woe unto you" over those who cause little ones to stumble (Matt. 18: 6). The narrow laws of Pharisaism cut into the tender ties of home and aging parents: with *corban* rules "Ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother" (Mark 7: 11f.); the tragedy of their hypocrisy was that "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23: 13); the sin that sent men to everlasting fire was a self-preoccupation that did not aid a brother's need (Matt. 25: 41ff.): "Deliver him to the tormentors" is the startling retribution that falls on one who had no mercy on a fellow-servant whose wife and children would be involved in ruin (Matt. 18: 23ff.).

Sin tangles up all the delicate inter-relationships of society so that everywhere confusion and distress enter where the divine will purposes harmony and largeness of life. One individual's shortcomings can wreck a home; one obdurate and selfish employer or a reckless labour leader can throw idle men into the marketplace and misery into countless homes with fell results upon the whole community. Our new world unity only carries sin's contagion in wider swathes across the world. A company of men in a city board-room looking at profits rather than human interests can issue decrees that stop the wheels of industry in lands across the sea, and that collapse upsets the balance in some other related trade and casts a shadow across still further lands. Poverty, bankruptcy, shattered lives, disrupted hopes, despair,

suicide, moral collapse, mental breakdown—so the vicious circle widens out. The economic disturbance is but the more manifest symbol of a deeper malaise of the soul. Lust and passion, pride and sloth, each send their noxious vapours forth to corrupt and destroy. One man's insane ambition can drag a nation into war, and in our inter-locking international life that war spreads and engulfs a whole universe. And each division breeds bitterness and hate, and misunderstanding darkens counsel. The world drifts into a nightmare of chaos and woe: it is a worldwide black-out where man's tiny candles but accentuate the gloom. Only an action large and luminous can break the pall of spreading evil, and that action must be by the strong right arm of God. He alone can work man's redemption.