

Present Truth magazine

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Proclaiming the Good News of the forgiveness of sin and eternal life by God's unmerited grace alone through faith alone in the sinless life and atoning death of Jesus Christ our Lord alone.

Sola Gratia.....Only By Grace
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Solo Christo.....Only By Christ
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Volume 39

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Comments from Dr. Wm. C. Robinson

Thank you for your study of "Man" (Aug.), which is illuminating and helpful. The distinction of man as creature and as person is excellent.

May this writer be privileged to offer a further word on the thorny question of divine sovereignty and human sin? After noting that man is a person, you agree "that sin is included in God's permissive will."

In his volume on Calvin's religious thought, Dean Emile Doumergue describes God as the highest cause of everything that occurs, but not the sole efficient cause. He illustrates this by the stories of Joseph and of Job. Joseph tells his repentant brothers, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." In the case of Job, God had a righteous and gracious purpose in permitting the evils to befall his servant, Satan had an evil intention, and the Sabceans wanted the oxen and asses. Each was an efficient and a responsible cause and acted according to his (or their) own nature.

Yet the Bible uses a term which is more personal than the word *cause* – the word *hand*. When used for man, hand is figurative, the part for the whole; and as used for God, it is anthropomorphic. But this term has found its way into our devotional hymns and prayers:

"Thy hand in all things I behold, And all things in Thy hand." –The Methodist Hymnal

"His faithful follower I would be, For by His hand He leadeth me." –The Presbyterian Hymnal

"By Thine own hand may we be fed; Give us this day our daily bread." – Part of a popular table blessing.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter declared, "Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay" (Acts 2:23). And again, "For of a truth against Thy holy Child Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel foreordained to come to pass" (Acts 4:27-28).

Thus at the very heart of our religion, over the wicked hands of Christ's murderers, the Bible portrays the hand of God. No deed of men was so wicked as the crucifying of Christ. And no divine act ever did as much to glorify God and to save sinners as God did in the cross of Christ.

No wonder Luther said that there is enough of the revelation of God in the cross of Christ to last a man all his life! And Calvin added that no man will ever find his way back to God as his Father except by the preaching of the cross. So the believer should start, as Paul does in 1 Corinthians, "with the gospel which sets Christ alone before us with His cross."

At this, the acropolis of our faith, the Word reveals *God's hand over man's*. And in so doing, it unveils the true mystery of Providence. The light which streams from Calvary arises to dispel the darkness which otherwise clusters over every area of Providence. "In His light we see light."

(continued as follows) It is quite possible that many readers will not entirely agree with Geoffrey Paxton on a first reading of his article on "The False Gospel of the New Birth" (June). May I suggest that we begin by thanking him for placing Christ in the center of this, as of every step in God's saving program?

Our Lord Himself reveals the new birth in John 3 near the beginning of His ministry and immediately follows by relating it to the objective facts of the incarnation (John 3:13) and the necessity that the Son be lifted up (John 3:14), for He is God's love gift to the world, who saves every believer (John 3:16). John had already presented Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

In Hebrews the ascended Christ is seen ever making intercession for His people on the basis of the one sacrifice of Himself offered once for all (Heb. 7:25-27). Likewise, in Romans 8:34 and 1 John 2:1 He is seen interceding for us on the ground of the objective propitiation He has made for us and for the world. Thus does He sue out for us the gift of the Holy Spirit that He may persuade and enable us to accept Jesus Christ as He is freely offered to us in the gospel. And thus are we who were dead in trespasses and sins made alive and raised up with Christ (Eph. 2:1-6).

Paul prays that we may be strengthened with might in the inner man so that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:16-17). And speaking of himself, the apostle affirmed, "Christ lives in me . . . and I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). Again he tells us that "of God are we in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom from God, both righteousness [justification] and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

In his commentary on Galatians (ed. Watson, p. 135) Luther concurs: "Wherefore Christ apprehended by faith and dwelling in the heart, is the true Christian righteousness for which God counts us righteous and gives us eternal life."

Wm. C. Robinson, Professor Emeritus
Columbia Theological Seminary

Too Far

I have enjoyed reading your publication for some time. The articles are thought provoking, and your stand for the objective work of God in Christ is helpful.

I have a comment regarding Mr. Paxton's article, "The False Gospel of the New Birth," in your June issue. I cannot help but feel that Mr. Paxton went a bit too far in his enthusiasm for the objective point of view. Also, I believe he made a definite error on page 22, in the paragraph beginning: "Much evangelicalism stresses the new birth as an instantaneous activity." To quote the seventeenth-century theologian, John Owen: "Men may be more or less holy; more or less sanctified; but they cannot be more or less regenerate." A birth is a birth. When one comes forth from the womb, one is born. It is a once-for-all happening.

John E. Holmes, Baptist Pastor
Michigan

Principle Omitted

I wholeheartedly agree with Geoffrey J. Paxton's article, "The False Gospel of the New Birth," in your June issue. However, I feel that this article omitted the biblical principle that the new birth is fundamentally accepting the outside-of-me death in the old Adam and the outside-of-me rebirth in the Second Adam. This acceptance of our "already acceptance" in the Last Adam (Rom. 4:25; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Eph. 1:6; 1 John 2:2) results in the inevitable subjective experience – namely, regeneration or the change to Godlikeness, the about-face from disobedience to obedience.

Therefore, "the greatest news in the universe" is that we have been born again legally into the Last Adam, Jesus Christ, who is our title to heaven (John 3:3; 1 Cor. 1:30). The "greatest news" is not regeneration, which is our fitness for heaven that comes through accepting the title by faith. If it were our fitness, as Roman Catholicism teaches, then, pray tell me, how much fitness must I have to merit entrance into God's kingdom?

Victor Kiuzit
Texas

Counterfeit Grace

I noted with interest the reactions to G. J. Paxton's article, "The False Gospel of the New Birth," in the letters' section of your last letters issue. I find it most unfortunate that many "teachers" do not have the correct understanding of the doctrine of grace. Paxton did a good job of exposing just one of the many hundred popular gospels. I only wish that people could understand that there is only one gospel (Gal. 1:6-10), and it is the one God has clearly revealed and the one we will be judged by. If our faith is ever based upon a false gospel, it is a vain faith.

2 Peter 2:3 expresses it clearly: "In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up." Other versions say, "And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you." When I ponder the many versions of the gospel today, I am reminded of a familiar bit of humor. We laugh about the country farmer being such an easy mark for a swindling salesman from the city. Unfortunately, we cannot laugh about the many trusting souls being robbed of their gift from God. We cannot laugh when we know that people are handing over their souls to religious merchandisers in exchange for counterfeit grace.

C. Kenneth Aspinwall, Evangelist
Louisiana

Objections

I have read your issue on "Righteousness by Faith" (Part 3) carefully. As usual, you are trying to uphold Calvinism by the remark on page 18, where you say, "The fact of the matter is that even the believer is beset by many inner contradictions, as Romans 7:14-25 amply testifies." The fact that the apostle Paul definitely wrote that Romans 7:14-25 was his experience while he was sold under sin proves that it is not the experience of a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, as your statement falsely claims. While Paul was sold under sin, yet he had at the same time a respect for the law of God, which proves that he was not "totally depraved." His experience as a Christian began when he was delivered from the bondage of sin by the Lord Jesus Christ, and his subsequent life is narrated in Romans 8, where he says that there was no condemnation after he became a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, because he was no longer committing sin. He was no longer a slave to sin but was a free man in Christian liberty.

On page 21 you refer to Abraham's faith, mentioned in Romans 4:1-24, as an example of our faith in the atonement made by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham was justified because he believed God's promise of a multitude of descendants through Isaac, which promise was made before Isaac was born. He had faith that God would do what He said He would do, and this faith was imputed to him as righteousness, by which he was justified before God. Our faith in what was accomplished by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is imputed to us as justification, for we accept the vicarious sacrifice of Christ as made for us even while we were still sold under sin, as Paul in Romans 7:14-25 said that he was sold as a slave to sin at one time in his life.

In James 2:20-24 we find that Abraham's faith in God, after Isaac was born, was again tested when God told him to sacrifice Isaac. He obeyed the command of God and by his works was justified before God, for his works were what proved his faith in God, just as the works of the believer are what prove his faith in God. In 1 Peter 1:3-9 we find that, as believers, we are kept by the power of God unto the salvation of our souls at the time of the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, like Abraham, we are saved by our faith and works.

Delmar H. Bryant
Ohio

Not by faith and works, but by faith which works (Gal. 5:6). We are saved by faith alone, but the faith which saves is never alone. – Ed.

"Ecumenical Developments"

Kudos for the excellent article on "Ecumenical Developments between Roman Catholicism and Non-Christian Religions". As a Reformed missionary working in the Far East, I found it timely. Ancestor worship is an accepted practice among Romanists here. Unfortunately, some Protestants have practiced it as well.

Nothing more clearly demonstrates the bankruptcy of a liberalized and universalistic Christendom than its desire for "dialogue" with the East. Such "ecumaniacs" should witness the wasteful extravagances of Buddhist and Taoist festivals here. They should also see the superstitious necromancy and extortion practiced in the name of religion. And they should remember that Confucianism's naive faith in the "superior man" and education (see Meng-tzu) bear part of the blame for the graft-ridden bureaucracies which dominated Imperial China. The lack of a clear understanding of God's law made it easy for self-serving opportunists to rise to the top. If our corrupted Christendom of today is looking for salvation in the East, it had better reread the warnings issued by Hosea and Jeremiah to the syncretistic Israelites of their times.

Still, I don't understand why you should only pick on Romanists, since so many Protestants are also guilty of advocating mutual recognition with the Asian religions. Perhaps the universalism of large segments of modern Protestantism is far more responsible for opening the door to the East than is Rome's traditional doctrine, which, for all its faults, still recognized the exclusiveness of Christ's claim to Lordship (I am speaking of the older Romanism).

Perhaps it is high time that more preachers reemphasized the lostness of man. After all, can the free grace of God offered in Jesus Christ make any sense if it is not viewed against the backdrop of man's true guilt and resultant alienation? This is surely a part of our Reformation heritage which has fallen on perilously hard times. Perhaps you should consider an issue in the future on the lostness of man. Ever since this important scriptural doctrine was discarded by the major denominations, the church's missionary zeal has flagged and the preaching of redemption in Christ has lost its power and conviction.

I am a hard-core five-point Calvinist and naturally disagree with certain things I have read in your journal. Even so, I have still found it helpful. It should be more widely read on the various mission fields to prevent some of the West's theological foibles from becoming too strong.

P. J. Herz, Reformed Missionary
Taiwan

Man (Part 2)

CHAPTER 5 – Man as Sinner

Orientation

Most errors on the doctrine of salvation stem from an inadequate doctrine of sin. Luther once said:

Ignorance of sin of necessity brings in its train ignorance of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, and of all things. For let no one think that he will become a theologian or a good reader or hearer of Holy Scripture if he minimizes the evil of original sin or does not correctly understand it.¹

Our doctrine of sin (hamartiology) [Greek: harmartia – sin] is directly related to our doctrine of man (anthropology). If we have an inadequate or faulty doctrine of man, we will have an inadequate or faulty doctrine of sin.

We should remember the two main points we have already covered in the doctrine of man:

1. Man is defined by his relationships. Man's meaning and value are relational.
2. Man is a holistic being. Human life is an indivisible unity.

Our present task is to apply these relational and holistic principles to the doctrine of sin. This means that our discussion of "Man As Sinner" will fall naturally under two main headings: "Sin As Alienation" and "Sin As Total Depravity."

Sin As Alienation

We have found that man is defined by his relationships. To be truly human means to be rightly related to God, to others, and to the world. It means to exist harmoniously in this threefold relationship as God intended.

Since man is essentially a relational being, he cannot find meaning, value, or significance in his own existence. He must go outside himself to find his meaning, value, and significance. A truly human existence is an auterocentric (other-centered) existence. Man was created to go out of himself to live in God and his neighbor. This going out of oneself for the other is what the Bible calls love.

Man as sinner is not man in his healthy, normal state. Instead of going out of himself to the other, he is curved in to himself. He tries to find value, meaning, and significance within himself. The worst sin is always the religious sin because, in this, man tries to use the gifts of God for his own self-validation. As a sinner, man is not truly human. He is dehumanized. This curving in to himself has disrupted man's God-given relationships. Sin is a condition of estrangement and alienation.

If being truly human means being rightly related to God, others and the world, then sin is being wrongly related to God, others and the world. It is a disruption of man's God-given relationships. Sin is a condition of alienation.

¹ Ewald M. Plass, comp., *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 3:1301.

Man is alienated from God (Col. 1:21). When the Bible speaks about man as sinner, it speaks of him as a sinner "before the Lord." Sin is a religious concept. It is what a man is "in the sight of God." Sin is always "sin against God" (Gen. 39:9; Ps. 51:4). It is a violation of man's relationship with God, a break in communion. Instead of finding his value in his being related to God, man has tried to find it in himself—even in his God-given gifts. In this he has worshiped (given supreme worth) to the creature rather than to the Creator (Rom. 1:25).

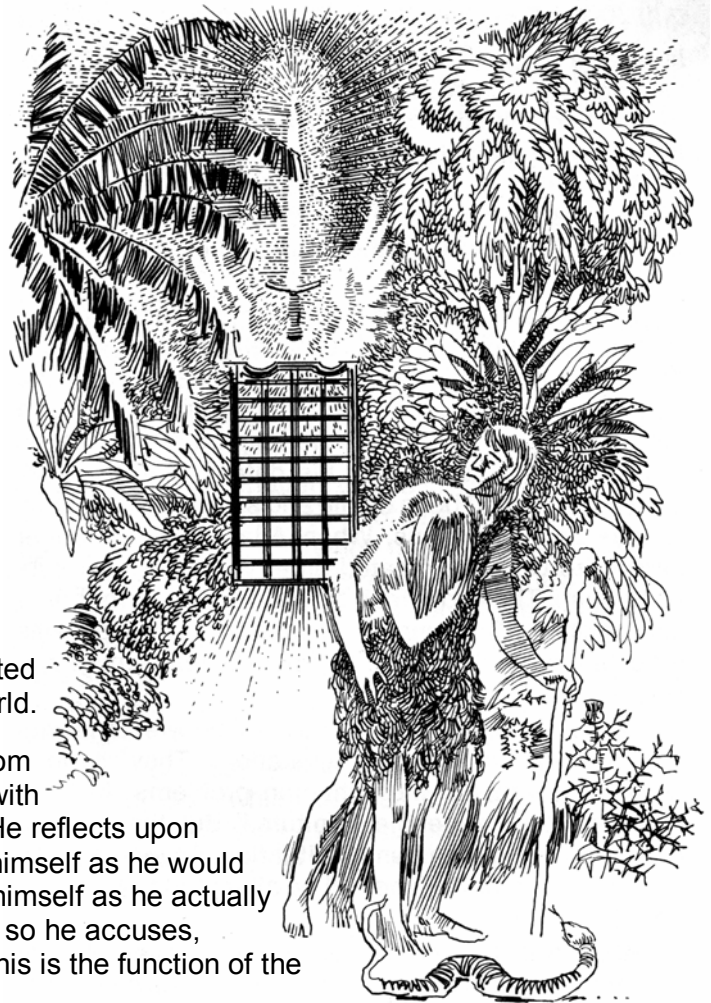
The holistic principle of human existence means that man cannot disrupt one relationship without disrupting all relationships. This is illustrated in **the Fall**. When man disrupted his relationship with God, he disrupted his social and environmental relationships. Adam blamed his wife for his defection (Gen. 3:12). Beasts which had been docile and submissive became vicious and dangerous. When Adam was no longer subject to God, the created order was no longer subject to him. The earth itself began to bring forth thorns and thistles. Thus man's alienation from God was reflected in man's alienation from his fellow man and from his environment.

Sociologists and ecologists are now wrestling with the problem of human alienation. They cannot, however, overcome these human problems. At best, they can "rearrange the furniture." But they cannot basically change the human situation. As long as man is alienated from God, he will be alienated from others and the world.

Alienation from God also leads to alienation of man from himself. Because he is human, he has a relationship with himself. He is not only conscious but self-conscious. He reflects upon himself and passes judgment upon himself. He sees himself as he would like to be and feels he ought to be. And he also sees himself as he actually is. The sinner sees that he is not what he ought to be, so he accuses, condemns, and rejects the self which he actually is. This is the function of the human conscience.

This self-alienation fractures the wholeness (health) of human life. It enters into and poisons all human relationships and affects all human behavior. It even has a profound influence on man's philosophical assumptions, on his thinking about himself. He alienates body from soul and thinks of himself as two instead of one. He isolates religion and spirituality from his concrete existence and makes a vast separation between what he calls "sacred" and what he calls "secular." He isolates sexuality from the wholeness of life so that it becomes nothing but an unwholesome physical encounter.

Sin is a change in man's God-given relationships. It is not a change in the essential properties of human nature. In the fall the substance of human nature was not changed. Man did not acquire new powers or faculties. They were perverted and put to wrong use. This means that the substance or stuff of human nature is not sinful. The Lutheran Formula of Concord correctly refutes the theory of Flacius which identified sin with the actual substance of human nature. Sin is *accidental* and not an *essential* property of human nature. It is a foreign element which has infected human nature, and is not to be confused with human nature itself. It is clear from the Bible that this infection is a demonic element (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8) which renders man less than truly human.¹



¹ This distinction between sin and the substance of human nature is important for a true understanding of the incarnation of Christ.

Man cannot be understood in isolation because he is man only in his relationships. The Bible has no burden to describe the actual composition of human nature. When we ask the question, "What is man?" the Bible directs us to his essential relationships. We can only understand what man is when we see what he is related to. So also, sin is not some bacillus we can isolate and look at in itself. Its existence is a mystery. The Bible gives no description of its composition. Sin is not some disease which floats in the air. It is something which has perverted and distorted all human relationships, especially man's relationship to God. Sin, therefore, must be defined relationally. We will now do this from several different perspectives.

Sin As a Breach of the Covenant.

The God-man relationship is based on a covenant. This is a divinely arranged treaty or compact which specifically defines the terms of the partnership or fellowship between God and man. The privileges and obligations of each party are legally defined.

The Bible presents the character of both God and man in the light of the covenant. God is always loyal and faithful to His covenant (Dan. 9:4; Luke 1:72). He never forgets His covenant or fails to carry it out with undeviating fidelity (Ex. 2:24; Ps. 89:34; 105:8). On the other hand, man the sinner is man the covenant-breaker. His fidelity to the covenant is like the morning cloud which soon vanishes (Hosea 6:4). "For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant" (Ps. 78:37). The whole history of Israel is one of forgetting and forsaking the covenant (Ps. 106:13, 21; 1 Kings 19:10, 14). Sin is the transgression of the covenant (2 Kings 18:12; Ps. 78:10; Jer. 11:2-10; Ezek. 16:59-60; Hosea 6:7; 8:1). Breaking the covenant is a breach of fellowship and a rupture of communion. It is a breach of faith, a condition of estrangement, and alienation from God.

Sin As a Breach of the Law.

If we are to think like the Bible writers, we must think of man's violation of his personal relationship with God in a concrete, dynamic way. The covenant is a legal conception. It spells out the concrete terms of the God-man relationship. The God of the Hebrews is preeminently the God of law. The law of God stipulates the kind of behavior required of those who live in covenant fellowship with Him. A person is said to be righteous if his concrete existence fulfills the obligations of his covenantal relationships. Sin is the opposite of righteousness. It means to fall short or to miss the mark imposed by covenantal relationships.

As far as the Bible is concerned, breaking the commandments of God – disobeying the express word of God – and breaking the covenant are the same.

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. – Isa. 24:5.

And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. – 2 Chron. 34:31.

. . . because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed His covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them. – 2 Kings 18:12.

They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law. – Ps. 78:10.

Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed My covenant, and trespassed against My law. – Hosea 8:1.

The apostle John is true to his Old Testament heritage when he declares, "Sin is the transgression of the law ["lawlessness," RSV] (1 John 3:4). So is the Westminster Catechism when it defines sin as any lack of conformity to the law of God in act, disposition or state.

In defining sin we must hold together the concepts of violation of a personal relationship and transgression of the law. We must not try to play one off against the other as some do. In certain circles it has become fashionable to represent the old orthodoxy and the new by the following contrast:

Old Orthodoxy

**Sin is transgressing the law,
breaking a code of conduct.**

New Orthodoxy

**Sin is violating a personal
relationship, a break in
communion.**

The purpose of making this contrast, of course, is to downgrade the impersonal and legalistic nature of the old orthodoxy in favor of a more personalistic religious approach. But to the men who wrote the Bible it was unthinkable to make a dichotomy between relationship and behavior. Much less could they set one off against the other in an either/or proposition. Law does not have any significance apart from God. It is always "the law of the Lord" (Ps. 1:2). It is the revelation of His will and the transcript of His character. Sin, therefore, is not a mere breaking of some legal code of conduct. It is a matter of despising the word of the Lord. Lawbreaking is covenant-breaking. God is personally offended and insulted "because they [sinners] have transgressed the laws . . . broken the everlasting covenant" (Isa. 24:5).

If we talk about sin as a violation of a relationship apart from any reference to the objective expression of God's will, sin is relativized and defined by each person's subjective experience. People can talk about having "a beautiful relationship with the Lord" while committing the most outrageous sins. For example, *The Wittenburg Door* published an interview with a self-confessed homosexual clergyman.¹ He justified his deviant lifestyle, and when asked about the Ten Commandments, replied, "Sin . . . is separation from God." This is true enough, but he flatly refused to have sin defined by the Ten Commandments. This illustrates what happens when men refuse to relate an abstract definition of sin to the concrete law of God. All relationships of human existence are defined by law. Unless the church stands on the law of God and calls sin by its right name, every sort of abomination can creep in clothed with the ornaments of Christ's sanctuary.

In Luther's day antinomians arose claiming that the law of God which defines sin had been swept aside by Christ. They even claimed this was true to Luther's theology. In his treatise, *Against the Antinomians*, Luther replied:

It is most surprising to me that anyone can claim that I reject the law or the Ten Commandments. . . . I myself, as old and as learned as I am, recite the commandments daily word for word like a child. . . .

Or does anyone imagine that there can be sin where there is no law? Whoever abolishes the law must simultaneously abolish sin. If he permits sin to stand, he must most certainly permit the law to stand; for according to Romans 5 [:13], where there is no law there is no sin. And if there is no sin, then Christ is nothing. Why should he die if there were no sin or law for which he must die? It is apparent from this that the devil's purpose in this fanaticism is not to remove the law but to remove Christ, the fulfiller of the law.²

To think relationally means we must go outside of man to define what man is. And it means we must go outside of human behavior to define what sin is. This is stated simply and forcefully by Lutheran scholar Edward W. A. Koehler:

The Bible defines sin as "the transgression of the Law," as "anomia," lawlessness (1 John 3:4). No deed, word, thought, or desire are in themselves sin, but become sin by being at variance with the Law of God. To eat the fruit of a tree seems to us a rather innocent matter, but since God had forbidden it, it was a sin to Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:17). When Saul spared Agag, the king of Amalek, and the best of the sheep and oxen for sacrifice, it looked like a humane and pious thing; yet God had commanded him to destroy Amalek utterly, and so it was a sin to spare them (1 Sam. 15). When at the exodus from Egypt the children of Israel borrowed jewels of silver and of gold from the Egyptians (Exod. 12:35, 36), without returning them, it was

¹ *The Wittenburg Door*, no.39 (Oct.-Nov. 1977).

² Martin Luther, *Against the Antinomians*, in *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan & Helmut T. Lehmann, American ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 47:109-10.

not a sin, because God expressly commanded them to do this (Exod. 3:22). Whether or not anything is a sin is not determined by what we think, or how we feel, about it, but solely by this: does it or does it not agree with the Word of God? Sin is not a physical, but a moral condition, and it consists in this that a given act, behavior, or condition of man is not what God wants it to be; it is nonconformity with the will of God. Thus, to sin means to do what God forbids (Gen. 2:17), or not to do what He enjoins (James 4:17), or not to be as He wants us to be (Lev. 19:2). Hence, with respect to the Law, sin is a departure from its rule; with respect to God, sin is disobedience to His will.

Every departure from the Law is sin, whether this be great or small, known or unknown, intended or accidental, or even when it is against our will (Rom. 7:19). The question whether anything is or is not sin, is not determined by our personal opinion, our knowledge, our intention, or our will, but solely by this one fact, whether or not it is in agreement with the will of God. Our personal attitude may aggravate or mitigate our guilt, but it does not change the nature of the act or the conduct as a transgression of the Law. Even the good intention and purpose one may have, will not change an unlawful act into a lawful one (1 Sam. 15:1-26). We cannot sin to the glory of God (Rom. 6:1).¹

We are not suggesting that we abandon the abstract definitions of sin. We need them too. Otherwise we may run to the opposite error and make sin appear as simply the transgression of a legal code of conduct. The violation of our relationship with God, expressed by disobedience to the law of God, must be seen as pride, selfishness, idolatry ("the lust for divinity" – Luther), rebellion, unbelief, ingratitude and enmity against God. These are abstract definitions of sin. But unless they are related to the concrete law of God, these abstract definitions can mean something different to everybody. What one calls pride, another may call dignity. Selfishness may well pass for prudence, or unbelief for broadmindedness.

When the creature refuses to submit to God's concrete commandments and chooses his own way, he manifests pride, selfishness, unbelief, rebellion, idolatry, ingratitude and hostility toward God.

It is not enough to talk about sin in an abstract way if sinners are to realize the gravity of their state of alienation and lostness. It is too easy for us to identify a right relationship with God with good feelings. Because "that which is rightly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15), the law of God must define a right relationship. The law should be used to make plain the concrete nature of the sinner's estrangement. To be out of harmony with God's law is to be out of harmony with the Lawgiver.

Sin As Guilt and Pollution.

Guilt and pollution are two different aspects of man's sinful condition. Like justification and sanctification, they should be distinguished but never separated. It is well known that while Roman Catholic theology sees sin mainly as pollution, Protestantism sees sin primarily in terms of guilt. While this may oversimplify the difference between these two streams of thought, it does pinpoint a very important aspect of the Catholic/Protestant debate.

If we think of sin chiefly in terms of a disease (pollution), salvation is reduced to healing the disease (sanctification). This illustrates what we said in the orientation. A faulty doctrine of sin leads to a faulty doctrine of salvation. If we are to arrive at a correct doctrine of sin and salvation, we need to think clearly and biblically about guilt and pollution.

There are always two aspects to human relationships:

1. Every important human relationship has a *legal* aspect – for example, marriage, sonship, citizenship, business partnership, church membership, club membership. Man's relationship with God is no exception. It is based on a binding legal arrangement called a covenant.
2. Then there is the existential or *vital* aspect of the relationship. The legal aspect of a marriage relationship may be good and secure, but the vital level may be marred by friction or difficulty. The justified believer has a right relationship with God which admits of no degrees because it is legally

¹ Edward W. A. Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, pp.62-3.

perfect. But on an existential or vital level he does not yet relate to God in perfect faith and unfaltering love.

The whole field of sin and salvation is often obscured because we fail to distinguish between our relationships on the legal and vital levels. For instance, someone may say, "Justification means being restored to a right relationship with God." If this means being adopted into the family of God and being made a citizen of His kingdom – a sonship and citizenship which are perfect and admit of no degrees – It is correct. But "right relationship" may also mean loving God, praising God, and enjoying God as we should. This is sanctification – the vital relationship – and it should be distinguished from the legal relationship.

Sin is a matter of a wrong relationship, and this wrong relationship exists on both a legal and a vital level. This is why we must speak of sin as both guilt and pollution. Guilt means demerit before the law. It is a legal conception. It has to do with a person's standing before the law. Sin is often spoken of in terms of debt (Matt. 6:12; 18:32; Col. 2:14). Man owes perfect righteousness to the law – in nature as well as in action. When he has not discharged this debt, he is guilty. To be guilty before the law means to be liable to the penalty of death (Rom. 6:23).

We could express this another way by saying that the law defines the ideal relationship with God, neighbor, and the created order. When man falls short of this ideal relationship in any way, he is guilty before the law. He forfeits the blessings of the covenant and incurs its curses. Guilt may be defined as man's legal standing of alienation. The guilty are legal aliens from the kingdom of God. They are legally estranged and enemies of God. We use the word *legal* not in a pejorative sense, but meaning lawful, rightful, just, proper, according to the rule of righteous law.

We must not only distinguish guilt from pollution. We must also distinguish the fact of guilt from the feeling of guilt. Fact and feeling are not the same. Real guilt is objective. It exists quite apart from a person's sense of guilt. A person may stand guilty before God's law but feel no guilt at all. On the other hand, he may feel guilty but not be guilty before the law of God. On this point of guilt, therefore, it is important that a person should not inquire of his feelings but of his standing before the objective law of God. Doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists and sociologists frequently refer to the great problem of guilt in human health. But they generally mean guilt in the psychological sense rather than in the biblical sense.

The sense of guilt results from the function of the human conscience. Because man is self-conscious, he is able to reflect upon himself. He sees himself in two different ways. He sees the self as he would like it to be and feels it ought to be. This is the only self he feels he can approve and accept. But he also sees the self as it actually is. When there is a gap between the two (the "ought" and the "is"), he is torn apart. He cannot approve and accept the self as it actually is. He sits in judgment upon it. He accuses and condemns it. He indulges in self-contempt and self-rejection. This causes self-alienation. Because he is ashamed of his real self, he may resort to masks and masquerades. He may create an image to hide his real identity. Material affluence, titles, degrees or religious profession may be used to mask his real self. But all this proves he is alienated from himself by his own conscience. Because he cannot truly accept and love himself, he cannot truly accept and love others. Self-alienation is reflected in alienation from others. He is driven to use others and the material world to seek status for himself and to prove he does not merit the verdict of his conscience. But then his conscience accuses him of his selfish use of others and the environment to gain status for himself. And so he is swept into a vicious and bitter whirlpool of alienation.

In the first step toward deliverance from the sense of guilt, the person sees his true guilt. Then faith in the gospel of Christ's atoning blood brings the verdict of justification from the highest court in the universe. When the sinner believes that this supreme court has acquitted and accepted him, he can acquit and accept himself. The conscience, like the lower court, bows before the verdict of the higher court. The conscience will never be satisfied until the believing sinner claims the verdict of the higher court (Heb. 9:14; 1 John 3:19-21).

The Christian is not one who never feels any guilt. The knowledge of God's law in the face of the holiness of Christ gives him an acute sense of his own sinfulness (Rom. 3:20). The gap between what he ought to be and what he is is not bridged by his life of new obedience even though he strives in the strength of the Spirit to be all that he ought to be. In fact, the tension between the "ought" and the "is" intensifies. But the Christian knows how to deal with the sense of guilt. By faith, and that continually, he applies the blood of Christ to the conscience. He bedecks himself with Christ's righteousness as if it were his own. Thus covered, he is able to look the law of God in the eye without shame.

Besides guilt, there is also the pollution of sin. Sin is not only a legal debt. It is represented as a reigning power which has taken possession of human nature. Our predicament is not just a matter of being burdened with a legal debt we cannot pay. We are stricken with a mortal disease for which we can find no cure (Isa. 1:5-6; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:14-25; Eph. 2:1-3). While guilt is the sinner's legal alienation, pollution is the spirit of alienation which has become a reigning power in human nature. Through his alienation from the kingdom of God, man has become the subject of Satan's dominion. As the lawful prey of Satan, he has been infected with the spirit of pride, rebellion, unbelief, selfishness, idolatry, ingratitude and hostility toward God. This spirit of alienation which controls human nature is not an essential property of human nature. It is a demonic element which has infected it.

. . . in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. – Eph. 2:2-3, RSV (see also 1 John 3:8).

When we follow Paul's presentation in the book of Romans, we find he deals with the problem of human guilt (justification) before he deals with the problem of healing the disease (sanctification). As guilt is objective, so is the remedy. Christ hung on the cross to pay the believing sinner's debt to divine justice (Rom. 3:25). Faith in the blood of Christ changes the sinner's legal relationship to God. God's imputation of righteousness for the believer's justification is not in itself a change within the sinner but a change in the way the sinner is regarded. Imputed righteousness is divine love in action. It is divine love accepting the unacceptable and ascribing excellence and value to those who confess they have nothing but degradation and shame.

This free gift of justification by the righteousness of what Another has done raises the question of practical ethics. Can the believer continue living in sin as if holiness of life were now irrelevant? (Rom. 6:1). Does God just count the believer holy and leave him enslaved to his unholy disease (moral condition) as he was before? We suggest that Paul links sanctification to justification in a way we generally overlook. In Romans 6:14 he declares, "For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." What he means is that when guilt is dealt with by forgiveness and the imputation of Christ's righteousness, the power of the disease is broken. Sin remains in the regenerate. But it will not reign where guilt is taken away by faith in the blood (Rom. 6:2).

According to Paul the power of sin stems from guilt and not the other way around. In Roman Catholic theology the sinner is said to become acceptable to God by the healing of the disease. But in Pauline and Reformation doctrine healing stems from being acceptable to God by the merit of the atonement.

We say again that the power of sin stems from guilt and not the other way around. This is why justification must take precedence over sanctification. Guilt means that the sinner is legally estranged from God. Being legally estranged, he is given over to the control of Satan's kingdom. The law of God actually consigns him to the prison house of sin (Rom. 11:32-33; Gal. 3:22). Sin in itself is not powerful. It gains its strength from the law of God (1 Cor. 15:56). Says the apostle, "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead (Rom. 7:8).

Let us suppose a man is sentenced to hard labor. He is bound to miserable servitude by the law. So it is with the sinner. The law or justice of God hands him over to the bondage of a cruel master. The power which binds him to this service is the omnipotent law (Rom. 7:1-6). The way to come to terms with the enslaving power of sin, therefore, is to come to terms with the just demands of God's law. The sinner cannot meet those demands by anything he can do, not even by the Spirit's work in him. God has

consigned him to the prison of disobedience until faith comes (Rom. 11:32-33; Gal. 3:22). When faith lays hold of the doing and dying of Christ, the law is satisfied. It no longer binds the sinner to the service of sin. Sin therefore loses its power over the justified.

Justification by grace ends the believing sinner's legal estrangement from God. It is a verdict for the believer and against the kingdom of Satan. By the decree of the Judge the believer is no longer an alien. He is adopted into the family of God. As long as he was a lawful subject of Satan's kingdom, sin had dominion over him. But in justification he is made a lawful subject of the kingdom of God. This gives God the right to give him His Spirit and to bring him under His charge and authority. Deliverance from the power of sin is therefore the effect of God's justifying verdict.

Sin As Universal.

Sin is common to all except Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:10-23; Heb. 7:26; 1 John 3:5). Not only have all sinned, but all keep falling short of God's glory.¹ The prophets, apostles and saints of all ages confess themselves to be sinners (Ps. 143:2; Eccl. 7:20; 1 John 1:8).

It is important to realize this corporate nature of human sin. We are so inclined to think each individual lives his life in isolation as a separate island. This is not true. There is such a thing as race solidarity. We share a common heredity. Our lives are inseparably linked with others and would be impossible without others. Others, such as parents, children, lawyers and governmental officials, act for us and do many things on our behalf. We depend on others to build our bridges, print our newspapers, fly our transport and do countless things without which life could not continue.

In a very real sense the race is one, and God deals with the race as one. He has consigned all to sin and pronounced that there is none righteous.

For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.—Rom. 11:32

But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. Gal. 3:22.

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. . . . There is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. — Rom. 3:10-12.

"As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. 27:19). Just as we see our own image reflected in water, so we may see our own sinful hearts reflected in the life of every other sinner. We cannot reproach any man for anything of which we are not also guilty (Rom. 2:1). Wesley said, "Never did every sin appear in the . . . vilest wretch that ever lived. But look thou into thy nature, and thou mayest see all and every sin in the root thereof."² This is frightful yet true. Though not in the flower but in the root, the sin of all men is in each of us. The law of God takes note of it and condemns us for it except we hide in the imputed righteousness of Christ. Just as by faith we believe we are righteous in Christ, so by faith we must believe we are sinners – and such radical sinners as God's Word declares us to be. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9).

The disordered environment of the world in which we live answers to the disordered nature we possess. Accidents, disease, frustration, futility and death are all about us. We live with them continually and suffer in our identification with the fallen environment. Yet we should see that God in His great mercy has given us an environment best suited to our condition. We suffer less in such an environment than we would suffer if the environment were perfect. We may picture for ourselves a perfect world where nothing disrupts or disappoints. But were it given us and we were the only imperfect thing in it, it would be unbearable torment. A perfect environment would intensify our suffering. God has made us as comfortable as possible.

¹ In Romans 3:23 the original Greek uses both the past and the present continuous tense.

² John Wesley, Sermon, Bristol, Aug. 17, 1757, in *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 9:462-64.

This may give us some insight into the sufferings of Christ. His holiness, the refined sensibilities and perfections of His holy nature, made contact with a fallen world and life in a disordered environment a matter of great suffering for Him. Discord, disharmony, pain, disease and human sin were unspeakably painful to Him. He suffered in proportion to His holiness.

We do not become sinners because we have sinned. We sin because we are sinners. Sin entered the race through the fall of Adam, who was the head of the race. "By one man sin entered into the world. . . . By one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Rom. 5:12, 19).

There are three opinions which deny the full force of our sinful inheritance:

1. There is the Pelagian opinion, which says that children are born amoral – that is, neither depraved nor sanctified. The Scripture, however, declares we are conceived and born in sin.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.—Ps. 51:5.

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.—Ps. 58:3.

The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.— Gen. 8:21.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh.—John 3:6.

We . . . were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. —Eph. 2:3.

2. There is the opinion which says Adam separated the race from God and the Holy Spirit, and therefore we are deprived of the Holy Spirit in consequence of Adam's sin. Like most heresy, this is not wrong in what it affirms. It is wrong in what it denies. Man the sinner is not just *deprived* but *depraved*. Adam sold the race to an alien power. In consequence of the fall, human nature is not only bereft of the Holy Spirit but infected by another spirit, even the spirit of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). All men are tainted with positive evil and corrupted with the tendencies of pride, unbelief, selfishness, idolatry, rebellion and hostility to God.

3. There is the opinion which says that man inherits a corrupted nature but not the guilt of Adam's sin. In this theory it is sometimes said no one is guilty before the law until he actually commits sin. Or it is said a person is guilty before the law only because of his inherited depravity.

Even though this third view moves toward confessing the universal nature of sin, serious objections must be brought against it.

In the first place, this view is erroneous because it makes guilt spring from pollution rather than pollution from guilt. The logical end of this approach is to say that salvation comes by gaining the victory over sin.

In the second place, this view does not do justice to Romans 5:12-19. Paul is not here talking about the depravity of nature inherited because of Adam's sin. The context is our legal predicament rather than our moral disease. The apostle is talking about judgment, condemnation and justification. It is in Romans 7:14-25 that Paul moves on to discuss sanctification and man's moral disease.

In the third place, if Romans 5:12-19 deals with inherited pollution, Catholicism is right. For if condemnation comes by inheriting an evil nature, justification must come by an inward moral renewal. But this is not Paul's point in Romans 5:12-19. Just as we were condemned by the unrighteous act of Adam, an act in which we had no part, so we are justified by the righteous act of Jesus Christ, also an act in which we had no part. If the righteousness of the second Adam is imputed to us, it seems inescapable that the sin of the first Adam is imputed to us. On the other hand, if we were condemned by the transmission of his corrupt nature to us, we would be justified by the infusion of Christ's new nature into us. This, of course, is the soteriology of Romanism, and it is contrary to the Pauline doctrine of justification by an imputed righteousness.

Our involvement in guilt by the sin of another is admittedly a difficult doctrine. It is offensive to our nature.

There is only one doctrine more offensive, and that is the related doctrine of justification by an imputed righteousness.

It is beyond doubt that there is nothing which more shocks our reason than to say that the sin of the first man has rendered guilty those, who, being so removed from this source, seem incapable of participation in it. This transmission does not only seem to us impossible, it seems also very unjust. . . . Certainly nothing offends us more rudely than this doctrine; and yet, without this mystery, the most incomprehensible of all, we are incomprehensible to ourselves.¹

However, if we understand that guilt is our legal standing, it helps us understand how the guilt of Adam is inherited. When Adam sinned, he did so as the covenantal head of the race. He acted for his posterity. If he obeyed, the blessings of the covenant would be theirs. If he disobeyed, the curses of the covenant would be theirs. Like the Hittite suzerainty treaties, the curses of the covenant fall on the children of the unfaithful vassal.

When Adam renounced his allegiance to God, he became a member of Satan's kingdom. It was inevitable that all his children would be born as legal aliens and enemies of the kingdom of God and therefore lawful subjects of His wrath. Let us suppose a young American citizen were to renounce the American flag and become a citizen of a foreign country. The children born in his house subsequent to his legal alienation from America would not be Americans but foreigners. This is not a biological inheritance (for the children might even look like Americans). It would be a legal inheritance. If America were at war with this foreign country, the children would be legal enemies of America.

Real guilt is not a subjective feeling. It is a person's legal relationship to God. By the sin of Adam all are born as aliens of the kingdom of heaven and enemies of God Himself. By inheritance they are wrongly related to God. They are born under a broken covenant and are subjects of His wrath quite apart from inheriting an evil nature. The evil nature is not the cause of God's curse but the result of it.

Therefore the children of Adam share his guilt and its consequences. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned [in their representative]" (Rom. 5:12).²

Sin As a State As Well As an Action.

By now it should be clear that sin is not just what we do. It is more especially what we are. We commit acts of sin because we are sinners. We are born into the estate of the kingdom of Satan and are in a wrong legal relationship with God. As long as we are aliens, everything we do is sin. All our devotion, piety and religion are sin. Besides this legal alienation from God, we are infected with the spirit of alienation. By nature we are sinful. This is why Paul refers to our natural state as "the body of this death" or "sinful flesh" (Rom. 7:24; 8:3). If the law of God does not curse and condemn our nature, why does the apostle call it "sinful"?

Some people say the sinful nature does not make us sinners before God unless we give way to the sinful nature and commit an act of sin. They say the law of God does not demand a sinless nature, only sinless deeds. They then turn around and say Christ too had the sinful human nature common to all men, but He successfully resisted its tendencies and so committed no act of sin. This argument says too much. If the holy law of God does not curse and condemn man's sinful nature, if it does not demand holiness of nature as well as actions, then why call that nature "sinful flesh" or "sinful nature"? A thing is not sinful unless it is contrary to the law of God. It should also be apparent that if Christ must fulfill the law and satisfy all its demands on our behalf, His human nature must be as holy as the law requires.

¹ Pascal, Pensees, cited in Dallas M. Roark, *The Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), p.174.

² The second half of this text is not talking about all sinning after the example of Adam. The "and so" of Romans 5:12 means that the first part of the text – "by one man sin entered into the world" – is being restated.

It is true there is no condemnation for those who are "in Christ." Although they share the polluted nature common to all men and are often distressed because of it (Rom. 7:14-25), yet for Christ's sake this sin which is in them and merits their damnation is not imputed to them (Rom. 4:8). As long as they keep the faith and do not allow sin to reign over them, they are not condemned for what in itself is worthy of condemnation.

This is why the saints recognize that all they are and do is pleasing to God only through the imputed righteousness of Christ. Their most pious and devout deeds, including their prayers and praise, are defiled with the corrupt taint of the flesh. Unless covered with the righteousness of Christ, it would render them worthy of death and destruction.

Holiness not only means separation from evil and separation to God. It also means wholeness and completeness. It is what its family of words suggests: *holy, wholesome, hale, health, healthy*. That which is less than wholeness of human life is what the law of Moses calls defilement or uncleanness. The whole man in all his relationships was made in the image of God. Anything which falls short of that image, anything which mars the wholeness of human life, is sin. To praise God with any less fervor and ardor than the sinless seraphim is sin. Surely we owe as much praise to God as do those angels! But none of us gives it. That is sin. To live in any less than an ideal relationship to God, others and the world is sin. To fail to improve every moment of time and to develop our capacities to their fullest potential for the glory of God is sin. To ill treat our body or our environment is sin. To be less than the perfect image of God as God intended us to be is sin. Therefore sin is more what we are than what we do.

Sin As Total Depravity

When a person sins, the whole person sins, and the whole person will die for that sin unless he shows repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The gnostic element at Corinth thought the "spiritual" Christians could commit fornication without sinning. According to them the body was not the real man. Whatever the body did was supposed to be irrelevant. Not so, replied Paul. All must stand in judgment on their total existence. When sin is committed, the mind and the body are always participants.¹

This holistic principle has vital implications:

It means that man is a sinner in the totality of his existence. Being a sinner in one area means he is a sinner in every area. There is not one part of his existence which he keeps intact and uncontaminated by sin as if he could stand before God, saying, "At least this part [my good intentions] is free from sin." There can be no such thing as plumbing beneath the sinful crust to discover the intrinsic good of human nature. The Bible does not deny that fallen man may have some good qualities or gifts. But they are all tainted and corrupted by sin. For instance, a sinner may have the good qualities of determination, ambition, imagination, creative genius and leadership. But he perverts these gifts by using them to glorify himself. Even the "good" is used in the service of evil. Good traits of character do not mitigate man's evil but aggravate it. He uses these gifts as an excuse for not repenting and giving his allegiance to God. His worst sin is the perversion of his good. He uses what are really the gifts of God to fight against God. The holistic view of man means the Reformers were right when they spoke about man's total depravity.² Man is a sinner in the totality of his existence.

We have already seen that being human means to be related to God, to the community and to the material order. The holistic view of man means we cannot disrupt one relationship without disrupting all relationships. For example, when man first alienated himself from God, he became alienated from his human partner. Guilt caused Adam to blame his wife (Gen. 3:12). The Babel builders' isolation from God resulted in their isolation from one another (Gen. 11).

¹ We do not use mind and body here to mean two parts of the person. By mind we mean the thinking willing whole person. By body we mean the physical expression of the whole person.

² Total depravity does not mean a sinner is as bad as he can be. It means there is no part of man's existence which has not become contaminated with sin.

More than that, when man rebelled against the dominion of God, the created order rebelled against the dominion of man. The beasts became unsubmitive. The earth brought forth thorns and thistles. Instead of worshiping and serving the Creator, fallen man began to worship and serve the creature (Rom. 1:25).

Whoever wrongs God wrongs his neighbor and the environment too. And whoever lives in a wrong relationship with his environment sins against his neighbor and his God. This means that ecology and health are moral questions. Yet we Christians have often been guilty of limiting piety to our own private experience with the Lord.

A person may go to the doctor with a physical complaint when he really needs reconciliation with his brother and with his God. He may go to the priest or pastor for spiritual counsel when the source of his problem is overwork, overeating or the want of a good night's sleep.

Holism means we cannot violate one relationship without violating all. This is why the Bible can say, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Righteousness, which is a right relationship (to God, neighbors and things), must be kept whole, intact and wanting nothing in every area, or it ceases to be righteousness altogether. There is no such thing as being partly righteous before God anymore than being partly sinful before God.

Holism means that fallen man can lay no claim to righteousness before God in any area of his existence. He is totally a sinner.

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; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.— Isa. 1:5-6.

Holism is the negation of perfectionism – the notion that believers may in this life receive enough "grace" to enable them to arrive at a state of personal sinlessness. Perfectionism can be supported only on dualistic premises. This is made clear in John Wesley's doctrine of perfectionism. He argued for the possibility of perfection on the grounds of a dichotomy of soul and body.

Some perfectionists admit that believers retain the sinful nature throughout this life but argue that by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit it is possible, even mandatory, to attain a sinless character before Jesus comes. But holism means that if a person is sinful in one area of existence, he is sinful in every area of existence. The essential unity of man means we cannot seal off a sinful nature in an isolated vacuum. There is an inevitable communion of the nature with the person. If the nature is sinful, so is the person. If there is one area or relationship which fails to reflect God's image fully, the whole man falls short of God's image. To fall short of God's glory is sin (Rom. 3:23). This is why the imputed righteousness of Christ must remain paramount. We can never reach a point in our fellowship with God where such fellowship does not rest entirely on the forgiveness of sin. Throughout life the saints must confess they are sinful mortals. They can approach a holy God only "by blood and incense." There must be Christian character by the impartation of the Holy Spirit. But apart from imputed righteousness it has no value with God.

Luther declared that the regenerate are *simul justus et peccator* (at the same time righteous and sinful). At first (in his Lectures on Romans) he said they were partly righteous and partly sinful. But when his theological position fully developed, he said the believer is totally righteous and totally a sinner. The Reformation doctrine of total depravity is not just a description of unbelievers. It is what every man except Jesus Christ is by nature. Believers, of course, do not make their sinful nature an excuse for sinful conduct. The sinful nature does not rule and dominate their lives as it does in the ungodly (Rom. 6:14; 8:1-17). Yet because the flesh always hinders them from doing what they would (Rom. 7:14-25; Gal. 5:17), they perfectly fulfill the law only by the forgiveness of sins. Even their good is contaminated with human imperfection. There is not one thing they do of which it can be said, "This deed or this phase of character is without sin." Unless God forgave what was still lacking in their most excellent virtues, unless Christ's imputed righteousness covered the human corruption which still clings to their holiest duties, they would be damned rather than blessed for their splendid attainments.

Remove imputed righteousness from the saints and they are not a whit better than the greatest sinner. For what does it advantage a man who must reach the stars if he stands on Mount Everest? Will he not be as pathetically short of his goal as the man in the valley? Unless the imputed righteousness of Christ bridges the abyss which exists between the divine Majesty and the best in poor mortal existence, all alike must be cast into hell.

Holism means that as long as we are in this world, identified as we are with this old eon, we are always totally a sinner. But by identification with Jesus Christ we are at the same time totally righteous by a righteousness completely outside ourselves. Such are the implications of relational and holistic thinking.

(To be continued in the next issue of Present Truth Magazine)

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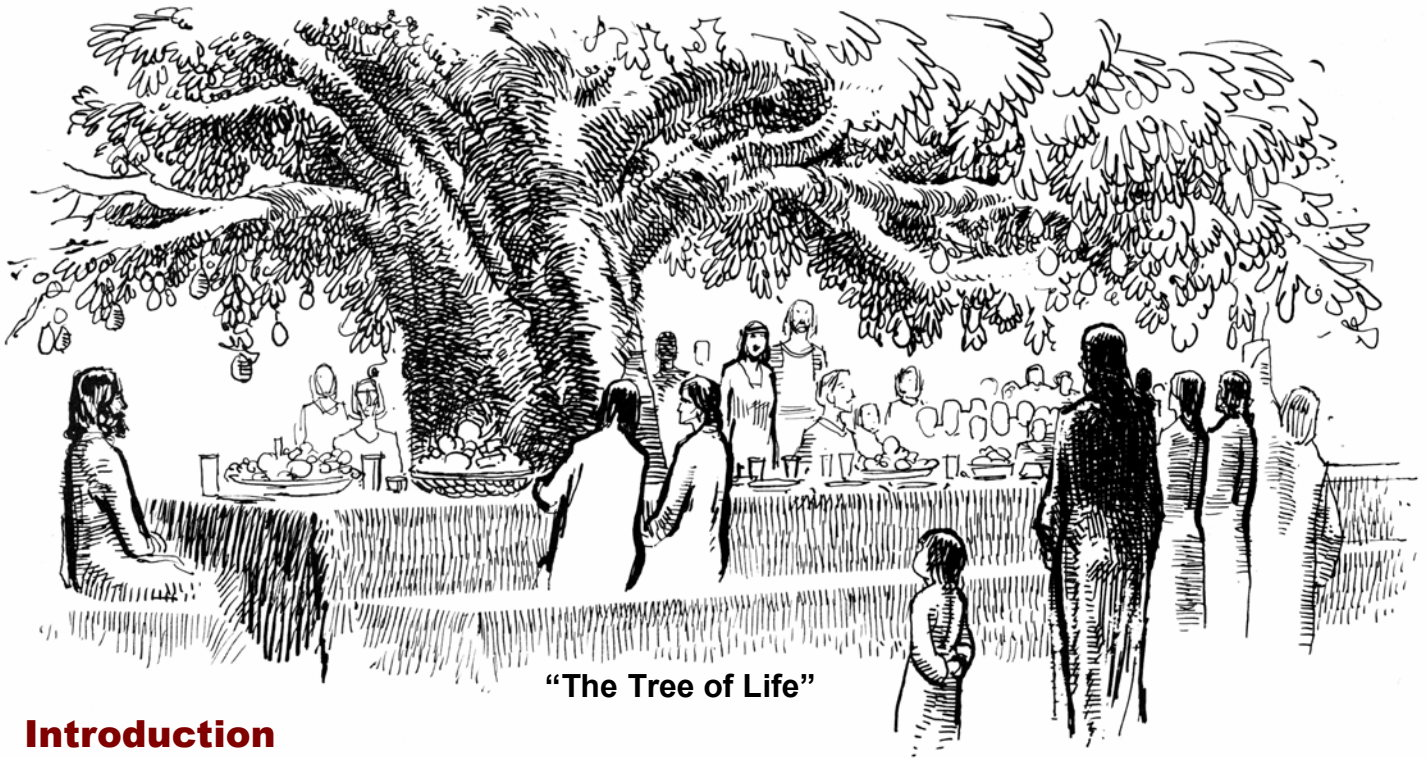
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The Reformation and Man

Geoffrey J. Paxton



Introduction

A struggle for the honor and integrity of God lay behind the central Reformation conflict over justification by faith alone. The Roman view of justification embraced one picture of God. The view of justification expounded by the Reformers embraced another picture of God.

The Reformers struggled to preserve the biblical view of God. They held that the true significance and glory of God are found within God Himself. While it is gloriously true that God goes out of Himself in blessing to His creatures, He is not dependent upon anyone or anything outside Himself for His sufficiency. This fundamental tenet lay behind the Reformers' opposition to such Roman doctrines as grace, the mass and the church.

But the Reformation was not only a struggle between two opposing views of God. It was also a struggle between two opposing views of man. We do not mean that after the doctrine of God was settled, the Reformation moved on to settle the nature of man. Rather, the being and character of God and the being and character of man were so bound together in the thought of the apostles and the Reformers that to settle one doctrine was to virtually settle the other also.

The Reformers' fundamental proposition concerning God was that God is totally self-sufficient. He is not in the least degree dependent upon anyone or anything outside Himself for His own well-being. The basic affirmation of the Reformers concerning man was that the true significance and glory of man are not found within man himself. Man is not self-sufficient. He is dependent upon Someone outside himself.

The Reformers and Rome were at variance both theologically and anthropologically. According to the Reformers, Rome's view of grace, the mass and the church threatened the biblical doctrine of God. So also, her view of man was opposed to the biblical picture of man and, in the final analysis, sought to destroy man.

We shall now set forth the Reformers' basic view of man.

Man's Knowledge of Himself

John Calvin's famous statement about man's self-knowledge sums up the basic Reformation position on man's knowledge of himself.

Man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God and come down after such contemplation to look into himself.¹

Man can only know himself in the light of God's revelation of Himself. The unveiling of God brings the unveiling of man. For a true knowledge of himself man must first contemplate the face of God and then descend to look at himself. Thus man's self-knowledge is reflexive. It proceeds from the revelation of God about Himself and about the creative activity of His love. To "come down" indicates the essential direction and motion of all Christian thought. Calvin is reiterating the biblical dictum, "In Thy light do we see light."²

Man's knowledge of himself does not lie within himself. Hence his knowing-activity is directed outward, not inward. The knowing-activity of man is not only specific mental activity but the comprehensive life-activity of man.

Man was created by God to have a special relation to God's Word. Man is dependent upon the communication of that Word for his very existence as man. His true life consists in lifelong and "life-wide" answers to that Word. Man's true life and dignity are found in this response to the Word of God. Calvin captures this responsive motion beautifully in his commentary on Genesis 2:9.

As often as man tasted of the fruit of that tree, he should remember whence he received his life, in order that he might acknowledge that he lives not by his own power, but by the kindness of God alone; and that life is not (as they commonly say) an intrinsic good, but proceeds from God.... The life of all things was included in the Word, but especially the life of men, which is conjoined with reason and intelligence Wherefore by this sign, Adam was admonished that he could claim nothing for himself as if it were his own, in order that he might depend wholly on the Son of God, and might not seek life anywhere but in him. . . . He possessed life only as deposited in the Word of God, and could not otherwise retain it, than by acknowledging that it was received from him.

True knowledge of ourselves consists in the knowledge of God's light. Without His light we are in darkness and cannot be said to live. True knowledge of ourselves consists in the knowledge that the Known (God) is Master and Lord of our entire being and that we are utterly dependent upon His grace for our entire existence. Man is only truly man when he realizes his creaturely dependence upon the grace of God. The fundamental characteristic of man's true life is therefore thanksgiving and celebration.

Man's Knowledge of God

Man cannot know himself without knowing God. And he cannot know God unless God freely reveals Himself to man. God has done this in the gospel of Jesus Christ. For the Reformers the gospel was the definitive source for the knowledge of God. Hence the knowledge of God, like the true knowledge of man, is outside man. It is in Jesus Christ that man comes to know both God and man. In Jesus Christ God reveals Himself as the God of man and as the Man of God.

For Calvin, understanding man as the image of God could only take place from the standpoint of man renewed in Jesus Christ. Only when we see man face to face with God in Jesus Christ can we understand that man is made in the image of God.

From this standpoint it is clear that the image of God is not any natural property of the soul.³ Rather, it is a spiritual reflection in holiness and righteousness which should characterize all human existence. The image of God is seen in man's response to God the Father. This response is brought about by the Word in the power of the Spirit.

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes*, I.1.2.

² Cf. Ps. 36:9 and Calvin's commentary on the same.

³ To think of the image of God as a natural possession of the soul is an act of impiety which does despite to the grace of God.

The image of God is man's intelligent life-answer to God's grace. At best it is only a shadow in this world until man reaches perfection. Hence the image of God may also be said to be God's destiny for man, God's goal for man.¹

In summary, God's true significance and meaning are not dependent upon any reality outside Himself. On the other hand, man's true meaning and significance are found outside himself. Man can only know himself when he knows God. Man's true meaning is reflexive of the Word which God addresses to him. In order to know God, man is dependent upon God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. When man views man renewed in Jesus Christ, he discovers that the image of God does not consist in any natural property of the soul but in the faithful life-response to the sheer goodness and kindness of God. The image of God is God's mind (communicated by His Word) reflected in the obedient response of the faithful covenant partner.

Man's Knowledge of His Sin

When man is viewed as the renewed man in Jesus Christ, man is seen as a sinner. This is not because Jesus Christ was a sinner. It is because the manhood of Jesus Christ throws into contrast the manhood of every other person.

Hence, for the Reformers the knowledge of sin, its nature and extent, was derived from the gospel. The knowledge of sin follows rather than precedes the grace of God. Thus the knowledge of sin comes from an external source and not from within man.

If the death of Christ be our redemption, then we were captives; if it be satisfaction, we were debtors; if it be atonement, we were guilty; if it be cleansing, we were unclean.²

The gospel speaks of man's salvation in total terms. So also it speaks of the depravity of man in total terms. The gospel tells us that man can be restored only by going outside himself to Christ, the very image of God. Man himself must then be bereft of that image. And if anything of it does remain, it is but a fearful deformity.

In the light of the gospel, total perversity is an existence continually turned away from God. All man does, even in the exercise of his God-given gifts, is against God. Instead of imaging the glory of God by faithful response to the will of God revealed in His Word, man does God constant dishonor.³

It is a dubious apologetic which thinks that the only way to bring about a consciousness of sin is to inspire men with terror in order to force them to seek refuge in Christ. In his French Catechism of 1537 Calvin shows that the supremely powerful demonstration of the bondage of the will and of man's predicament comes when we view what God has done to save us in the Mediator. This should help correct those who want man to understand his plight by turning within himself.

Man's Righteousness

For the Reformers the gospel was the ultimate negation of all attempts by man to find meaning and significance in himself even with God's help. The gospel revealed the total extent of man's plight. It also revealed the total nature and extent of God's provision. For the Reformers the grace of God in Christ was more than a message. It was victory over all obstacles, the achievement of total restoration. In the gospel, sin is totally conquered, the new man is totally recreated, life is reestablished, and God and man are fully reconciled. The gospel is the consummation of everything that needed to be done to effect the new heavens and the new earth. The Reformers were captive to the Christ event. They saw it as the ultimate criterion by which man is to measure all things and to adjudicate all reality.

¹ This is yet another reason why the image of God cannot be seen as a static property of man's being which can be handed on from man to man by the will of the flesh (cf. Calvin's Sermons on Job).

² Cf. Calvin's commentary on Gal. 2:21 and Eph. 1:10 For a variation of this theme cf. Ap. IV.12ff.; Ap. IV.392 in the *Book of Concord*.

³ Cf. Calvin's commentary on Eph. 4:24.

In the gospel the Reformers saw the ultimate demonstration of the true significance of man. The God who created man and gave him purpose and destiny came in the person of His Son to restore man. It is of the highest significance, then, that this God did not come to dwell in man by His Spirit to effect the restoration. That would have suggested that man's real significance is constituted by something within him, even if it is divinely engendered. The fact is however, that God came for man and not in man.

Man's sin has consisted in a dreadful inversion of the God-given perspective. Man has looked to himself as the final arbiter of meaning. His sin has consisted not least in his attempt to call the divine into the service of his quest to make himself the center of meaning. Hence man has from time to time been only too happy to acknowledge divine assistance. This is sinful man's version of "grace alone."

Of course, this is quite different from the understanding of "grace alone" which the Reformers received from Holy Writ. That "grace alone" orients man exclusively to the activity of God outside of man on his behalf. The "grace alone" of redemption in Jesus Christ was as outside of man as was the divine activity in the original creation. The "grace alone" of the re-creation of man in Christ has provided man with as extrinsic a focal point as did the initial creation. The God who gives man his true meaning is the God who is outside of man and over man, not a God who is in man and under him.

Luther agrees with this perspective when he says:

You are righteous through steadfast love and mercy. . . . This [being righteous] is not [a matter of] my disposition or a quality of my heart, but something foreign, namely the steadfast love of God.¹

The most fundamental thing that can be said about man must be said not in terms of man himself, but in terms of God. The righteousness of the human person must be defined in terms of the activity of the divine person.

A moment's reflection on something that takes place every day will help us understand this. Someone speaks of a child and says, "That child is precious." This statement points to the fact that the child stands in a peculiar relationship to someone else. The child is being defined in terms of the attitude of someone else toward the child.

So the believer is defined in terms of what God has done in Christ and not in terms of the believer as such. Hence, "You are righteous" is equivalent to "You are precious." Neither statement says anything about the person in himself. Both statements speak about the person in terms of the relationship of attitude and assessment of someone outside that person. This is the fundamental method of the biblical-Reformational definition of man. This is why the gospel brings into clearest relief the true nature of man.

The Reformers opposed the Roman Catholic Church so strongly because she wished to find the significance of man at least partly within himself. It was not that Rome asserted that man gave significance to himself without divine aid. Rather, with divine aid man and his actions were given significance within man. Rome was more or less consistent in this position. She asserted that man could know something about himself without the aid of God. She also taught that man could know certain things about God without God's special revelation. And Rome taught that the righteousness of God was not only the saving action of God in Christ but also that righteousness whereby God makes us righteous in ourselves, albeit by the power of His Spirit.

The Roman Catholic view of man has led to much introspection and consequent misery of spirit and mind. Likewise, in much evangelicalism—which has followed a Roman doctrine of man in more than one area—there has been all too much inward-looking piety. Even the Roman Catholic veneration of the saints has its popular evangelical counterpart in the well-known testimony meeting where the focus is "what the Lord is doing in my life."

¹ *Luther's Works*, 12:328.

For the Reformers a proper biblical understanding of man resulted in giving glory exclusively to God and bringing certainty and comfort to the conscience of man. Concern for the glory of God and the stability of man constituted the heart of the pastoral mission of the Reformation. Only when man finds the true meaning of his existence outside himself will God's grace shine with biblical brilliance and man's conscience rest in the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit.

Christianity and Naturalism

D. R. G. Owen ¹



We have been speaking of a possible synthesis between *scientific naturalism* and the Christian faith, instead of between science and religion. The reason for this is that the body of knowledge we call science does not belong to the same level of thought or realm of discourse as the Christian faith. The Christian faith consists of beliefs that make up a general world-view. Science is a collection of particular theories about particular aspects of the world. There is, however, a world-view that is based on science; it is this that we refer to as scientific naturalism. It belongs to the same level of discourse as the Christian intellectual scheme and can be compared with it. No doubt it is this scientific naturalism that is usually the referent of the word "science" in the phrase "science and religion." If we use it in this sense, as we shall for the sake of convenience, we shall write it "science" and not science.

The only one of the great world religions about which it is even possible to raise the question of a synthesis with this scientific naturalism is Christianity. For not only is science a child of a Christian culture, but it is also perfectly proper, as we shall see, to speak of Christian naturalism – whereas, of course, it would be absurd to speak of Hindu or Buddhist naturalism. Indeed, the main difficulty in the way of any reconciliation between "science" and "religion" is that "science" is preoccupied with nature, matter, and this world, while religion is supposed to be entirely concerned with the supernatural, the spiritual, and the next world.

¹ Editorial Note: We are here reprinting by permission part of Dr. Owen's introduction to his book called *Body and Soul* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956). While we do not subscribe to everything Dr. Owen says in his book, we think his comments on "science" and "religion" in relation to man are very challenging and worthy of our readers' consideration. The book is well worth reading.

Now while this may be true of religion in general, it amounts to little short of a caricature of the Christian faith. We recall William Temple's famous saying that Christianity is "the most avowedly materialist" of all the great religions. He was drawing attention to the same features of Christianity to which Albert Schweitzer refers in his distinction between the Christian faith as "world-affirming" and the religions of India as "world-denying." Oriental religion in general tends to treat the whole realm of nature as *maya*, as illusion, as a sphere of unreality from which the human soul must by all means escape; it is antiphysical and antinatural. Christianity, on the contrary, teaches that the whole natural, physical order is God's creation and, as such, is both real and good. It is not something from which man is destined one day to escape, but something that he is meant to control and use, and his relationship to it has eternal significance. And it is not only the Christian doctrine of creation but also the Christian doctrines of the incarnation, the resurrection of the body, and Christ's return to the earth at the end, that make us take the physical order seriously, recognizing that it has an eternal place in God's purposes.

It is this Christian naturalism in the realm of doctrine that lies behind the Christian concern for this world in practice. It is in the Western world, therefore, with its Christian background, and not in the East, where other religions have prevailed, that we find the beginnings of various humanitarian movements and a general preoccupation with man's material well-being, unknown in cultures built on different religious foundations.

This Christian naturalism, both in theory and in practice, indicates that it is with Christianity and not with any other religion that scientific naturalism can be reconciled. The other religions are preoccupied with the supernatural and "the things of the spirit"; they are so uniformly world-denying and world-escaping that these features are almost the defining characteristics of "religion" as such. It is for this reason that we have refrained from speaking of the Christian "religion." For Christianity is not a religion in this sense at all. Yet this is the sense in which the word is usually used in the phrase, "science and religion." As in the case of "science," so in the case of "religion," when we use the word in this sense, we shall write it "religion" and not religion. And there can be no synthesis between "science" and "religion," for they stand in direct opposition to one another. The most that could be hoped for would be a division of labor in which the things that belong to nature and to this world are altogether surrendered to "science," while "religion" continues to restrict itself to the things that belong to the spirit and to the next world. Fortunately, however, we are not driven to this desperate solution as far as Christianity is concerned, for Christianity is not a "religion."

If Christianity is thus naturalistic and materialistic, our former question recurs in a slightly different form. Why did the concern for man's material welfare and for the things of this world have to wait, like the appearance of science, for the beginning of the modern period of Western history when the Christian Middle Ages had come to an end and the Christian faith was becoming a waning influence? The answer again is that medieval Christianity was influenced not only by Biblical naturalism but also by Greek metaphysical dualism. The influence of Greek thought created a Christian version of "religion" in which the natural and the supernatural were ranked in a two-story structure, with the main honors going to the supernatural to the disparagement of the earthly and the natural. Medieval Christianity to this extent corrupted the Biblical worldview and turned men's minds away from this world to the "higher" heavenly places. Christianity thus tended to become a "religion" like other "religions."

In this connection scientific naturalism, by recalling us from Greek and Oriental otherworldliness to a proper and Biblical concern with this world, can render a great service to genuine Christianity. The scientific naturalism that has become characteristic of modern Western thought has, in George McLeod's words, "brought man down to earth." From the Christian point of view, this is sheer gain, since it sheds new, or forgotten, light on the old Biblical proclamation that God has come down to earth. It cannot be right for the Christian, who believes in this earthward movement of God, to oppose or disparage this modern earthward movement of man. As C. S. Lewis says, "There is no good trying to be more spiritual than God." We must recognize that this naturalistic development in the Western world has taken place within, and not outside, the purposes of God. In George McLeod's words:

"Gerald Heard may write with some truth that 'Newton banished God from nature, Darwin banished him from life, and Freud drove him from his last stronghold: the soul.' But is that to finish the matter? Man's honesty in pursuit of truth – whatever the first apparent results of such pursuit—cannot really be a flight from God. Surely it is more sensible to suppose that God had a mighty purpose in bringing man 'down to earth.' Whatever chaos man's pride has created along the roadside of this journey, we believe that this journey was also of God. Just as Christendom [medieval culture] was necessary to the fashioning of one stage of man's journey, so also, in the purpose of God, this 'earthing' of man has been necessary."

The naturalism of a scientific age can help to purify the Christian faith of its "religious" accretions. Genuine Christianity is not "spiritual" and otherworldly; it is naturalistic and this-worldly. There is, therefore, no irreconcilable opposition between the Christian and the "scientific" world-view.

It is not only Christianity, however, that tends to be corrupted. Scientific naturalism, on its side, very often deteriorates into "scientism." Preoccupation with nature can easily lead to the dogma that nature is a closed and self-explanatory system, that matter as we know it is the ultimate reality, and that explanation in terms of natural cause and effect gives the final truth. This kind of crude materialism carries with it a denial of the reality of spirit and freedom in any sense. And science is invariably invoked to support these conclusions. Such dogmas distort science into "science" or "scientism," just as the Greek and Oriental doctrines, on the other side, pervert Christianity into "religion." And just as "religion" can lead to otherworldliness and escapism, in which the values of this life tend to be dismissed as worthless, so "science" can easily result in some kind of "scientific" mass society, in which the true values of human existence tend to be destroyed.

If there is to be a reconciliation between scientific naturalism and the Christian faith, then both sides must begin by mending their own fences. The genuine truths of scientific naturalism, based on scientific evidence, have to be carefully distinguished from the illegitimate conclusions of "scientism." On the other side, Christians must distinguish just as clearly between the authentic truths of the Christian faith, based on Biblical sources, and the alien accretions of "religion." It is to this latter task that the present work is mainly devoted.

The Nature of Man

In attempting to make a contribution to the reconciliation of Christianity and modern naturalism, we are confining ourselves to a preliminary clearing of the ground. But our contribution is still more circumscribed. For we shall restrict ourselves to one part of the vast field. Our main intention is to elucidate the real nature of the Biblical-Christian view of man. This is, therefore, an essay in Christian anthropology. We shall use the word "anthropology" here, not in the usual contemporary sense in which it stands for one of the social sciences, but in its broader etymological meaning, where it stands for a general theory or doctrine of man.

It is in the field of anthropology, in this general sense, that the conflict between "science" and "religion" is sharpest at the present time. In fact, the two views of man are hopelessly antithetical. The irreconcilable nature of this opposition would not be a matter of any great concern were it not for the fact that it is regularly mistaken for a conflict between the actual scientific evidence and the genuine Christian estimate of human nature.

We hope to expose this mistake by showing that the "religious" anthropology is not Christian but Greek and Eastern both in origin and in nature, and that it is this view of man, and not the Christian, that the scientific evidence refutes. In the course of the argument the authentic Christian doctrine will be elicited, and it will then be obvious that this view is perfectly consistent with the evidence collected by the various sciences. At the same time, we shall have to distinguish between the scientific evidence proper and the "scientific" materialism to which the evidence, in some quarters, is supposed to lead.

The points at issue revolve around the concepts of "body" and "soul." The "religious" anthropology adopts an extreme dualism, asserting that the body and the soul are two different and distinct substances. It claims that the soul is divine in origin and immortal by nature and that the corruptible body is the source of all sin and wickedness. It recommends the cultivation of the soul in detachment from the body, and advocates the suppression of all physical appetites and natural impulses. It regards the body as the tomb or prison of the soul from which it longs to get free. Finally, it tends to suppose that the soul, even in its earthbound existence, is entirely independent of the body and so enjoys a freedom of choice and action untrammelled by the laws that reign in the physical realm.

The scientific evidence, on the contrary, indicates that "body" and "soul" are simply the names of two inseparable aspects of a unified psychosomatic whole. It follows, therefore, that there can be no detachable part of man that survives physical death. The sciences of man have also taught us that the rigorous suppression of natural instincts and desires can do incalculable injury to the human personality. The same investigations have further revealed the extent to which the beliefs, conduct, and character of the individual are shaped by material forces operating in accordance with general laws. In other words, the evidence appears to refute the fundamental doctrines of the "religious" anthropology.

The faults, however, are not all on one side. The "scientific" anthropology supposes that the same evidence that refutes the "religious" view leads inevitably to a crudely materialistic interpretation of man, to a free self-expression ethics, and to some form of absolute determinism. Against these extreme doctrines we can see that the "religious" anthropology, in spite of its mistakes, stands for and protects certain important truths about man's status, especially the reality of the human spirit and of human freedom.

Nevertheless, our main concern must be to set our own house in order. If scientific naturalism tends to deteriorate into scientism, the Christian faith seems even more prone to degenerate into "religion." And nowhere does this happen more often or with more disastrous results than in the field of Christian anthropology.

We are frequently surprised and shocked by the theological illiteracy and naive misunderstandings of Christian beliefs that turn up repeatedly in otherwise well-informed writers, especially on popular scientific subjects. In commenting on Fred Hoyle's *The Nature of the Universe*, Professor J. V. Langmead Casserley cites a typical example:

"The problem of whether or not it is possible for man to transcend and conquer death he confuses with the question whether a part of man, called his 'mind,' has within it some inherent property which gives it the power to survive the dissolution of the body. He doubts whether it has, and so, I venture to think, would any competent Christian theologian. The Christian belief is certainly a belief in the full mortality of man – and, equally certainly, not a belief that some one part of human nature is inherently immortal."

Casserley is right in his statement of the genuine Christian position in this matter. Unfortunately, however, his historical generalization about Christian theologians is more questionable. The fact is that many Christian teachers and preachers have undoubtedly presented, as Christian, precisely the view that Hoyle is opposing. He probably learned it at Sunday school, and, in the unlikely event of his attending church, he would certainly hear it preached in any one of a great many pulpits on almost any Sunday. The point is that we cannot lightly dismiss, as culpable ignorance, the misinterpretations of Christian doctrine that are so common on the part of its opponents. Erroneous teaching, on the part of Christians themselves, must bear a large share of the blame.

It is not only in preaching and teaching that we encounter traces of the "religious" anthropology. It turns up, even more often and more objectionably, in many so-called Christian hymns, prayers, and poems. The opening sentence of the prayer of committal in the Burial Office of *The Book of Common Prayer* is starkly dualistic: "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground." A phrase in another prayer in the same Office betrays not only dualism but also a Greek-like, "spiritual" contempt for physical existence: "With whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are

in joy and felicity." The Orphic notion that the body is the tomb from which the soul longs to get free is clearly set forth in the lines of the Christian poet, John Donne: "When bodies to their graves, souls from their graves remove."

Many of our hymns are nothing but thinly disguised Orphic poems. How frequently we are asked to lament this present life as a "weary pilgrimage" and "transient dream," and to hate the physical aspects of our being as shackles binding us to earth, and to look for an eventual release and an escape to heaven, "up above the sky."

"Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

Examples in allegedly Christian hymns of "religious" escapism, hostility to this life, and other-worldliness could be multiplied indefinitely. It is beyond question that the "religious" view of human life frequently turns up disguised in Christian clothes.

If we turn to the Bible, however, as we shall later, we find that a quite different view of man is assumed throughout. Here there is no dualism and scarcely any idea of the immortality of a detached and independent soul. There is no tendency to ascribe unrestricted freedom of choice to the soul, nor is there the slightest inclination to vilify the body and its appetites. On the contrary, the Bible assumes that human nature is a unity; in the New Testament it teaches that man's ultimate destiny involves the "resurrection of the body," that in actual fact the human will is not free but in "bondage," and that a repressive and legalistic system of ethics is an intolerable burden that authority "binds" upon men's shoulders.

One of the most important contributions that Christians can make to the eventual reconciliation of Christianity and scientific naturalism is to rid their thinking of the spurious intrusions of "religion." It is an essential prolegomenon (introduction) to the main task.