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THE CONTRIBUTION OF EXEGESIS  
TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEM OF  
SIN AND SINLESSNESS  
IN THE  
FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

by

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A THESIS

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THESIS: The contribution of exegesis to an understanding of the problem of sin and sinlessness in the First Epistle of John.

INTRODUCTION:

It is unfortunate that no translation can ever adequately reproduce the studious precision of an author's language in another tongue. St. John's idiomatic distinctions in his statement, exposition and solution of the problem of sin and sinlessness in his First Epistle were undoubtedly clear and vivid in the minds of his Greek-speaking readers; but these have been difficult to reproduce in the English versions of this Epistle. Accordingly, it is the purpose of this study to bring into bolder relief and clearer understanding the precise meaning of the Apostle's doctrine. Furthermore, the reader of the First Epistle of John is constantly faced by certain questions involved in John's statements about sin in Christian experience. An illustration of this is the seeming contradiction in the two passages 1:10 and 3:9. In the first he writes, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us"; in the second, "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin...and he cannot sin...". An exegetical treatment of these and other passages will enable us to determine John's precise meaning and solve the problem of sin and sinlessness in this Epistle.

The present study aspires to bring out into clear perspective what John really meant to convey to his

readers, within the following limits: the passages for special study in this investigation are 1:7-2:2; 3:4-9.

Ordinarily an exegetical treatment should be undertaken in order to establish the exact meaning of the author's terminology. In the present case this involves an investigation of some of the synonyms for sin in John's vocabulary, in both substantive and verbal usage. In the course of this study certain questions will emerge, such as: "What is the difference between the use of the singular and the plural of nouns?"; "What is the difference in meaning among the nouns of various endings?"; and "What difference is involved, if any, between a corresponding substantive and verb?". An investigation of this character, upon a subject which has been the object of so much controversy naturally presupposes a large body of available references, the more important of which have been consulted; a complete list of authorities is given in the Bibliography.



## CHAPTER I

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- A. The prominence of the idea of sin in the Scriptures.
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B. Ἀσικία and Ἀρομία

1. Relationship of Ἀσικία and Ἀρομία

- a. Composition.
- b. Root and derivation.

2. Ἀσικία

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- b. Survey of New Testament usage.
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3. Ἀρομία

- a. Etymology.
- b. Survey of New Testament usage.
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- d. Summary.

III General Conclusion and Application.

## CHAPTER I

### THE TERMINOLOGY FOR SIN IN JOHANNINE THOUGHT-SYNONYMS

#### I Introduction.

##### A. The prominence of the idea of sin in the Scriptures.

The prominence of the idea of sin in Holy Scripture is emphasized by the variety of terms used to describe its various forms of expression. In opening his discussion, Trench writes of nine New Testament synonyms for sin, "A mournfully numerous group of words, and one which it would be only too easy to make larger still. Nor is it hard to see why". He continues: "For sin, which we may define in the language of Augustine, as 'factum vel dictum vel concupitum aliquid contra aeternam legem', .....may be regarded under an infinite number of aspects, and in all languages has been so regarded; and as the diagnosis of it belongs most of all to the Scriptures, nowhere else are we likely to find it contemplated on so many sides, set forth under such various images (1)".

##### B. The purpose of this chapter.

A reading of the passages in the First Epistle

(1) Trench: Synonyms of the New Testament, pg.224(London, 1915). The other words for sin which Trench lists are: ἀμαρτία, παράβασις, παρακοή, παράπτωμα, ἄγνοια, ἥτις, παράνομία, πλῆμμελεια

of John which are involved in this study, reveals that the following terms are used: ἁμαρτία and ἁμαρτανών, ἁδικία and ἁνομία. Inasmuch as each word emphasizes some phase of the whole question of sin, it is the immediate purpose of this chapter to determine their precise meaning and relationship.

C. The peculiar characteristics of the terms for sin.

1. "A" Privative.

In beginning to study these words several common characteristics are observed. The first observation is not only that they all begin with the same prefix, but that 'α' is an integral part of these four words. It is an universally recognized law of etymology that "'α' when prefixed to words as an inseparable syllable" sustains either a positive, copulative, or intensive relation to the word to which it is prefixed. It is clear that with these words the first sense is indicated; as for instance, ἁνομία means "what is contrary to νόμος (law)"; i.e., "lawlessness, outlawry", and ἁδικία designates "what is not conformable to δίκη (right)". Therefore, as Thayer (1) has shown, 'α' privative is "like the Latin 'in' and the English 'un', giving a negative sense to the word to which it is prefixed, as ἄβαρὺς ("without weight, not burdensome") is the negative of βάρος ("weight, a burden"); or signifying what is

(1) Thayer: New Testament Lexicon, 'α', Pg.1 (Corrected Edition - 1889).

contrary to it, as ἀτίμιος meaning "without honor" is contrary to τίμιος which is rendered as "valuable, precious, held in honor, esteemed".

## 2. IA "Ending.

The second observation is that all three substantives end in "ια". It is an universally recognized law of etymology that there is a special significance in the ending of Greek nouns: Robertson says that nouns ending in ια "denote an active principle which accompanies an act" (i.e., the idea of a principle working as well as the concrete work), while such an authority as William Goodwin states that "nouns denoting 'quality' are formed from adjective stems by these suffixes: τῆς, τῆς, ια" (1). This is well illustrated by the following words: σοφία ("wisdom"), κακία ("vice"), and ἀλήθεια ("truth"). To set forth the significance of the ending, ἐλεεινότης may be comprehended under the aspect of an active principle. It is also recognized etymologically that nouns ending in ια, such as πρᾶγμα ("thing, act"), ῥῆμα ("saying, i.e., thing said"), τμήμα ("section"), and ἁμαρτία ("an evil deed, a sin"), "denote the 'result' of an action" (2) with more thought of

- (1) Buttmann: Greek Grammar, Pg. 281.  
 Goodwin: Greek Grammar, Pg. 186-7.  
 Hadley and Allen: Greek Grammar, Pgs., 191, 197.  
 Hickie: Lexicon of the Greek New Testament, Pg. 9, "ἐλεεινότης".  
 Robertson: Grammar of the Greek New Testament, Pg. 156, etc.  
 Cf. also: Blass, Pg. 63; and Winer, Pg. 95.  
 (2) Goodwin: Greek Grammar, Pg. 186.

the act than the principle. The above is comprehended in an instances illustrating the meaning of ἁμαρτία in I John 1:8 (of 3:4, etc.), "If we say that we have no sin (ἁμαρτία) we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us", in which the idea of an active principle in life is present; this is somewhat different from the idea suggested by ἁμαρτήματα in Mark 3:28, 29: (Cf. also Rom. 3:25; and I Peter 1:9), "Verily I say unto you, All their sins (ἁμαρτήματα) shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin (ἁμαρτημάτων)", in which cases it is evident that sin is contemplated as deeds of disobedience to a divine law and a result in action (1).

#### D. Summary.

To summarize, it has been observed that ἀδικία, ἁμαρτία, and ὁνομία have common affixes: the prefix 'α' indicating negation or contrariness to the meaning of the root word, and that, although the suffix μα signifies the result of an act, the suffix 'ια' denoting the active principle which accompanies the act.

- (1) Trench: (New Testament Synonyms, pg. 226) cites an illustration of this principle in noun endings from Aristotle (Nic; Eth. v. 7.7):  
 Διαφέρει τὸ ἀδικημα καὶ τὸ ἀδικον.  
 Ἀδικον μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ φόνεϊ, ἢ τὰχεϊ.  
 τὸ αὐτὸ δὲ τοῦτο, ὅταν πρᾶχθῃ ἀδικημα ἐντι

## II Discussion.

### A. Ἀμαρτία and Ἀμαρτάνω

#### 1. The relationship of ἁμαρτία and ἁμαρτάνω

##### a. Composition.

The relationship between the noun ἁμαρτία and the verb ἁμαρτάνω is naturally very close, in view of the fact that they both are formed from a common root and prefixed by the same vowel. Thayer says that ἁμαρτία is connected with ἁμαρτάνω from the aorist form of

ἁμαρτεῖν, as ἀποτυχία is from ἀποτυχεῖν .(1). Three

##### b. Root and derivation.

possible derivations of the word have been suggested

respectively by Suidas, Bullinger and Buttmann. (as the accompanying footnote (2) indicates); however, Buttmann's

(1) Thayer: Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, pg.30, 'ἁμαρτία'.

(2) Suidas derives it from μάρπτω, 'ἁμαρτία quasi ἁμαρττία', "a failing to grasp". Bullinger (Lexicon & Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament, pg.703) suggests that, "If ἁμαρτία is from ἁμαρτα, a duct or canal by which water flows down to any place, then it is akin to ἁρττα, to speak or put forth, and which implies an evil influence....then it is the defiling and bitter principle of disturbance which has flowed down upon the creation of God". Buttmann (Lexilogus, i. pg.137--Eng.Ed.pg.85) refers ἁμαρτάνω with ἁμείρω τοῦ ΜΕΡ in μείρω, μείρομαι, μέρος (with ἁνδ privative), upon which a negative intransitive verb with 'α' privative was formed, and assumes as the original sense, "to be without a share in, not to attain, not to arrive at the goal". Curtius thinks the sense of ἁμβροτον almost drives one to this derivation (pg.679); Brugman (Gram.ii.#682) says ἁμαρτάνω is probably from ἁ-μαρ-το, ἁ-μβρα-το, "without a share of", connected with μέρος-μέρος; he quotes the gloss ἁμαρτεῖν; ἁμαρτάνειν (Hesychius). Buttmann's conjecture has been accepted by such lexicographers and scholars as Cremer, Liddell and Scott, Thayer, and Trench, and has found general favor.

view is supported very closely by Brugman and Curtius and is accepted by the leading lexicographers, and is justified by the meaning of the earlier classical use. The uncertainty of the derivation is implied in the statement of Trench that: "In seeking accurately to define *ἁμαρτία*, and so better to distinguish it from the other words of this group, no help can be derived from its etymology, seeing that it is quite uncertain. Only this much is plain, that when sin is regarded as *ἁμαρτία*, it is regarded as a failing and missing of the true end and scope of our lives, which is God"(1). An examination of the passages in the New Testament where this substantive and its corresponding verb occur should reveal the significance with which it was used by the writers of the New Testament.

## 2. *ἁμαρτία*

### a. Survey of New Testament usage.

*ἁμαρτία* is found about one hundred and seventy-two times in the New Testament, or four times as often as its corresponding verb form *ἁμαρτάνω*, and many times more than any other word meaning "sin". The following chart tabulated from the usages listed by Moulton and Geden will serve to indicate the frequency with which *ἁμαρτία* occurs in the New Testament (2).

- (1) Trench: Synonyms of the New Testament, pgs. 224-5.
- (2) Moulton and Geden: Concordance to the Greek Testament, pgs. 47-9.



Group or Book	Singulars	Plurals	TOTAL
Pauline	52	11	63
Johannine	24	14	38
Hebrews	11	14	25
Lukan	1	18	19
Petrine	3	5	8
Matthew	1	6	7
James	4	3	7
Mark	<u>96</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>163</u>

b. Illustrations of New Testament (including Johannine) usage.

The following typical examples serve to illustrate the New Testament significance of ἁμαρτία. Hebrews 3:13 reads "but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (ἁμαρτία)". It is clear that sin is regarded in this statement as hardening by deceitfulness, and thus is comprehended as an active principle. Furthermore, sin is even personified in II Thessalonians 2:3; "For it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin (ἁμαρτίας) be revealed, the son of perdition"(1). The following instances are also representative of Pauline usage: "that, as sin (ἁμαρτία) reigned in death, even

(1) The Received text (SR<sup>t</sup>) reads ἁμαρτίας, altho Nestle's text reads ἀνομία with ἁμαρτίας in margin.

so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 5:21); and, "So now it is no more I that do it, but sin (*ἡμαρτία*) which dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:17). A Johannine example is in the Gospel of John 8:34: "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin"; When the various instances are compared *ἡμαρτία* may be regarded, as Thayer states it, "in sense but not in signification as the source whence evil acts proceed"(1); or, to express the idea another way, *ἡμαρτία* is conceived under the aspect of an active evil principle in life (2). Another group of instances which reveal a similarity of usage under a different category are the following: First, Matthew 1:21, "For it is he that shall save his people from their sins"; second, Matthew 12:31, "Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men"; and third, John 1:29, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world". Speaking of these three instances, Burton, whose well-balanced judgment as an authority has contributed essentially to our understanding of this term, refers to these passages by saying that *ἡμαρτία* sometimes signifies

- (1) Thayer: Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, pgs. 30-31.
- (2) This is illustrated in classical Greek in Plato's Legg. II 660C: "far advanced in evil (*ἡμαρτίας*)".

"the deed as distinguished from the doing of it"(1).

To these instances such others as the following might be added. I John 3:5 as an example similar to Matthew 1:21;

"And ye know that he was manifested to take away sins (*ἁμαρτίας*)", involves the principle with emphasis

upon the concrete expressions of it, in a generic sense.

Acts 7:60, "Lord lay not this sin (*ἁμαρτίαν*) to their charge" and John 19:11, "Jesus answered him, Thou wouldest

have no power against me except it were given thee from

above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath

greater sin (*ἁμαρτίαν*)", are similar to Matthew 12:31

as referring specifically to a particular deed or kind of

sinful act. Further instances of the third type illus-

trated by John 1:29 are: Hebrews 10:6, "In whole burnt

offerings and sacrifices for sin (*περὶ ἁμαρτίας*) thou

hadst no pleasure"; Romans 3:9, "for we before laid to

the charge both of Jew and Greeks, that they are all un-

der sin (*ἁμαρτίαν*)"; and in I John 1:7 and 2:2 respec-

tively, "and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from

all sin (*ἁμαρτίας*)" and "he is the propitiation for our

sins (*ἁμαρτιῶν*)". From the several contexts it is

easily seen that in these cases the collective idea is

foremost.

(1) Burton: "New Testament Word Studies", pgs.1,2.  
"Commentary on Galatians", pgs. 436-43.

c. Summary.

The two general uses which appear in the foregoing occurrences, on the two preceding pages, as used by the New Testament writers are illustrated and contrasted in an early Christian letter of the Fourth Century, A.D., (1), which has been discovered in Egypt: An unknown Justinus addresses himself to a Christian brother, Papnuthius. The relevant part reads: "For 'in the multitude of words they shall not escape sin (*τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν*)', I beseech you, master, to remember me in your holy prayers, in order that I may be able (to receive) my part in the cleansing of sin (*τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν*)....For I am one of the sinners"(2). The first instance refers to the abstract principle, the latter to the concrete committed sins, collectively (3). Accordingly, it is noteworthy that *ἁμαρτία*, "sin", as "hardening, reigning, doing" and even personified in "the man of sin" may be viewed as an active principle or abstractly as the committing of sin, in the first sense. On the other hand, it may be considered collectively as committed sin under varying aspects. In conclusion, *ἁμαρτία* as an active principle outworking in action

- (1) Heidelberger Papyrus-Sammlung, Vol. I, Die Septuaginta Papyri und andere altchristliche Texte, ed. A. Deissmann, Heidelberg, 1905.
- (2) Milligan: Selections from the Greek Papyri, pgs. 125-7.
- (3) The use of Aeschylus in Agamemnon (1198) is similar to the second use: "Bear witness upon thine oath that I do know the sins (*ἁμαρτίας*), ancient in story, of this house".

represents all that does not conform to the standard, viz., that set by the will of God. (1).

### 3. Ἀμαρτάνω

#### a. Survey of New Testament usage.

Ἀμαρτάνω appears forty-three times, or about one fourth the number of occurrences listed for its related noun ἁμαρτία, in the New Testament (2). The distribution according to author or book is as follows: Pauline, seventeen (largely in Romans and I Corinthians); Johannine, fourteen (I John ten; Gospel of John, four); Lukan, five; Matthew, three; Hebrews, two; Petrine, two. Of particular interest is the fact that the verb ἁμαρτάνω occurs ten times in the First Epistle of John and oftener than in any other New Testament book (3). Another point of interest is the fact that the Gospel has two present and two aorist usages, while the Epistle has nine present forms and one perfect; the use of these tenses with this verb will be considered at an appropriate stage of this investigation.

- (1) Similar treatment of this term may be found in the following: Cremer: Lexicon of New Testament Greek, pgs. 100-102. Liddell and Scott: Greek-English Lexicon, pg. 72. Robinson: Lexicon of the New Testament, pgs. 35-6. Thayer: Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, pgs. 30-31. Burton: "New Testament Word Studies", pgs. 1, 2. "Commentary on Galatians", pgs. 436-43.
- (2) Moulton and Geden: Concordance to the Greek Testament, pgs. 47-9. It may be noted that the Revised Version renders "to sin" everywhere.
- (3) The use of ἁμαρτάνω in the Septuagint, although not conclusive, shows that the verb, according to Burton, Commentary on Galatians, pgs. 437f, occurs about one hundred and seventy times (and generally means  
(Continued on next page)

b. Illustrations of New Testament (including Johannine) usage.

The following citations illustrate the New Testament significance of ἁμαρτάνω. The parable of the Prodigal Son contains the following clause, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight (πατέρ ἁμαρτον εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ἐνώπιόν σου )" in Luke 15:18 and 21. An amazing counterpart of this usage and story is in "The Letter of a Prodigal Son", a document belonging to the second century A.D. (1): it is an illiterate appeal from Antonius Longus to his mother, entreating her to be reconciled to him despite his pitiful and shameful state. The actual instance is: παῖ παῖδευμας, καὶ ὅτι δὲ τῷ τρόπῳ. οἶδα, ὅτι ἁμαρτάνω—"Punished I have been in any case. I know that I have sinned (ἁμαρτάνω )" (2). Judas likewise wasted his golden opportunity but when stricken with remorse said, "I have sinned (ἁμαρτον ) in that I have betrayed innocent

(3 Continued from preceding page).

"to sin") and is used for the Hebrew verb *חָטָא*. An instance is found in Genesis 20:6, "I also withheld thee from sinning against me". Sophocles (Greek Lexicon, pg.123, ἁμαρτάνω) also calls attention to apocryphal uses: Tobit 3:3; Judith 5:17; Baruch 2:12, etc., as being of same meaning as Gen.20:6-"to sin, offend against God". The supposition is that the word had an early ethical significance of such nature as to be adopted into the Septuagint, which usage may have influenced John (cf. 9:2,3), yet his known Grecian contacts and the New Testament relation to Hellenistic Greek oppose this idea. Classical use shows two distinct trends:

1. Physical-used by Homer, Il.8.311, on through Sophocles, Aeschylus, Antipho, when a spear misses the mark, and 2. Ethical-Also used as "to fail of one's purpose, to lose" until it developed as early as Homer, Il.9.501, an ethical significance meaning "to do wrong, to err, to sin". (cf. Cremer, Liddell & Scott, Robinson, and Thayer.)

(1) B.G.U. 846(ii.A.D.): Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Koeniglichen Museen zu Berlin: Griechische Urkunden. Vols.i-iv (in progress). Berlin, 1895-.

(2) Milligan: Selections from the Greek Papyri, pgs.93-5, Document #37,12. Moulton and Milligan: The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, Vol.I.

blood" (Matthew 27:4). John 9:2 reads, "And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned (*ἥμαρτεν*), this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?", similarly I John 1:10, "If we say that we have not sinned (*ἡμαρτήκαμεν*), we make him a liar, and his word is not in us". Observation of each instance cited above, in the light of its derivation (cf. page 5 above), suggests what may be considered to be the fundamental meaning of the verb *ἡμαρτάνω* "to miss the mark", or to wander from the path of uprightness and honor, or to do or go wrong. Inasmuch as the aorist tense expresses punctiliar action (1), it here suggests comprehension of sinning as a single act; while the perfect expresses the continuance of completed action (2).

But the verb is also found in the present tense which expresses durative or linear action (3). The Epistle to the Hebrews (10:26) contains an instance as follows: "For if we sin (*ἡμαρτανόντων*) wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins (*ἡμαρτιῶν*)", i.e., if we go on sinning (*ἡμαρτανόντων*) there can be no sacrifice for sins as long as wrong-doing is the practice or habit of one's life (4). Paul writes in I Corinthians 8:12 "And thus, sinning (practicing sin) (*ἡμαρτανούμεν*) the brethren, and

- (1) Robertson: A Grammar of the Greek New Testament, pgs. 830-1.
- (2) Dana and Mantey: Manual for the Study of the Greek New Testament, pg. 125.
- (3) Robertson: A Grammar of the Greek New Testament, pg. 879.
- (4) Plato, Legg. 891 E and Phaedr. 242 E show similar classical usage: "to do wrong in a matter", *ἡμαρτάνω περὶ τῆς [ἡ] τιμῆς*.

wounding their conscience when it is weak, ye sin (are practicing sin) (*ἡμαρτάνετε*) against Christ". John has similar instances in both his Gospel and Epistle. John 5:14 and 8:11 both record Christ as saying, "Sin (go on sinning) (*ἡμαρτάνετε*) no more", while I John 2:1 contains John's message: "These things write I unto you that ye may not sin (*ἡμαρτάνετε*). And if any man sin (*ἡμαρτή*), we have an Advocate with the Father. A singular example is that of I John 5:16, "And if any man see his brother (*ἡμαρτάνοντα ἡμαρτάνοντα*)", in which the sense of the latter two words is "to keep on sinning a sin" or "sinning a sin"; a classical Greek reference illustrates this peculiar sense as involved in use of both verb and substantive: *μεγάλα ἡμαρτήματα ἡμαρτάνειν* (Plato, *Phaedo* 113 B). The present tense in the above instances clearly indicates the durative sense in the expression of the idea of sinning.

### c. Summary.

From the preceding study of a number of the occurrences of *ἡμαρτάνω* in the New Testament, it is clearly seen that it is fittingly rendered in the simple sense of "to sin", no matter in what tense. As stated in the preceding survey (cf. page 11) and considered in the discussion which follows it, the use of *ἡμαρτάνω* in the Johannine writings is limited to the aorist and perfect or to the present tenses (1).

- (1) Blass: *Grammar*, pg. 198: "The perfect tense unites in itself as it were the present and aorist, since it expresses the continuance of completed action".



#### 4. Conclusion.

Finally, it is evident that the verb "to sin" (*ᾠμάρταν*) corresponds exactly to the meaning of the noun "to sin" (*ᾠμαρτία*) in having the same root (cf. pg. 5) and construction. The meaning may be comprehensively expressed as "the transgression of or want of conformity unto the law of God"(1). In his scholarly additional note on I John 1:9 Westcott (2) states concerning the threefold obligation of man to self, the world, and God: "To violate the 'law' by which this relation is defined in life is 'to sin'. Each conscious act by which the law is broken is 'a sin': the principle which finds expression in the special acts is 'sin'". He continues: "*ᾠμαρτία* ('a sin, sin') and *ᾠμάρταν* ('to sin') have two distinct meanings.

*ᾠμαρτία* may describe a single act impressed by the sinful character (I Jn 5:16), or sin regarded in the abstract (Jn 16:8). And again *ᾠμάρταν* may be 'to commit a sinful act' (I Jn 1:10) or 'to present a sinful character' (I Jn 3:6)." This analysis is well justified by the present investigation.

#### B. *ᾠδικία* and *ᾠνομία*

##### 1. Relationship of *ᾠδικία* and *ᾠνομία*

###### a. Composition.

The remaining two words to be studied in this

(1) Westminster Shorter Catechism: Section Q-A 14.

(2) Westcott: Commentary on "Epistles of St. John", pgs. 37-8.

chapter are similar in construction, root-idea, and principle, viz. ἀδικία and ἀνομία. They have the same prefix and suffix, the 'α' privative, as shown previously (cf. pg. 2,3 ), imparting the idea of negation and the ending 'ια' (cf. pgs. 3,4 above) signifying the principle outworking in action.

b. Root and derivation.

Ἀδικία is derived from δίκη (δικαίος) (1), which means "right, just"; ἀνομία is from νόμος denoting "law" (2); accordingly their root-ideas have a similar connotation(3). As Westcott has well said (4), ἀδικία is properly rendered "unrighteousness" as ἀνομία is translated "lawlessness": the basic principle in both is that which is contrary to the established norm or standard.

2. Ἀδικία

a. Etymology.

Ἀδικία; ας, in the Ionic ἀδίκω, ἀδίκη occurs from Homer down, and is the substantive form of the adjective

- (1) Thayer: Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, pg. 12.  
Cf. Cremer: Lexicon of New Testament Greek, pgs. 200-2.
- (2) Robinson: Lexicon of the New Testament, pg. 61.  
Thayer: Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, pg. 48.
- (3) Herodotus (1.96), contains a passage with both words, although the derivatives of δίκη are there used more in the sense of "justice": He writes concerning Deioces a Mede, "And this he did although there was much lawlessness (ἀνομία) in all the land of Media, and though he knew that injustice (ἀδικία) is ever the foe of justice (δικαιοσύνη)".
- (4) Westcott: Epistles of St. John, pgs. 192-3.

$\delta\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$  as a combination of 'α' privative and  $\delta\iota\kappa\varsigma$ .  $\Delta\iota\kappa\varsigma$  is connected with  $\delta\epsilon\iota\kappa\nu\mu\epsilon$  (1), occurring from Homer down likewise; the original sense of  $\delta\iota\kappa\varsigma$  was "custom, usage", but in early times "right" was inferred from "usage" until the idea progressed to be used "of all proceedings instituted to determine legal rights, etc." (2). A comprehensive classical illustration which links the widening conceptions of  $\delta\iota\kappa\varsigma$  and  $\delta\iota\kappa\iota\alpha$  together is found in Thucydides (3.66): "And now after having perpetrated in a short time these three crimes ( $\delta\varsigma\iota\kappa\iota\alpha\varsigma$ ).....the breach of your agreement, the subsequent murder of the men, and the falsification of your promise not to kill them. ....No, not if these your judges come to a right ( $\delta\iota\kappa\varsigma$ ) decision." Accordingly, 'α' privative and the 'ια' ending unite with the root to impart the idea of "un-right-eousness", or (3) what is not conformable to  $\delta\iota\kappa\varsigma$  (right)".

b. Survey of New Testament usage.

The word under consideration occurs twenty-six times (4) in twenty-five New Testament verses, or ten more times than  $\alpha\nu\omicron\mu\iota\alpha$  and one seventh of the appearances of  $\alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\iota\alpha$ . The distribution of the twenty-six instances

- (1) Liddell and Scott (cf.  $\delta\epsilon\iota\kappa\nu\mu\epsilon$ , pg. 328 in Greek-English Lexicon): Curtius believes that the root is  $\Delta\epsilon\iota\kappa$  or  $\Delta\iota\kappa$ , whence also  $\delta\iota\kappa\varsigma$ , etc.
- (2) Thayer (Greek-English Lexicon of N.T., pg. 151, ' $\delta\iota\kappa\varsigma$  ') briefly divides its growing significance: first, custom and usage; second, right and practice; third, suit at law; fourth, judicial proceedings; fifth, punishment; sixth, avenging justice.
- (3) Gremer: Lexicon of New Testament Greek, pg. 201.
- (4) Moulton and Geden: Concordance to the Greek Testament, pg. 22.

according to author or book are as follows: Pauline, twelve; Lukan, six; Johannine, three; Petrine, two; Hebrews, two (8:12  $\delta\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\iota\varsigma$ , only plural in New Testament); and James, one. Of the three Johannine uses, two occur in the First Epistle of John.

c. Illustrations of New Testament (including Johannine) usage.

The following examples are representative of the significance of  $\delta\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}$  as used in the New Testament. In II Corinthians 12:13, Paul writes, "For what is there wherein ye were made inferior to the rest of the churches, except it be that I myself was not a burden to you? forgive me this wrong ( $\delta\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\lambda\epsilon$ )", using  $\delta\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}$  in the sense of wrong or injustice (1). Peter uses  $\delta\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}$  in his Second Epistle 2:13,15: "suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing ( $\delta\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ )" and "forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the hire of wrong-doing ( $\delta\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ )"; these parallel instances contrast  $\delta\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}$  with the right way as the doing of what is contrary to right. The sense in these three instances is particularly that of "wrong-doing" as revealed against the right standard (2). A slightly different mean-

- (1) P. Tebt. I 104:23, a Marriage Contract papyri of 92 B.C. is illustrative of the sense of "injustice, wrong": "It shall not be lawful for Philiscus to bring in any other wife but Apollonia....nor to alienate any of their property to Apollonia's disadvantage ( $\delta\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\lambda\epsilon$ )". For other illustrations consult Moulton and Milligan. The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, (Part I), pg. 10.
- (2) Xenophon supplies an instance of this in his Memorabilia (ii.2.3): "thinking that they will not, in all likelihood, cause wrong-doing ( $\delta\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\lambda\epsilon$ ) to cease by the fear of any greater evil". Cf. also Cyrop viii.8.7, "accordingly, owing to their impiety ( $\alpha\tau\epsilon\beta\epsilon\iota\alpha\lambda\epsilon$ ) toward the gods and their iniquity ( $\delta\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\lambda\epsilon$ ) toward man".

ing appears in instances from several other New Testament writers: Luke (13:27) records Christ as saying, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity (*ἁμαρτίας*)"; in Acts 1:18, "Now this man obtained a field with the reward of his iniquity (*ἁμαρτίας*)", and again in 8:23, "For I see that thou art in the bond of iniquity (*ἁμαρτίας*)", the same meaning is evident, viz., that of a deed (or deeds with regard to Luke 13:27) violating law and justice, but still more the idea of a principle of unrighteousness manifesting itself in action as iniquity. James speaks of "the world of iniquity (*ἁμαρτίας*)" in 3:6; Epistle to Hebrews furnishes the other instances which seem to have this meaning, 1:9 - "thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity" and 8:12 - "I will be merciful to their iniquities". All of the foregoing denote a special unrighteousness of life and activity, something deep-seated and fundamentally opposed to what is highest in man's relations with God and his fellow-creatures, (and of such nature as to require God's mercy), a principle of unrighteousness that is contrasted (cf. Hebrews 1:9) with righteousness and expresses itself best in English as the type of sin (1) termed "iniquity".

Still another variation in meaning is evident in other examples, such as in Luke 16:9, "mannon of unrighteousness (*ἁμαρτίας*)" and literally "unrighteousness" again in 16:8 and 18:6 in reference to the unrighteous steward and judge. Eleven of Paul's twelve uses of *ἁμαρτία* seem to be

- (1) I John 5:17, "all unrighteousness is sin", *πᾶσα ἁμαρτία ἁμαρτία ἐστίν*

similar to the rendition just above: a few representative illustrations are Romans 1:18 "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"; Romans 6:13 "neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness"; I Corinthians 13:6, "rejoiceth not in unrighteousness"; II Thessalonians 2:10, "but had pleasure in unrighteousness"; and II Timothy 2:19, "let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness". In all of these there is an universal recognition that "all unrighteousness is sin", is opposite of godliness, irreconcilable with the nature of God in our lives; unrighteousness, therefore, is a potential factor for wickedness which may be opposed by dedication to its opposite, "righteousness". Paul contrasts  $\delta\lambda\iota\mu\iota\alpha$  with  $\delta\iota\kappaαιοσύνη$  in Romans 3:5, "but if our unrighteousness ( $\delta\lambda\iota\mu\iota\alpha$ ) commendeth the righteousness ( $\delta\iota\kappaαιοσύνη$ ) of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous ( $\delta\lambda\iota\mu\iota\alpha$ ) who visiteth with wrath?" and again in 6:13, "neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness ( $\delta\lambda\iota\mu\iota\alpha$ ); but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness ( $\delta\iota\kappaαιοσύνη$ ) unto God". These instances are similar to I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous ( $\delta\iota\kappaαιος$ ) to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ( $\delta\lambda\iota\mu\iota\alpha$ )".

$\delta\lambda\iota\mu\iota\alpha$  is also contrasted with  $\alpha\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$  as in Romans 2:8, "obey not truth but righteousness (cf. also 1:18, etc.)"; John also has an instance in his Gospel that

is similar to the Pauline occurrences. John 7:18 reads  
 "Οὗτος λατρεύς ἐστὶν καὶ ῥησιν ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν; the

same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him", imply-  
 ing no immorality of nature and a deeper contrast to

λατρεὺς then ψεύδος ; ῥησιν is the inner moral  
 basis of the ψεύδος . This illuminates the two examples  
 of ῥησιν in the First Epistle of John, which with John  
 7:18 comprise the total Johannine usage of the word:

I John 1:9 reading, "If we confess our sins, he is faith-  
 ful and righteous (δίκαιος ) to forgive us our sins, and  
 to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (ἀδικία )" and  
 5:17 "All unrighteousness (ἀδικία ) is sin (ἁμαρτία)..."

Although Paul generally views ἀδικία as purely "unrighteous-  
 ness", the triple Johannine usage has a different aspect or  
 basis. Righteousness and unrighteousness are regarded by  
 him as characteristically under the aspect of truth and  
 falsehood, i.e., the form of being rather than the form of  
 manifestation and each time in an all-inclusive scope;  
 hence, in John especially ῥησιν refers to "that which  
 ought not to be because of revealed truth".

#### d. Summary.

Furthermore, ῥησιν brings forward that side of  
 sin which is against our neighbor and does him a wrong, and  
 as such is common to human and divine law (1); it may be

(1) Hastings: Bible Dictionary, IV, pg.432.

conceived as "wrong-doing", "iniquity", or strictly, "unrighteousness"-or specifically or universally, ordinarily as contradicting divine righteousness and opposing divine truth.  $\text{Ἀδίκη}$  is violation of right, as what is not conformable to either  $\text{δίκη}$  or  $\text{ἀλλόθετα}$ ; consequently it is indeed "un-right-eousness" in the mind of the Apostle who loved Truth and Light.

### 3. $\text{Ἀνομία}$

#### a. Etymology.

$\text{Ἀνομία}$ , as in the Ionic as  $\text{ἰν, ῥ}$  is properly "lawlessness", from which proceeds the idea of "violation of law, transgression". It is found from Thucydides onward, and often in the Septuagint.  $\text{Ἀνομία}$  is the substantive form of the adjective  $\text{ἄνομος}$ , "lawless", which is likewise a compound of the negative "α" privative" and  $\text{νόμος}$ , "law". The latter comes from  $\text{ρένω}$ , which is derived from the root-stem  $\text{ṚNEM}$  (1); and which means to "divide, distribute, apportion", occurring in Homer.  $\text{νόμος}$  itself is in profane authors from Hesychius down, especially in Herodotus, the Tragedians, Aristotle, Xenophon, and Plato; but it was known even by Josephus (c. Ap. 2.15,3) that it was not in Homer. It is properly rendered as "anything assigned or apportioned, that which one has in use or possession (1): hence, "anything established, anything received by usage, a custom, a law, an ordinance, all that becomes law thereby"(2).

(1) Liddell and Scott: G-E Lex. pg.<sup>34</sup>1009.

(2) Thayer: G-E Lex. of New Testament, pg.427.



It indicates a national, settled life when the idea of law as ordinance developed (1). Burton skilfully traces the progress of the word-idea as the thought of a group which controlled others, until the sense of custom and finally authoritative law was reached (2).. Accordingly, *νομος* meaning "law", *ἀνομος* will mean "un-law" or "lawless" with the idea that here is a law but the character chooses to be *ἀνομος* , "lawless" (3). It is important to grasp the distinction, in contrast to our English usage, that this does not mean without law, but rather "out-law" or "lawless character under law-existent circumstances" (4).

*Ἀνομία* then carries out this out-law idea into the substantive form, the *α* carrying strongly the idea of contrariness and the ending *ια* the idea of a principle working as well as the concrete work, "the principle of out-lawry which works lawlessness", (pgs. 243-244).

#### b. Survey of New Testament usage.

The last of this group of four words, *Ἀνομία*, occurs in thirteen New Testament verses to the total of fifteen times: thus it occurs least frequently of any of the four words discussed in this chapter, inasmuch as it is found slightly over one-half the number of times for *ἀνομία* and

- (1) Gremer: Lexicon of New Testament Greek, pg. 429.
- (2) Burton: Commentary on Epistle to the Galatians, pgs. 243-5.
- (3) Cummings: Monograph on "Synonyms for Sin", pg. 9.
- (4) Trench in "Synonyms of N.T.", pg. 227-8, seems justified in his statement that although *ἀνομος* may connote absence of law (cf. I Cor. 9:21--four times), *ἀνομία* "is never the condition of one living without law, but always the condition or deed of one who acts contrary to law".

about one twelfth for *ᾗμαρτία*. The uses are further apportioned as follows: Paul, seven; Matthew, four; John, two; Hebrews, two. Both of the Johannine instances are found in the First Epistle of John and in the same verse (I John 3:4). It is found in the plural only in Romans 4:7 and Hebrews 10:17 (1).

c. Illustrations of New Testament (including Johannine) usage.

Among the representative passages containing *ἁμαρτία* are those of Matthew. Matthew 7:23 reads, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity (*ᾗμαρτίαι*)" similarly to 13:41, "and they shall gather.....them that do iniquity"; in both cases *ἁμαρτία* is considered as an abstract principle resulting in action. Matthew 24:12 reads. "And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold" in which instance iniquity seems capable of affecting or nullifying a similar active principle, namely, that of love. The plural is used in Romans 4:7 ("whose iniquities are forgiven") and Hebrews 10:17 ("their iniquities will I remember no more"); a comparison with corresponding singular uses shows that there is little difference in the general principle involved but that the use designates the individual acts as the outcome of such a factor; *ᾗμαρτία* is used with the plural instances in such conjunction as to indicate almost a parallel signification. Hebrews 1:9 has the statement, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity

(1) Moulton and Geden: Concordance to the Greek Testament, pg. 78.

Brooke: Commentary on Johannine Epistles, Indices, pg. 229.

(ἀνομίαν)", showing the fundamental opposition existing also between δικαιοσύνη as righteousness and the concept of iniquity or wickedness, set forth in ἀνομία.

Other illustrations worthy of consideration follow: II Thessalonians speaks of the "mystery of lawlessness (ἀνομίας)" in 2:7 and several verses before of οὗ ἀνθρώπου τῆς ἀνομίας (1); as "the man of lawlessness"; this sense seems to be nearer the original proper sense of the noun as being derived from νόμος. I John 3:4 is probably the best known passage containing ἀνομία, "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin (ἡμαρτία) is lawlessness (ἀνομία)". The two instances from II Thessalonians as used by Paul and the two from I John as written by John differ from all the preceding examples and have the same idea of "lawlessness" in view; this is well illustrated in the classical Greek (Plato) and in papyri of 295 A.D. which will be considered subsequently (cf. pg. 27).

In the last mentioned usages of ἀνομίας "lawlessness" the New Testament has reference to the law of God for "whosoever committeth sin, committeth also transgression", for sin is the transgression of God's law. It is obvious that ἀνομία is the lawlessness, i.e., sin is the working out of the principle of lawlessness. Here ἡμαρτία is the more general abstract term, and

(1) Nestle's Text: ἡμαρτίας is given as marginal reading; this is reversed in SRT. Cf. pg. 7

*ἀνομία* the more definite and specific. The principle is illustrated in Xenophon's Memorabilia (i.2.24) in which he states about the sojourn of Critias in Thessaly: "making use of (living in) lawlessness (*ἀνομία*) rather than just dealing"; the citation is significant in view of the idea in the background, that the Thessalians were proverbial for their licentiousness, perfidy, and treachery. While Paul (twice) and Hebrews (once) contrast *ἀνομία* with *δικαιοσύνη*, as illustrated in classical usage (1), John conceives of *ἀνομία* more as being contrary to law and faith than to the norm or standard of righteousness (of preceding references) although Paul agrees with John in I Thessalonians. *Ἀνομία* is the working out of the principle of lawlessness, whereas Paul contrasts the principles of lawlessness and righteousness with less definite connection with sin (II Cor. 6:14-- "righteousness and iniquity"). The Johannine conception is that of the singular principle and its outworking, resulting in the idea of "iniquity" in other New Testament writers; in its strict proper sense of "lawlessness" represents the conception of sin given in the First Epistle of John, for "sin is lawlessness".

- (1) *Ἀνομία* is opposed to *δικαιοσύνη* and *δίκαιος* in Herodotus (i.96) and Xenophon's Memorabilia (i.2.24), as cited in this discussion; New Testament occurrences of similar character are Romans 6:19; II Corinthians 6:14; and Hebrews 1:9.

d. Summary.

Non-Biblical writers seem to give *ἀνομία* as "lawlessness". For example, Plato (Republic ix.575 A) describes the state of a people without stable government as "anarchy and lawlessness", *ἀναρχία καὶ ἀνομία*. Furthermore, John is true to the permanent sense of "lawlessness" as is shown by the fact that not only the early classical Greek but even a papyrus (1) of about 295 A.D. (here *ἔρριπτα ὡς ἐν ἀνομίᾳ ἀνελάβε* means "lawlessly carried them off") have the same constancy in conception of meaning. The view that John, midway in time, used *ἀνομία* in its proper sense seems especially acceptable in the light of Xenophon's usage in Memorabilia i.2.24 (cf. pg. 26 ) in which case the proverbial lawless character of Thessaly implies a conception of sinfulness. Despite the fact that other New Testament writers use the word to mean variously "wrong-doing, iniquity, lawlessness" and the possibility of such usage by others, the context of the First Epistle of John and the secular usage before and after John indicate that the Apostle used the word in its proper sense. There is no special reason why John, writing later and in a Grecian environment at Ephesus, should have changed from the historic meaning; however, the word would naturally assume deeper significance by its application in

(1) P Oxy VIII 1121:20.

the Scriptural theme where contrasts are intensified by "light" and "darkness".

### III General Conclusion and Application.

In conclusion and application it will follow then that "where there is no law (Romans 5:13) there may be *ἁμαρτία*, *ἀδικία* but not *ἄνομία*". Trench adds that, "It is true, indeed, that, behind the law of Moses which they (the Gentiles) never had, there is another law, the original law and revelation of the righteousness of God, written on the hearts of all (Romans 2:12; 3:21); and, as this in no human heart is obliterated quite, all sin... must still in a secondary sense remain as *ἄνομία*, a violation of this older, partially obscured, law" (1). *Ἀνομία* is also commonly used as parallel and nearly synonymous with *ἁμαρτία* as "transgression, unrighteousness, iniquity" (cf. Romans 4:7 and Hebrews 1:9) (2); and yet, it suggests sin in its relation to God's will and law. On the other hand, the general notion of fault exists in both *ἄνομία* and *ἀδικία*: that is *ἀδικία* by which the *δικαίωμα* is injured, that is *ἄνομία* by which the law is violated. *Ἀδικία* is said of anyone's shortcomings in relation to the standard of *δική*; for all unrighteousness is sin (I John 5:17). But sin is *ἄνομία*, because it is properly the non-observance or transgression of the law, whether the law be unknown or

(1) Trench: Synonyms of the New Testament, pg.228.

(2) Robinson: Lexicon of the New Testament, pg.61.

wilfully violated. There can be no *ἀνομία* without *ἁδικία* (1), for *ἁδικία* is the wider term: *ἀνομία* is the violation of law, *ἁδικία* the doing contrary to what is right (2). Finally, *ἁμαρτία* (sin) is *ἀνομία* (lawlessness), and all *ἁδικία* (unrighteousness) is *ἁμαρτία* (sin) (cf. I John); but since *ἁδικία* includes *ἀνομία*, all *ἁδικία* and *ἀνομία* are *ἁμαρτία*, i.e., all unrighteousness and lawlessness are sin. And, although *ἁμαρτία* and *ἁμαρτάνειν* mean "sin", yet "sin is lawlessness". Accordingly, what is sin except whatever is contrary to the will or law of God?

(1) Herodotus: 1.96. Cf. Footnote (3) on pg. 16.

(2) Tittmann: Synonyms of the New Testament, Vol. I, pgs. 85-6 (English edition: Edinburgh, 1833).

## CHAPTER 11

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF EXEGESIS TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF 1:7-2:2.

#### 1 Preliminary Remarks.

- A. Observations upon the Structure of the Passage.
- B. Symmetrical form of the passage.
- C. Relationship of the introductory context (1:5-7)

#### 11 Elucidation of St. John's Phraseology concerning Sin.

##### A. Phraseology of 1:7,9.

- 1. Construction of 1:7,9.
- 2. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 1:7.
- 3. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 1:9.
- 4. Conclusions.

##### B. Phraseology of 1:8, 10.

- 1. Construction of 1:8, 10.
- 2. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 1:8
- 3. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 1:10.
- 4. Conclusions.

##### C. Phraseology of 2:1, 2.

- 1. Construction of 2:1, 2.
- 2. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 2:1
- 3. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 2:2.
- 4. Conclusions.

#### 111 General Conclusions.



## CHAPTER 11

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF EXEGESIS TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF 1:7-2:2.

#### 1. Preliminary Remarks.

##### A. Observations upon the structure of the passage.

Careful observation of the structure of the passage to be discussed here ( 1 John 1:7-2:2, but involving the larger context of 1:5-2:2) shows that the declaration in 1:5 concerning the nature of God, i.e., that "God is light ( $\delta\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma\ \phi\acute{\omega}\varsigma\ \epsilon\upsilon\tau\epsilon\iota\nu$ ) is followed by five conditional sentences (1:6,7,8,9,10) introduced consecutively by  $\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu$  and a concluding couplet (2:1,2) containing another condition beginning with  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu$ . In the protasis of three of these sentences (vs.6,8,10) indirect discourse is introduced by the phrase  $\epsilon\acute{\omega}\nu\ \epsilon\iota\pi\omega\mu\epsilon\nu\ \delta\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon$ . (" if we say that "); by this device St. John introduces three false views of pleas about the relationship of man to God as a result of the character ascribed to God (vs.5). "Probably many a one in St. John's congregation did so think and act, as here in Vs.6,8,10, is in a communicative and hypothetical manner portrayed. But, by such a form, the address in one respect, gained a more delicate softness, and, in another, a more universal applicability and efficacy" (1).

##### B. Symmetrical form of the passage.

Westcott suggests that "The contrasts and consequences involved in this view of man's relation to God can be placed clearly in a symmetrical form ( 6,8,10)";

(1) Lucke: Commentary on the Epistles of St. John pg.112

to show the relationship of the protases to the apodoses.(1).

- "6. If we say We have fellowship with Him, and walk in the darkness,  
we lie, and  
we do not the truth.
- 8. If we say We have no sin,  
we deceive ourselves and  
the truth is not in us.
- 10. If we say We have not sinned,  
we make Him a liar and  
His word is not in us.

On the other hand(vv.7,9):

- 7. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light,  
we have fellowship one with another, and  
the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin.
- 9. If we confess our sins,  
He is faithful and righteous  
to forgive us our sins, and  
to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".

The third contrast does not lend itself to such arrangement (2:1,2). Referring to 1:6,8,10 and 1:7,9 Westcott also observes the following: "The progress in the development of the thought is obvious from the parallelisms. 'We lie', 'we deceive ourselves', 'we make Him a liar': we are false, that is, to our own knowledge; we persuade ourselves that we dare to set ourselves above God. Again: 'we do not the truth', 'falsehood is truth',/'the truth is not in us', 'His word is not in us': we do not carry into act that which we have recognized as our ruling principle; the Truth, to which conscience bears witness, is not the spring and law of our life; we have broken off our vital connection with the Truth when it comes to us as 'the Word of God' with a present, personal force". (2) Accordingly it is evident that John here uses parallel constructions in antithetical series to emphasize his points. Thus, because of its position, construction, and thought, 1:5-7, as a characteristically

(1) Westcott: Epistles of St. John, pg.18.  
(2) Westcott: Epistles of St. John, pg 18.

Johannine contrast and comparison of light and darkness, seems to be introductory to the main context.

C. Relationship of the introductory context (1:5-7)

Further observation of 1 John 1:5-7 as the introductory portion of the context reveals a vital connection between the message that "God is light", and the related idea of fellowship: The implication is that light is not alone a separated attribute of God but also a communicable part of His character in his relationships with the human race. The Apostle's statement that "this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you" shows the Divine origin of the message given; it would seem therefore that the Apostle's statement concerning the nature of God (vs.5) should be his foundation in considering the objections and difficulties which are subsequently presented. What might be termed the test or condition of fellowship is stated in verse 6, "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie and do not the truth;" likewise the privileges and results of fellowship with God in the light are given in verse 7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." It is evident from 1:5-7 that there is a vital relationship between light and truth, and a similar correspondence between darkness and falsehood. It is with these conceptions as a background that John considers the problems of sin and sinlessness respectively.

11 Elucidation of St. John's Phraseology concerning Sin.

A. Phraseology of 1:7,9.

1. Construction of 1:7,9.

Because of their similar structure and phraseology (including three corresponding phrases), verses 7 and 9 may be effectively treated together. Their construction is evident from the following arrangement:

Verse 7---(καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ)  
καθαρίσει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάντων ἁμαρτιῶν  
Verse 9---(ἐάν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν,  
ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν πιστὸς ἔστιν καὶ δίκαιος) ἵνα  
καθαρίσῃ ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάντων ἁμαρτιῶν.

2. Exegetical Discussion of phraseology of 1:7.

The clause "and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin," in vs.7, is associated with the preceding statement "we have fellowship one with another", as is shown by the use of the simple connective καὶ and their use as a compound apodosis in a conditional sentence; however, both results are dependent upon the fact and principle of the condition "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light", which constitutes the protasis. Thus fellowship with God is the requirement and sign of fellowship with one another and the cleansing from all our sin. The statement implied by the conditional form of the sentence is that fellowship in the light results in or necessitates the cleansing from all sin; therefore, in view of vs.5 that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" it would seem that not only is God (by virtue of his character or nature) in opposition to sin, but also that he has made provision for pur-

ification from sin thru the blood of His Son. (1) The use of the present tense of  $\kappa\alpha\theta\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma\omega$  lends to the final phrase the force of the present, namely the durative or linear idea of present continued action or incompleted action (2); thus it follows that  $\kappa\alpha\theta\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma\epsilon\upsilon$  (3) must be interpreted to mean that the blood of Jesus "cleanseth", "is cleansing", or "continues to cleanse us" "from all sin" (provided that the condition given in the protasis is fulfilled. Plummer calls special attention to the use of the present here; "Note the present tense of what goes on continually; that constant cleansing which even the holiest Christians need. One who lives in the light knows his own frailty and is continually availing himself of the purifying power of Christ's sacrificial death. 'This passage shows that the gratuitous pardon of sins is given us not once only, but that it is a benefit perpetually residing in the Church, and daily offered to the faithful' (Calvin) " (4)

- (1) For an unusually complete treatment of  $\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$  consult Westcott: Epistles of St. John, pg. 34-37, Additional Note on 1:7, entitled "The Idea of Christ's blood in the New Testament".
- (2) Robertson: A Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament, pg. 139-40 Winer: Grammar of the New Testament, pg. 265.
- (3) Brooke: Johannine Epistles, pg. 15, 16--Discussion of general usage.
- (4) Plummer: The Epistles of St. John, pg. 82.

In other words, by the use of the present tense, the power of Christ's life is said to be effective in the constant cleansing from sin, in those attempting to walk in the light. The suggestion that "The use of *καθαρίζε* determines the sense to be the removal of sin rather than the canceling of guilt (1) is seemingly horn out by the fact that the present (durative) tense is used rather than the aorist which expresses punctiliar action (2).

The present tense and meaning in both the protasis (*περιπατῶμεν*) and the apodosis (*καθαρίζε*) implies that the Apostle here views the Christian life of walking with God in the light as a matter of "present sanctification" for the "cleansing" is effected continuously.

In studying the phrase *ἀπὸ πλῆθους ἁμαρτίας* a question arises as to why John selected *ἀπὸ* from among a group of four words (*ἀπὸ ἐκ, παρὰ, ἐξ*), which all denote 'issuing', proceeding from (3) "*Ἀπὸ*" is generally accepted as meaning from, off from, away from'; originally (as opposed to *ἐκ*) denoting 'separation' or 'departure' from something "(4)

- (1) Brooke: Johannine Epistles, pgs. 15,16
- (2) Moulton: A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol.1 pg 109
- (3) Winer: Grammar of the New Testament, pgs. 364,9. *Ἀπὸ* itself, means 'from' in the widest sense--whether what has come 'from' anything, may have been previously 'on, with, at', or 'bedside' (even 'in') the object in question
- (4) Goodwin: Greek Grammar, pg.255  
cf. also Robertson: A Grammar of the Greek New Testament pg.577: *ἐκ* means 'from within' while *ἀπὸ* is merely the starting point. *Ἀπὸ* does not deny the 'within-ness', it simply does not assert it as *ἐκ* does."

This would seem to be born out in the only three New Testament occurrences of ἀπό with ἁμαρτία: Romans 6: 18, 22 ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁμαρτίας, "being made free from sin"; and Matthew 1:21 ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τοῦ λαοῦ, "he shall save his people from their sins". Πᾶς is here of course the ablative πάντων after ἀπό; this is the only New Testament occurrence of πᾶς(ας) ἁμαρτία(ς). In a number of instances where πᾶς is used with abstract nouns such as χάρις (James 1:2), σοφία (Ephesians 1:8, etc., it is rendered "all"; and likewise with the abstract noun ἁμαρτία it would seem to specify "all sin"; i.e., sin in whatsoever form it may appear, thereby anticipating any evasion of division in cleansing sin. Thus the occurrence together of ἀπό and πάντων suggests that the blood of Christ cleanseth us 'from' (in the sense of separation from, or removal away from) all (all and every form of) sin". The word for sin (ἁμαρτία) itself is in the singular; in comparison with other occurrences of the word, its use has been considered to be in the collective sense of committed sin under varying aspects. (1) This is supported by the meaning of the related words considered above, which strengthen the abstract conception of universal applicability. Accordingly, the phrase ἀπὸ πάντων ἁμαρτίας considers "sin in all its forms and manifestations". The writer is apparently thinking of sin as an active power, showing itself in many forms, rather than of specific acts of sin." (2)

(1) Cf. Chapter 1, pg.7, where John 1:29; Hebrews 10:6; I John 1:7 and 2:2 are cited as being a type of the collective use of ἁμαρτία.

(2) Brooke: Johannine Epistles, pg.16.

wherefore it appears that the phraseology forestalls any narrow application to particular sins or periods of religious experience.

To summarize the foregoing, the virtue of Christ's blood in relation to sin may be stated conversely as follows in regard to its efficacy: First, scope--all sin, in its many manifestations ("from all sin"); second, effect--continuous cleansing and purification ("cleanseth us", present tense); third, basis--the blood of Jesus his Son, a Saviour in a special relation to the Father ("the blood of Jesus his Son"). The condition specified here is "if we walk in the light, even as he is in the light"; the accompanying result is "we have fellowship one with another". In conclusion, since God is light, we also must walk even as he is in the light; if we do so walk, we have the promise that the blood of Jesus his Son shall constantly be cleansing us from all sin (that which is contrary to His Will) (1)

(1) Cf. Chapter 1 pgs. 10 and 11.



### 3. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 1:9

In verse 8 the protasis "If we say that we have no sin(*ἀφ' ἡμῶν*) is presented seemingly as a denial of the abiding power of the principle of sin in humanity; in vs.9 the opposite hypothesis "If we confess our sins(*ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν*)" is assumed as an admission of what was denied in verse 8, similarly to verse 7 in following

6. "There is no sharp distinction in form between this verse (vs.9) and vs.8, as there is between 7 and 6 ('If we say---but if(*ἐὰν δέ*) we walk). Open confession and open assertion are of the same order"(1) Plummer also makes some noteworthy remarks upon the relation of vs.9 to vs.8: "Here there is expansion and progress, not only in the second half of the verse where 'He is faithful and righteous' takes the place of 'we are true'; but in the first half also; where 'confess our sins' takes the place of 'say we have sin'. The latter admission costs us little: the confession of the particular sins which we have committed costs a great deal, and is a guarantee of sincerity. He who refuses to confess, may perhaps desire, but certainly does not seek forgiveness" (2). The principal verb in the protasis clause of verses 6-10 is each time in the present tense, which expresses durative or linear action(3) thus in verse 9 the present tense of *ὁμολογῶμεν* in the protasis gives the force of continued present or incompleting action to the condition.

(1) Westcott: Epistles of St. John pg.23

(2) Plummer: The Epistles of St. John, pg. 83

(3) Robertson: A Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament pgs.139-40

The meaning is therefore "If we confess", "If we go on confessing", or possibly better "If we constantly confess", so that at the outset the Johannine conception of the Christian life requires habitual constancy. Inasmuch as the denial of sin deceives ourselves (vs.8) and the confession of sins results in forgiveness and cleansing by Him who is "faithful and righteous", the confessing our sins is apparently to be made to God rather than to men. The article ~~the~~ <sup>ὁ</sup> before ~~the~~ <sup>ἡ</sup> ~~sins~~ <sup>ἁμαρτίας</sup> marks the latter as plural and accordingly avoids possible ambiguity; what are to be confessed are "our sins", i.e. <sup>οἱ ἁμαρτίαι ἡμῶν</sup> which seems to point toward believers as those to whom the message was announced. The collective generic sense expressed by <sup>ἁμαρτίας</sup> in Matthew 1:21 (1), "he shall save his people from their sins" appears to be reproduced, because the principle of sin expressed by <sup>ἁμαρτία</sup> would seem to emphasize the concrete expressions of it by the use of the plural here. Accordingly, if we confess our sins we are evidently doing more than confessing the presence of the evil principle in our life (i.e. that we have sin, which is the opposite of vs.8 "If we say we have no sin") that is also set forth in vs.7; we are even going on to confess constantly the concrete personal acts or expressions of the principle. The subject of the clause <sup>ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ἡμῶν</sup> is necessarily the subject of the passage, namely, "God" (cf. vs.5,7), and therefore is not Jesus (<sup>τὸ ῥῆμα Ἰησοῦ</sup>, vs.7).

(1) Cf. Chapter I pg. 9.

The Authorized Version reading "faithful and just" is better rendered "faithful and righteous" by the American Version, for the latter brings out the contrast with "righteousness ( $\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\iota\acute{o}\nu\eta\varsigma$ )" and the connection with "Jesus Christ the righteous" in 2:1, and the thought of the passage as dealing with sin and sinlessness. The use of  $\kappa\alpha\iota$  as a connective and similar adjectives in a compound predicate suggest that  $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  and  $\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\iota\acute{o}\nu\eta\varsigma$  are of coordinate value. "By  $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  it is said primarily and generally that God, in the forgiveness of sins, approves himself faithful to His own nature, which is light; then by  $\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\iota\acute{o}\nu\eta\varsigma$  it is more specifically said under what aspect this fidelity shows itself".(1). Because  $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  ordinarily has the sense of faithfulness to promises, and  $\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\iota\acute{o}\nu\eta\varsigma$  generally is considered incompatible with unrighteousness and is here contrasted with the antithetical word  $\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\iota\acute{o}\nu\eta\varsigma$ , there would seem to be a correspondence in terminology; thus the faithfulness of God results in forgiveness, and his righteousness in cleansing. The relation of suggests the necessity of human confession of sins as a condition the protasis and the apodosis of the condition/for the inception and reception of divine action; the latter is the outcome of his active, durative ( $\epsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}$  is present tense) nature (faithful and righteous).

The study of verse 9 necessarily centers upon the two connected, subordinate clauses of the apodosis, because of

(1) Haupt: The First Epistle of St. John, pgs. 48-9.

their more involved phraseology: ἵνα ἂν ἡμεῖς τὸ ἀμαρτῖαν καὶ καθαρίσθῃμεν ἀπὸ πάντων ἀδικιών.  
 From its position in the construction of

the sentence, ἵνα is naturally the introductory conjunction for both parts of the compound clause. Obviously the thought of the sentence is not to say that "God is faithful and righteous 'for the purpose of' forgiving and cleansing", but "with the aim in view to". Therefore, ἵνα here (as also in IJohn 2:27; 3:1; 5:3) has not retained strictly its telic idea of purpose ("in order that"), but "it states what is the aim of the divine faithfulness and justice to attain which these qualities operate on men" (1). Accordingly, ἵνα, although it may be taken as "that", is rendered satisfactorily by the Revised Version as "to". The use of the common conjunction ἵνα, the presence of the simple connective καί, and the parallel construction of the phrases show that the clauses are of coordinate and equal value. The conditional nature of the sentence, the phraseology of the context, and the definitive meaning of ἵνα indicate the presence of the idea of "intention" and "aim" in both dependent clauses. The two verbs ἂν and καθαρίσθῃ are second and first aorist, subjunctive, active respectively: Therefore the idea of action as expressed by the aorist subjunctive is essentially the same in both, although "the subjunctive is the mood of mild contingency of probability." (2)

(1) ~~Hutter~~: Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of James and John, pg.295.

(2) Dana and Mantey: Manual for the Study of Greek New Testament pg.1

the aorist subjunctive expresses simply the "occurrence" of an action (1). Similarly to its sense of "remission" or "forgiveness" in many New Testament as well as in other Johannine instances,  $\epsilon\phi\iota\lambda\eta\mu$  may be rendered as "to forgive", while  $\kappa\alpha\theta\alpha\rho\iota\zeta\omega$  has the same meaning of "to cleanse" as in vs. 7 (cf. pg. 34, 35); consequently the aorist subjunctive will here give them the force of "that he may absolutely or finally forgive and cleanse". The most acceptable rendering in keeping with the use of  $\epsilon\phi\iota\lambda\eta\mu$  is simply "to forgive and cleanse"; this is given by both the Authorized and Revised Versions. Brooke compares the two verbs as follows: "In  $\epsilon\phi\iota\lambda\eta\mu$  the metaphor is borrowed from the canceling of debt, but the idea which the metaphor is used to illustrate is ethical. There is therefore no need to equate the meaning of  $\kappa\alpha\theta\alpha\rho\iota\zeta\omega$  to that of  $\epsilon\phi\iota\lambda\eta\mu$ . It should certainly be interpreted in an ethical sense" (2). As previously suggested (Cf. pg. 40) the faithfulness of God may be viewed as resulting in forgiveness and his righteousness in cleansing. From the preceding the forgiving would seem to have more reference to sin as external and objective ( $\epsilon\mu\alpha\rho\tau\iota\alpha$  is in the plural), and the cleansing to inner, personal unrighteousness ( $\alpha\pi\theta\epsilon\tau\iota\alpha$  and  $\alpha\delta\iota\kappa\iota\alpha$ ).

- (1) Goodwin: Greek Grammar, pg. 272-- Section 1272. Concerning the subjunctive present and aorist: "These tenses here differ only in this, that the present expresses an action in its duration, that is, as 'going on, repeated', while the aorist expresses simply its 'occurrence', the time of both being otherwise precisely the same".
- (2) Brooke: Johannine Epistles, pg. 21.

The duplicate accusative-plural structure (τὰς ἁμαρτίας) of the objects of ὁμοῦν and φθῆ apparently indicates not only the connection of the thought of the two clauses but also the similar interpretation of ἁμαρτία: thus in the apodosis the specific sins (or the concrete expressions of the principle (ἐκ ἁμαρτίας) are forgiven, i.e. "those particular acts of sin which we have confessed, and from the punishment due for which we are thus set free" (1) (See Prov. 28:13). The cleansing from all unrighteousness would not have been added, unless something additional were to be designated by it; as indicated by the emphatic expression: "From all unrighteousness". A distinction is here evidently made between forgiveness of sin and the work of purification from all unrighteousness (2). Ἀδικία (3) ——— is viewed by John as violation of right, as what is not conformable to either δικαιοσύνη and is therefore "un-right-eousness"; thus in the triple Johannine use (John 7:8; I John 1:9 and 5:17) Ἀδικία refers to the character and form of being rather than the form of manifestation, but in I John 1:9 the context lends force to the idea of what is opposed to the righteousness and truth of God, while the use of ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν (cf. pgs. 34-36) makes the complete

(1) Plummer: The Epistles of St. John, pg. 84

(2) Neander: The First Epistle of John, pg. 42.

(3) Cf. Chapter 1, pgs. 20, 21.

rendering of the clause mean "to cleanse us absolutely by separation from all and every form or manifestation of that which is contrary to the righteousness of God"--actually "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".

The thought of vs. 9 has been summarized by Neander:

"It is therefore that inward confession of sin before God,-- the consciousness of sin both in general, and in its manifestation in particular sinful acts,- whereby, in a spiritual sense, man draws near to God. In this it is necessarily implied, that he....begs of God forgiveness of sin and purification from all remaining sinful tendency" (1). The second dependent clause in the apodosis" is not a repetition of the preceding: It is a second distinct result of our confession: 1. We are absolved from sin's punishment; 2 We are freed from sin's pollution. The forgiveness is the averting of God's wrath; the cleansing is the beginning of holiness"(2). Spence in the Pulpit Commentary writes that "Purification is promised as well as pardon; sanctification as well as justification". The character of God is a pledge that the penitent shall receive pardon and purification"(3)

#### 4. Conclusions.

In conclusion, various observations and contributions are here set forth: If we do constantly confess to God our actual sinful acts, he is faithful, and also righteous to his pledge, to forgive us these same--and not only to forgive

- (1) Neander: The First Epistle of John pg. 41
- (2) Plummer: The Epistles of St. John, pg. 84.
- (3) Spence: Pulpit Commentary, I John, pg. 15.

our acts but also to cleanse our entire personal character thru separation from all unrighteousness. Fellowship with Him in the light comes also thru the constant cleansing from sin in all its aspects, as well as positive forgiveness of the concrete acts which are the outworking of the sinful principle in our lives. Although upon walking in the light the blood of Jesus constantly cleanseth us from all manner of sin (vs.7.), yet upon the confession of our concrete sins, the faithful and righteous nature of God, particularly his righteousness, leads him to cleanse us absolutely from all manner of unrighteousness.

" 'Unrighteousness' is offensive to Him who 'is just' or 'righteous' and is called 'sin' in vs.7, because 'sin' is the transgression of the law', and the law is the expression of God's 'righteousness', so that sin is unrighteousness" (1). In all these things the Apostle's outlook is toward all (note the constant employment of *ὑμεις*) who believe that God is light. *ἁμαρτία* is that which is contrary to the light, will, or law of God, while *ἀνομία* denotes what is contrary to the righteousness of God. Findlay summarizes 1: 7, 9 as follows: "In vs. 9 we find the 'cleansing from sin' of vs. 7 opening out into its two elements of 'forgiveness' and 'moral renewal'. Both turn upon one condition: the subjective condition, as the atonement is the objective ground of salvation."

(1) Fausset: Critical and Explanatory Commentary, pgs.526-7.



viz. the acknowledgment ( *ὁμολογῶμεν*: present tense) - of personal sin, which is nothing else than the soul's yielding to the light of God's holy presence: 'If we confess (go on to confess) our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. This thorough cleansing, the immaculate perfection of the believer crucified with his Lord, is the crown of a life of walking in the light." (1)

## B. Phraseology of 1;8,10/

### 1. Construction of 1:8,10.

The similar structure of verses 8 and 10 suggests that they may wisely be treated together:

Verse 8 *Ἐὰν εἰπῶμεν ὅτι ἀμάρτια ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἔχομεν*  
*(ἐαυτοῦς πλανῶμεν καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν)*

Verse 10 *Ἐὰν εἰπῶμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτησάμεν,*  
*(ψεύτην ποιῶμεν αὐτὸν καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν)*

In both verses 8 and 10 (also in vs. 6) the phrase *ἐὰν εἰπῶμεν ὅτι* introduces the indirect discourse of the protasis: "If we say that: we have no sin, (and) we have not sinned." Plummer writes the following concerning this phrase: "With great gentleness he puts the case hypothetically, and with great delicacy he includes himself in the hypothesis"(2)

(1) Findlay: Fellowship in the Life Eternal, pg. 103.

(2) Plummer: The Epistles of St. John, pgs. 80-82/

The first person plural form of the verb includes the writer with his readers, and addresses the message to the members of the Christian group; *εἴπαμεν*, in the light of the reference of the preceding verses in both instances to sin and unrighteousness, here seems to include actual expression as well as inner and outer assertion.

## 2. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 1:8/

The connection of vs.8 with the preceding thought of "walking in the light" is made still closer by the words *καθαρίζουσιν ἀπὸ πάντων ἁμαρτίας* at the end of the foregoing verse. If the cleansing from sin is an essential element of our walking in the light, so the denial of its necessity is a token of *εἰσάγειν τὸ σκότος* (1). The protasis phrase *ἁμαρτία ἣν ἔχομεν* contains the special terminology for sin; and thus *ἁμαρτία* and *ἔχω* will be the subject of special study. *ἁμαρτία* in the singular denotes sin in general; the absence of the article points out that the reference is neither to a particular sin, nor to the whole, full sin (but to "any sin") (2); Accordingly, there is seemingly little evidence for restricting the meaning to original sin, or to sin of any particular type. *ἔχω* meaning "to have", here seems to suggest the sense of "to have, hold, be affected by, subjected to", similarly to I John 4:8 and John 12:48 and 15:22.

(1) Haupt: The First Epistle of St. John pg.44

(2) Lange: Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, I John pg.36

The phrase *ἁμαρτίαν ἔχειν* is like <sup>the</sup> corresponding phrases (1)

which mark "the presence of something which is not isolated but continuous source of influence" (2)

Thus Brooke cites "*πίστιν ἔχειν*" 'to have faith', as an active principle working in us and forming our character.

To 'have sin' is not merely a synonym for 'to commit sins'. This is necessitated by the contrast demanded by ver. 10 between *ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν* AND *οὐκ ἡμαρτήκαμεν*.

'Sin' is the principle of which sinful acts are the several manifestations (3).

Therefore *ἁμαρτίαν ἔχειν* refers to those having sin in their character i.e. being possessed by the principle of sin or having it in one's life; only of those who are absolutely pure could it be said that "they have no sin". The phrase *ἁμαρτίαν ἔχειν* is essentially Johannine, occurring nowhere else in the New Testament (4) "Thus 'to have sin' is distinguished from 'to sin' as the sinful principle distinguished from the sinful act/in itself.

'To have sin' includes the idea of personal guilt: It describes both a state and a consequence" (5) The use of the aorist tense in *ἡμαρτήκαμεν* and the present in *ἔχομεν* brings the thought vividly, "If we say that we habitually

(1) *ἔχειν πίστιν* (Mt. 17:20, etc.) *πιστὶν ἔχειν* (John 5:26, 40, etc.)

(2) Westcott: Epistles of St. John, pg. 22 on 10:21 (f).  
pg 22.

(3) Brooke: Johannine Epistles, pgs. 17, 18. Cf. for extended study of *ἁμαρτίαν ἔχειν* phrase.

(4) N.T. Uses of the phrase *ἁμαρτίαν ἔχειν* John 9:41 15:22, 24; 19:11

(5) Westcott: Epistles of St. John pg. 22.

have no sin"; the positiveness of those who deny the abiding power of sin as a principle in one who has committed sins results in almost complete self-deception. The apodosis of vs. 8 is compound in structure, and the two clauses are of coordinate character in view of simple connective *καὶ* as in 1:6-10. *ἑαυτοῦς* *πλανάμεν* does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The verb is present, "we go on deceiving ourselves"; the construction is the active verb with the reflexive pronoun; implying that our deception is the result of our own activity. The idea of *πλανάμεν* is primarily "to lead astray" (James 5:19), involving the idea of deception in both truth and life; as implied from the context; the presence of *ἑαυτοῦς* emphasizes the personal equation. In the final clause and the truth is not in us", the idea of truth is a contrast with the self-deception of the coordinate clause and the phrase *ἐν ἡμῖν* suggests that the truth is an indwelling principle of the highest order in life, incompatible with the power of sin. Thus those who say they have no sin are self-deceived and devoid of the truth.

#### §. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 1:10.

The parallel structure of verses 8 and 10 would seem to indicate similar thought, yet the occurrence of the noun and verb for sin in the respective verses implies that the second verse is more than a repetition. The expression *οὐκ ἡμαρτίζαμεν* in vs. 10 is evidently called forth by the plural *ἡμαρτίαι* and the singular *ἡμαρτία* in vs. 8.

in — vs. 9, which specify the nature of sin more than vs. 7/ Hence the phrase *οὐχ ἡμαρτήσαμεν* is evidently a stronger expression and denial than *ἡμαρτὸν οὐκ ἔχομεν* (vs. 8): the denial of the abiding power of sin as an indwelling principle describing a state is followed by a denial of the fact of having even committed sin or of sinful activity. The perfect tense of *ἡμαρτήσωμεν* (1) reflects the meaning of the Greek perfect, namely the "continuance of completed action" (2); and the first person plural again adds personal force to the condition: thus, the protasis might well be rendered, "If we say that we are in the position(state) of not having sinned". Furthermore the perfect representation of the present result of past action will emphasize the fact that this is a denial not only of past commission of sin but also of any present onsequences. The Apostle's answer is similar to his rejoinder in verse 8, but in keeping with a greater supposition is more emphatic. The first part of the conclusion is "we make Him a liar (*ψεύτην ποιούμεν αὐτόν*); again the first person plural of the present tense intensifies the statement *Αὐτὸς* as referring to the major subject of the passage, makes us

(1) Cf. Chapter I, pg.12

(2) *Blass*: Grammar of New Testament Greek, pg.198.

realize that we have gone farther than deceiving ourselves "we constantly make God a liar", because indirectly we have questioned the whole purpose of God's revelation thru Christ to cleanse us from our sins. (1). In the second clause of the apodosis the presence of *αὐτοῦ* in the phrase *ὁ λόγος δι' αὐτοῦ* not only again refers to God as the subject of the passage but also emphasizes the personal aspect of "the word" in contrast to the impersonal character of "the truth" ; thus the holder the denial of sin in human life becomes, the greater is the opposition to the whole nature and work of God, for it is "the word" that as the revelation of God vitalizes human life and enkindles "the truth" in us. (2).

#### 4. Conclusions.

In this section the answers to the suppositions, "If we say that we have no sin"(vs.8), and "If we say that we have not sinned" (vs. 10), "prove that neither in reference to the past nor the present can anyone lay claim to perfection"(3). Therefore, in opposition to the light of God there is presented:

- (1) For a similar phrase Cf. I John 5:10, "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar".
- (2) Similar expressions concerning "the word" occur in I John 2:14; John 8:31; 13:34. Complete discussions are given in the commentaries of Haupt (pg. 51,52). Neander Plummer (pg.85), and Westcott (pg.26) ( pg.43 )
- (3) Barnes: General Epistles of James, Peter, John Jude, pg324

a denial of sin in principle (a state), by which we deceive ourselves and have not "the truth" in us; and a denial of sin in actuality (an activity), by which we make God a liar and have not "the word"--in which, if we would walk in the light, we should "live and move and have our being".

C. Phraseology of 2:1,2.

1. Construction of 2:1,2.

The last two verses (Chapter 2:1,2) of the passage 1:7-2:2 may well be studied together as the conclusion of this group of verses; although related in thought, the structure of 2:1 and 2 does not allow them to be arranged similarly to 1:7,8,9,10:

Verse 2:1 *Τεκνία μου, τὰυτὰ γράφω ὑμῖν*

*- ἵνα μὴ ἀμαρτῆτε.*

*- καὶ εἰς τὴν ἀμαρτίαν*

*παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα*

*τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ δικαίου.*

Verse 2:2- *καὶ αὐτὸς ἔλαλτος ἐστὶν περὶ τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν,*  
*οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου.*

The general subject-matter of 2:1,2 reveals their special relationship to 1:10 as the conclusion of the preceding verses. Gore has stated this briefly but adequately: "To deny that we have sinned--to attribute our shortcomings to any other cause, such as our nature or circumstances--is, in effect, to make God a liar and show that His word has no place in us. The object of this stern reminder which St. John presses upon us twofold. It is both that we should cease to sin, and also that, when we fail and commit sin, he should know where the remedy lies" (1).

(1) Gore: The Epistles of St. John, pg. 72.

In the foregoing context the requirements for walking in the light , "even as he is in the light", may possibly be formulated as the conviction and confession of sin; but these final verses seem to contain the Apostle's purpose and remedy. The latter is expressed by and centers upon two occurrences of the verb in 2:1 and one of the noun *ἁμαρτία* in 2:2, in addition to related phraseology of varying importance.

## 2. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 2:1.

Having addressed his readers affectionately as "My little children", the Apostle states "these things (*ταῦτα γράφω*) write I unto you that ye may not sin". Because of the statements of the introduction and the parallel phrase in 1:4, *ταῦτα* seem to refer to the contents of the whole Epistle, but possibly more especially to the relevant discussion of the preceding paragraph. In the clause *ἵνα μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε*, the thought of the sentence as well as the constructions indicate that *ἵνα* has here <sup>its</sup> telic idea of purpose. (1); therefore, the conjunction should be rendered "in order that" to emphasize its purposive character (2). *Ἀμαρτάνετε* and *ἁμαρτᾷ* are the second person plural and third person singular, second aorist subjunctive forms of *ἁμαρτάνω* (3).

(1) Cf. Chapter 11, pg. 41.

(2) The Authorized and Revised Version rendering is "that".

(3) For complete discussion, Cf. Westcott, pg. 42



As in the case of  $\lambda\phi\eta$  and  $\kappa\alpha\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\eta$  in 1:9 (1), the aorist subjunctive expresses simply the "occurrence" of an action; also, the aorist sense of punctiliar action suggests that sinning should be comprehended as a single act, the outworking of the inner principle(2). Thus the meaning of the clause  $\text{ἵνα μὴ ἁμαρτήτε}$  appears to be "in order that ye may not commit sin (occurrence)". Accordingly, it is with a vision of God as light that St. John writes these things "In order that ye (his little children) may not commit sin". This statement of John's purpose is immediately followed by the condition upon which the remedy for sin is based:  $\text{ἐάν τις ἁμαρτή}$  in view of the idea of continuousness suggested by  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu$  might be rendered, "And furthermore, if any man commit sin". Therefore the use of the aorist tense and the related constructions specify the single, definite act in both instances, and not the habitual state ( $\text{ἁμαρτάνετε}$ ). A fine statement concerning 2:1; has been made by Plummer: "St. John is not telling the intending sinner that sin is a light matter; but the penitent sinner that sin is not irremediable. In both sentences 'sin' is in the aorist, and implies a definite act, not an habitual state of sin. We are

(1) Cf. Chapter 11, pg.42.

(2) Cf. Chapter 1, pg. 43.

to avoid not merely a life of sin, but any sin whatever. And not merely the habitual sinner, but he who falls into a single sin, needs and has an Advocate. Sin and its remedy are stated in immediate proximity, just as they are found in life" (1)

In stating the remedy John says "we have" instead of "he has" an Advocate, thereby including all Christians in the need and possession; in view of the fact that not only is <sup>the</sup> rendering of ~~παράκλητος~~ as "Comforter" practically incompatible with the context, but also that all English and Latin Versions translate the word here as "Advocate", this rendition seems more acceptable. Brooke, as the result of an extended study, concludes that, "In itself it denotes merely 'one called in to help'. In the Epistle the idea of 'one who pleads the Christian's cause before God' is clearly indicated, and 'advocate' is the most satisfactory translation"(2). Thus whoever sins has assurance of Divine help; Jesus Christ the righteous. "The adjective is not a simple epithet but marks predicatively ('being as he is righteous') that characteristic of the Lord which gives effica-

(1) Plummer: The Epistles of St. John, pg. 86.

(2) Brooke: Johannine Epistles, pgs.23-7.

cy to His advocacy of man". answering "to the righteousness of the Father in 1:9" (1).

### B. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 2:2/

In verse 2 the emphatic pronoun *αὐτός* likewise refers to Jesus Christ the Righteous Advocate; thus it is the Advocate who himself is the propitiation (*ἱλασμός*) for our sins (*περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν*); the present tense thruout emphasizes the perpetual and active nature of the Advocacy and Propitiation. The absence of article in the Greek before *ἱλασμός* results in the strict English translation, "a propitiation"; the word occurs only here and in 4:10 in the New Testament. Plummer has interpreted the meaning remarkably well: "Had St. John written 'propitiator (*ἱλαστήρ*) we should have lost half the truth: viz. that our Advocate propitiates by offering 'Himself'. He is both High Priest and Victim, both Propitiator and Propitiation. It is quite obvious that he is the former; the office of Advocate includes it". (2). In the prepositional phrase *περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν*, *περὶ* may be rendered 'for, in regard to'; the emphasis in this phrase is upon "sins", i.e. Christ is the propitiation for the sins we confess, and then are cleansed of by God; in the final phrase the suggestion is that John

(1) Westcott: Epistles of St. John, pg. 43.

(2) Plummer: The Epistles of St. John, pg. 88.

wishes to insure the view that the application is world-wide and not restricted to the believers.

#### 4. Conclusions.

To restate the general thought of 2:1 and 2, the following points made be made briefly: First, John states his purpose or objective in writing--- "that ye may never sin at any time"-i.e. sinlessness as the goal of life; second ~~the~~ remedy "in/case of sin" is twofold in character and scope---i.e. there is an advocate and a Propitiation, for ourselves and the world.

#### III General Conclusions.

The contribution to an understanding of the problem of sin and sinlessness, resulting from the study of this passage in the First Epistle of John, are here set forth briefly. The general thought of the complete context may first be summarized by a quotation from Lucke: "If the communion of Christians mutually with each other, as well as with the Father and the Son, is to be intimate and firm, they must, because God is light, separate from themselves all sin and darkness, and walk entirely in the divine light" (1). The context of 1:5-2:2 suggests three general division with regard to the problem of sin and sinlessness: first, the character of God (as light) is the basis of fellowship with him

(1) Lucke: Commentary on the Epistles of St. John, pg 109.

and with one another; second, three false please or denials of the factor of sin in human life (namely), the denial of the reality of sin, the responsibility for sin, and the fact of sin) are opposed by requirements for sinlessness (namely, the conviction of sin, the confession of sin, and opposition to sin); and third, John's goal is sinlessness but his remedial solution is two-fold (namely, the Advocacy and Propitiation of Christ) for all mankind. Accordingly, whosoever would be sinless must "walk in the light, as he is in the light"; repent of or confess all sins in order that they may be forgiven and cleansed; and finally, trust in the Advocacy of Jesus Christ the Righteous who is the Propitiation for our sins.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF EXEGESIS TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF: 3;4-9.

#### I Preliminary Remarks.

- A. Observations upon the structure of the passage.
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#### III General Conclusions.

# CHAPTER III

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF EXEGESIS TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF 3:4-9.

### 1. Preliminary Remarks.

#### A. Observations upon the structure of the passage.

By the use of substantive and verbal phrases involving the terminology for sin in the passage, St. John seems to express the different aspects of the problem of sin and sinlessness. Thus ἡμαρτία the noun for "sin", is found in the construction ποιεῖν ἡμαρτίαν in substantive phrases occurring in 3:4 8,9; while ἡμαρτάνω the verb for "to sin", is found in verbal phrases occurring in 3:6,8,9. The substantive phrases follow:

Verse 4--πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἡμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ

Verse 8---ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἡμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν

Verse 9--πᾶς ὁ γεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ

The ἡμαρτάνω phrases in this passage are:

Verse 6--πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῇ μένων οὐκ ἡμαρτάνει  
πᾶς ὁ ἡμαρτάνων οὐκ εἰσάγει <sup>αὐτὸν</sup> οὐδὲ ἐγνωκεν αὐτόν.

Verse 8--ὅτι ἅπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἡμαρτάνει

Verse 9--*καὶ οὐ συνάται ἀπατάειν*

The employment of the contrasted terminology at once invites exegetical inquiry. This may be done most effectively by establishing the distinction between these modes of expression and applying their meaning to the thought of the message. Other considerations relating to sin, such as are expressed in vs. 5 and 6 may then be profitably studied.

B. The distinction between the contrasted modes of expression.

The meaning of the substantive phrase would seem to depend not only upon the rendering of each word individually, but also upon the idiomatic use of both in combination. *Ἀπατία* as determined in the first chapter (1), expresses an active principle of evil out-working in action: All that does not conform ~~unto~~ the will or law of God.

(2) *ποιέω* Ordinarily means "to make, commit, practice, cause, do"; and aside from the instances in this passage, it is evidently so used with reference to evil, iniquity, or sin, by Matthew, John, Paul, and Peter (3). In his notes on I John 3:8 Wordsworth states that *ποιέω* is "a strong

(1) Cf. Chapter I, pgs. 7-11.

(2) Hickie: A Lexicon of the Greek Testament, pgs. 154-5.

(3) Matthew 13:41-- ; Matthew 27:23; John 8:34; II Corinthians 11:7; and I Peter 2:22.



word describing habitual design and actual habit of life, not an occasional lapse on the road, but a wilful and presumptuous self-surrender to sin, as a trade or profession"(1); the force of ποιεῖν as putting into action a principle of life must not be overlooked. The construction ποιεῖν ἁμαρτάνειν itself is similar to ποιεῖν ἀνομίαν ("to do iniquity or lawlessness") in Matthew 13:41 or I John 3:4; ποιεῖν ἀλήθειαν ("to do truth") in I John 1:6 and ποιεῖν δικαιοσύνην ("to do righteousness") in 2:29 and 3:7,10.

However, the only parallel phrases occur in John 8:34, II Corinthians II:7 and I Peter 2:22 (Cf. footnote (3) on page 60 .) The American Revised Version renders the six occurrences of the phrase (the above three, in addition to I John 4,8,9) as "to do sin", with the exception of II Corinthians II:7 "Did I commit a sin?". Inasmuch as the three ποιεῖν ἁμαρτάνειν phrases in this passage have the verb in the present tense, the conception is of one who habitually does sin rather than of one who merely does a sinful act.

(1)

(1) Wordsworth: Greek New Testament, Vol. II, General Epistles, pg. 115.

Therefore the meaning of *ποιεῖν ἁμαρτίαν* in this passage may well be translated as "to do sin", meaning "the doing or practicing of what is actively opposed to the will of God". Bruckner considers that the phrase indicates "an actual moral tendency of life" (1).

Thus the phrase involving *ποιεῖν* evidently indicates the habitual practice of sin. In distinction to the substantive phrase the idea of the verbal phrase is determined by one word: *ἁμαρτάνω*, of which an extended study has already been made (2), is everywhere rendered "to sin"/is "to violate the will or law of God".

*Ἀμαρτία* denotes the source whence evil acts proceed, while *ἁμαρτάνω* naturally has the verbal force of expressing sinful activity. In contrast to the perfect tense of *ἁμαρτάνω* indicating "the continuance of completed action" and reflecting the idea of past commission and present consequence of sin, the present tense is used in every case in this passage and carries the durative sense of "to sin continually". A concrete comparison of the substantive and verbal phrases is that *ὁ ποιεῖν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν* (vs. 8) is "an emphatic and interpretative variation of *ὁ ἁμαρτάνων* (vs. 6), 'he that makes sin his business —

(1) Huther: Critical & Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles, pg. 386.

(2) Cf. Chapter I, pgs. 11-15.

or practice' "(1);: these may be rendered respectively as "Every one that doeth sin" and "Every one that sinneth". which as Findlay says, "is as much as to say, 'Every sinner, every one whose life yields sin for its product". (2) Under any circumstances, the substantive phrase "to do sin" is distinguished from simple verbal phrases of "to sin" by adding the conception of the actual realization of sin as something which is definitely brought about. This conception is emphasized by the addition of the article (τὸν ἁμαρτίαν).

( Accordingly, the substantive phrase ποιεῖν ἁμαρτίαν seems to indicate the habitual practice or commission of sinful action and what is evil in principle as some tendency which is effected in life; and the verbal phrase ἐσφρατίζει denotes more simply the committing of sin or the presenting of a sinful character.

- (1) Smith: Expositor's Greek Testament, I Hohn, pg.185  
(2) Findlay: Fellowship in the Life Eternal, pg. 261-2

# 11 Elucidation of St. John's Phraseology Concerning Sin.

## A. Phraseology of 3:4,8,9.

### 1. Construction of 3:4,8,9.

In the study of this passage verses 3,8, and 9 are to be treated together because of their obvious similarity in construction: First, the substantive phrase *ποιεῖν ἁμαρτίαν* occurs in all three verses. In two of these the form is that of a participial phrase (*πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν*) in 3:4 and *ὁ ποιῶν* in 3:8, with the noun taking the article (*τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν*); while in the third verse (3:9) a similar participial phrase (*πᾶς ὁ γεγενημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ*) is the subject of the predicative phrase *ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ* without the article before the noun. Secondly, the verb *ἁμαρτάνω* occurs in a dependent clause in 3:8 (*ὅτι ἁμαρτάνει*) and as an infinitive construction (*καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν*) in 3:9. In both of these instances the verbal phrase is in conjunction with a corresponding or related substantive phrase dealing with sin.

## 2. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 3:4.

By the use of the two words  $\pi\alpha\varsigma \delta'$  instead of just the article alone in the phrase  $\pi\alpha\varsigma \delta' \pi\omicron\iota\omega\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$  John includes "everyone", for  $\pi\alpha\varsigma$  meaning "every" (1), allows no exceptions. In a note concerning a like phrase in 3:3 Westcott states the following: "by employing the universal form of expression ( $\pi\alpha\varsigma \delta'$ ) instead of the simply descriptive  $\sigma'$ , St. John deals with the exceptional presumption of men who regarded themselves as above the common law. In each case where this characteristic form of language occurs there is apparently a reference to someone who had questioned the application of a principle in particular cases". (2) The phrase  $\pi\omicron\iota\omega\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$ , as considered in the beginning of this chapter, means the doer of sin or one who practices it habitually and realizes the sin in action, the present tense indicates continued doing of sin. Thus "He who  $\alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu \tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \pi\omicron\iota\omega\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$ , by that very fact also committeth  $\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$  in every individual transgression the nature of 'the sin' is manifested. That the  $\pi\omicron\iota\omega\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$  is identical with the  $\pi\omicron\iota\omega\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$ , the apostle proves by the simple declaration that  $\alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$  and  $\alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$  are or ought to be interchangeable for Christians". (3).

- (1) Hickie: A Lexicon of the Greek Testament, pg. 143-4.
- (2) Westcott: Epistles of St. John, pg. 102.
- (3) Haupt: The First Epistle of St. John, pg. 174.

The use of *καί* here, best rendered as "also", stresses the correspondence of the doing of *ἀνομίας* as well as *ἀμαρτία* upon the part of the doer: Having asserted a truth of action, John proceeds to define the principle involved, and in so doing selects words which expressed a principle out-working in action: "Sin is lawlessness". This is the only definition of "sin" in the Bible, although its nature is discussed elsewhere; furthermore, the subject of this verse appears to be the definition and delimitation of the idea of *ἀμαρτία*. "When the article is used with the predicate it marks its essential identity with the subject; *ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία* makes sin identical with lawlessness" (1) The composition of the word *ἀνομία* (*a-nomos*) or shows clearly that it denotes what is contrary to Divine Law, and therefore the doing of *ἀνομία* is the doing of unlawful acts involving a principle of action; accordingly, "sin (*ἀμαρτία*) is lawlessness (*ἀνομία*)". Findlay has well comprehended the author's constructions here: "The Apostle in saying 'Sin is lawlessness' virtually affirms that 'Lawlessness is sin'. His proposition is convertible; the predicate *ἡ ἀνομία* as well as the subject *ἡ ἀμαρτία*, is written with the Greek article of definition: The two terms cover the same ground, since they denote the same thing, defining it from different sides. The Bible knows of no boundary line between the religious and the ethical. Since man was created in the image of God and the end of his life is determined by God, every lapse

(1) Dana and Mantey: Manual for the Study of the Greek N. T. pg. 102.

from that end, every moral aberration (*ἁμαρτία*), is an act of rebellion, a violation of the constitutional laws of human nature (*ἀνομία*)" (2)

### 3. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 3:8.

"Ὁ ποιών τὴν ἁμαρτίαν forms the diametrical opposite of ὁ ποιών τὴν δικαιοσύνην (vs. 7), inasmuch as it signifies the man whose life is service of sin, 'who lives in sin as his element' (Sander). While the latter belongs to Christ, and is ἀτέκνον θεοῦ, the former is ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου. Ἐκ does not signify here either merely connection, or similarity, or imitation, but as the expression τέκνον τοῦ διαβόλου (vs. 10) shows, origin; the life that animates the sinner emanates from the devil. The apostle confirmed the truth of this statement by the following words: ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διαβόλος ἁμαρτάνει. The present ἁμαρτάνει describes the sinning of the devil as uninterruptedly continuous" (2). Accordingly in vs. 8 there is not the all-inclusiveness of vs. 4, for here the simpler form ὁ ποιών means "he that doeth"; the present participle specifies "the habitual doer of sin"; the idea and content of ἁμαρτία are marked especially by the use of τῇς

and the use of ἐκ shows that ὁ διαβόλος is the source or origin of the doing of sin; the meaning here is clearly "He <sup>the</sup> whose whole course of action is/expression of 'sin', belongs to the Devil, from whom the life which animates him is derived". (3). In the dependent clause introduced

(1) Findlay: Fellowship in the Life Eternal, pg. 256

(2) Huther: Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of James and John, pgs. 393-5.

(3) Brooke: Johannine Epistles, pg. 88.

by *ὅτι*, the context determines the causative sense as the only allowable rendition: *ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀρχαίου ὁ διαβόλος ἡμαρτάνει* is therefore the reason that "he that doeth sin is of the devil", for regardless of the exact reference of *ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀρχαίου* (1): the general declaration is clearly that the devil sinned, and has since been in the continual act of sinning, since his whole existence is sin. Thus the necessary outcome of the facts of the main and dependent clauses is that set forth in the second part of vs.8: "To this end was the Son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil", in which case the *ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου* seem to be the *ἡμαρτίαι* done by the devil. The statement that "he that doeth sin is of the devil" suggests that the phrase *πολεῖ τὴν ἡμαρτίαν* denotes the practice of sin from evil influence, whereas the verb *ἡμαρτάνω* alone suggests sinful activity as the outworking of personal character. (

(1) Cf. Brooke: pg. 88, and Plummer: pg.126 for discussion.



4. Exegetical discussion of phraseology of 3:9.

In view with the contrast, that he that is of the devil doeth sin (vs.8) and he that is of God doeth no sin (vs.9) the thought of the latter vs. requires that *ὅτι* again be taken as causative. As Lange notes, "the structure of the sentences too is alike, with the sole difference that by the usual inversion the subjects and predicates have changed places"(1). The employment of *ὅς* as a part of the participial phrase again indicates (as in vs.4) "everyone", although translated as "whosoever" in the American Revised Version. The expression "to be begotten" of God occurs frequently in the Epistle, and in every instance the Revised Version renders *γεννητός* as "begotten"; the perfect (passive) participial phrase *ὁ γεννημένος* naturally means he that has been begotten of God, for the perfect indicates the continuance of completed action. In the phrase *ὁ μὴ ἔχων* the noun is anarthous and therefore qualitative; the whole phrase suggests the idea that whoever is begotten of God does not practice that which is sinful in its essence, or does not make a habit of doing sin. The thought of "abide in me and I in you" is set forth in the clauses of vs. 6 and vs. 9 in which the verb *μένω* occurs thus, in vs.9 *ὅτι* introduces the reason for the truth of the main clause, "because his seed abideth in him". The clause *καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν* viewed in the light of its appended reason "because he is begotten of God", seems to affirm that it is morally impossible to sin, "and he cannot, is not able to sin". "The fact that he has been

(1) Lange: Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, I John, pg. 104.

begotten of "God excludes the possibility of his committing sin as an expression of his true character, though actual sins may, and do occur, in so far as he fails to realize his true character".(1) Inasmuch as the independent clause of the second sentence states the impossibility of the "begotten of God" sinning, it follows that it is in contrast to the doing of sin in the preceding statement: the child of God merely does not habitually do sin (state), his character precludes sinful activity. Haupt suggests that the phraseology of vs.7 and vs.8 gives us "the standard of perfected righteousness"(2); in vs.8, the positive side of this standard, the first statement describes the permanent condition of sinlessness and the second the origin or basis for such. Findlay concludes as follows: "The two sentences of vs.9 amount to the above position (Sin is 'unnatural in the child of God'):

as a matter of fact, the child of God 'does not sin' *διὰ τὴν φύσιν* of *παιδὸς* --the produce of his life is not of that kind; and as a matter of principle, 'he cannot sin'. In the former of these statements St. John is appealing to the facts ...Thus sin is got rid of not by repression, but by pre-occupation. The man is possessed by another generative principle"(3) The problem arising from the seemingly conflicting statements of 1:7-22 and 3:4-9 will be considered in the concluding chapter.

(1) Brooke: Johannine Epistles, pg.89

(2) Haupt: The First Epistle of John, pg.199

(3) Findlay: Fellowship in the Life Eternal, pg. 265-7.

## 5. Conclusions.

These verses have been found: first, to give a unique definition of sin-"sin is lawlessness (*ἡ ἀνομία ἐστὶν ἡ ἁμαρτία*)"; second, to include an idea which both opens and closes the ~~passage~~the universal application of these truths to "every one (*ὅς τις*) who qualifies under the conditions named; third to support the truth of the statements concerning sin and sinlessness in each case by an explanation or reason--thus, "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness" is followed by the reason or definition that "sin is lawlessness" (vs.4), "He that doeth sin is of the devil" by "for the devil sinneth from the beginning"(vs.8), and "Whoever is begotten of God doeth no sin" by "because his seed abideth in him"(vs.9); fourth, to distinguish the aspects of sinful action by the contrasted modes of expression. Thus the substantive and verbal phrases express ~~the~~ following ideas respectively: habitual practice of sin-a habit; and the act of sinning-an expression of character. In 2:1 the aorist subjunctive suggests the possibility of "an occurrence" of an act of sin *ἐάν τις ἁμαρτῇ* ; but here the present participles (*οἱ ποιεῖτες τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, ἁμαρτάντων*) presume 'a habit and character'. Thus sinning and the doing of sin ("sin is lawlessness") are obviously alien to the character and habit of the children of God.

B. The phraseology of 3:6

1. Exegetical discussion of 3:6.

Inasmuch as this verse differs from those treated above in having only the simpler verbal phrase, and its contrasted statements involve ideas expressed separately in other sentences, it is here treated subsequently to 1:4,8,9. The fact that "In Him there is no sin" (vs.5) necessarily results in the affirmation that "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" (vs.6), in which the phrase *ἅς οἱ πάντες* has its comprehensive sense of "every one", as in vs.4. The employment of the verb *μεῖνω* in the participial phrase implies that John is thinking not merely of "being" in Christ, but actually of living and dwelling in *hkm*. Accordingly, the meaning intended may be expressed as follows: "Everyone that goes on abiding in him (Christ) does not go on sinning (*οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει*)". This has been well stated by Westcott: *οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει* 'sinneth not', describes a character, 'a prevailing habit' and not merely an act.

Each separate sinful act does as such interrupt the fellowship to the character of the man, and removed from him, it leaves ship, and yet so far as it is foreign to his character unchanged"(1). The second part of the sentence is similar to the first in construction; if rearranged in exactly parallel form it would read "every one that seeth and knoweth him not sinneth". However in the actual form *ἅς οἱ ἀμαρτάνουσιν* the verb *ἀμαρτάνει* has the same sense as in the preceding clause; actual sinning in word, or work, or in the thought of the heart(2):

(1) Westcott: Epistles of St. John, pg. 104.

(2) Lange: Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, I John, pg.102

the phrase also expresses universal application in the present time with regard to sinning. "The perfects (*βούλει* *ἐπαίρει* *οὐδέ* *ἐγίνωκεν*) connote facts that have taken effect, the settled results of action, the state into which one has passed thereby" (1) The second verb although perfect in form is present in meaning according to its usage. The form of the clauses and the occurrence of the object *αὐτόν* along with each verb, together with the resulting stronger emphasis of *οὐδέ*, make it clear that the two verbs express two distinct ideas; "If the two words are to be distinguished here, *ὁραῖν* lays stress upon the object, which appears and is grasped by the mental (religious) vision (of Christ), *γινώσκω* on the subsequent subjective apprehension of what is grasped in the vision, or it is unfolded gradually in experience" (2) "'Seeing' expresses briefly the fullest exertion of our utmost faculties of gaining new elements of truth from without: 'knowing', the apprehension and coordination of the truth within" (3).

- (1) Findlay: Fellowship in the Life Eternal, pg. 261.
- (2) Brooke: Johannine Epistles, pg. 87.
- (3) Westcott: Epistles of St. John, pg. 104.

## 2. Summary.

The progress of thought in vs. 6 has been summarized by Haupt as follows: "He who abideth in Christ sinneth not. The present does not express precisely the actual now, but a continued condition: in him in whom the *μὲν* has become a reality, for *μὲν* carries with it the idea of abiding continuously, In him there is the abiding condition of the *οὐκ ἀμάρτανειν*. Again, on the other hand, in the case of him who sinneth, such an abiding state has not been attained: the actings of the *οὐκ ἀμάρτανειν* are not accomplished facts. Then the sum is: every sin demonstrates that we are not found in the fellowship of the Lord!"(1) Accordingly, it is evident that whether the construction be that for not sinning (*οὐκ ἀμάρτανειν*) or for sinning (*οὐκ ἀμάρτανων*), the idea involved in the use of *ἀμάρτανων* refers to the outworking of the principle of evil in action. The entire verse may be rendered thus "Every one that abideth continually in him(Christ) doth not go on sinning: every one that sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him". In summarizing the ideas of vs. 6 two statements may be made: first, the first sentence gives the condition or proof of sinlessness--abiding in Him; and second, the second sentence gives the explanation or proof of sinfulness--failure to have seen or to know Him.

(1) Haupt: The First Epistle of St. John, pg. 184.

# C. Phraseology of 3:5.

## 1. Exegetical discussion of 3:5.

This verse has been left for the latter part of this discussion not only because it does not contain either of the distinctive expressions mentioned above, but especially because its thought (i.e. that the Incarnation has redemptive significance) seems to make it the key verse of the passage. In vs. 5 John appeals directly to the knowledge of his Christian readers by his use of οἱσὶτε, "ye know". He also seems to use ἐκείνους and αὐτὸς with practically no distinction in referring to Christ as "he". The employment of the aorist tense of φανερώ indicates that John's conception was punctiliar in nature; and therefore, the phrase "he was manifested" must point to the Incarnation. The dependent clause introduced by ἵνα is evidently purposive, for the context implies that the conjunction carries the purposive sense of "in order that"; the verb ἔργη, similarly to ἀφῆ and ἀπαρτί in 1:7 which it comprehends in thought(1), expresses simply the "occurrence" of an action (aorist subjunctive). The fact that the Hebrew word שָׁלַח carries the two senses of "taking away" and "bearing" but that the former sense is translated into Greek by ἀλπεῖν (and the latter by φέρειν) suggests that the true rendering of ἔργη here is "to take away"; this is supported by the meaning of οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀπαρτί in John 1:29

(1) Cf. Chapter II pgs. 141, 42.

which is considered parallel in thought. The object

(*τὸς ἀμαρτίας*) of the verb occurs in some texts

with *ἡμῶν*, but the use of the article in Greek oc-

casionally where the English uses a possessive pronoun also allows the possibility of the possessive here; the plural form and the use of the article stress

the concreteness of the many forms and manifestations of

sin which Christ took away. The second clause of the

sentence is introduced by *καὶ* and is therefore coordinate

with what precedes; the order *ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν* is like

that of a corresponding phrase (*ἡ δικαία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν*)

in John 7:18. The present tense of the verb shows the

permanence of the fact stated: "Sin in him is not". Re-

garding the meaning of *ἡ ἀμαρτία* which is made prominent by

the order of the phrase, Cremer says: "Without the art-

icle, *ἀμαρτία*, like *δικαιοσύνη*, *κακία*, according to a common cus-

tom of classical writers, is used where the reference is

to the conception itself (embodied in the individual man-

ifestations), and not the collective sum of manifestations;

so in I John 3:5.(1).

## 2. Summary.

In keeping with the thought of the sentence the purpose of this statement seems to be that of showing the effective example of Christ as a basis for his redemptive plan. Thus, vs.5 proclaims a Divine purpose and fact: to take away sins, and the eternally pure and sinless character of Christ. Furthermore, the concrete sins of humanity are to be taken away by Divinity in which there is not even the

(1) Cremer : Lexicon of New Testament Greek, ,pgs. 100-102



principle of sin: this explains the fundamental opposition of sin which is the basis of God's redemptive purpose, for the state of sinfulness and sinlessness are incompatible. Accordingly "every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (vs. 5) for it is known that "he was manifested to take away sins; and in him is no sin": thus He is also the hope as well as the power and ideal of sinlessness.

### III General Conclusions.

As a result of the foregoing exegetical study the following contributions are to be made; for as shown above John discusses various aspects of the fact and nature of sin. In this ~~pp~~assage the following statements concerning sin are made: first, the definition of sin-"sin is lawlessness", second the provision for the removal of sin" he was manifested to take away sins"; third, the explanation of sin-"whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him"; fourth, the source of sin", he that doeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning". On the other hand, the following truths concerning sinlessness are given: first the example of sinlessness-"in him ~~is~~ no sin", "he is righteous"; second, the condition ~~of~~ sinless-ness-"whosoever ~~abideth in him~~ sinneth not"; third, the fact, of sinlessness-"whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin"; and fourth,-

the basis of sinlessness--"his seed abideth in him, and --he is begotten of God". While the section as a whole apparently describes the character of the children of God, by way of synthesizing the thought of the passage the following divisions in the aspect of the thought may be made: first, the irreconcilability of sin and sinlessness (vs.4-6); and second, the incompatibility of sin and sinlessness (vs.7-9). Findlay has said that from this passage(3:4-9) sin is shown to be ruinous, illegal, unchristian, diabolical, and unnatural in the child of God(1). As Wordsworth has suggested (2) the long history of misunderstanding in the Church concerning what seemed to be conflicting statements regarding sin and sinlessness in 1:7-2:2 and this passage might have been avoided by proper examination of the tenses used: for the Christian may sin(*ἡμαρτῆ*-punctiliar), but he does not continue in sin(*ἡμαρτάνει*-durative).

- (1) Findlay: Fellowship in the Life Eternal, pgs. 253-269.  
(2) Wordsworth: The Greek Testament, Vol. II, pgs. 115-6.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RELATIONSHIP OF I JOHN 1:7-2:2 and 3:4-9.

- I A General Descriptive Statement.
- II The Atmosphere of the Passages.
  - A. The atmosphere of 1:7-2:2.
  - B. The atmosphere of 3:4-9.
- III The Statements at Issue.
- IV Restatement of the Meaning of 1:10 and 3:9.
  - A. Restatement of 1:10.
  - B. Restatement of 3:9.
- V The Relationship of 1:10-to 3:9 in View of Their  
Context.
- VI The Solution and Justification.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RELATIONSHIP OF I JOHN 1:7-2:2 and 3:4-9.

#### I A General Descriptive Statement.

The First Epistle of John contains a number of distinctive, general characteristics; among these the following are especially noteworthy: first, the variety of subjects-Fellowship, sin, the Divine commandments, the antichrist, love and life; second, the lack of well-ordered treatment-as, for instance, the subject of sin and the relationship of Christians to the world are intermingled; third, the complexity of statement-as illustrated in the introduction; and fourth, the absence of a logically developed theme- which fact is revealed in any attempt to analyze the Epistle. In addition to the foregoing there is the well recognized difficulty in accounting for the paradoxical statements concerning sin. This fact is the basis of E.R.Barnard's statement that, "The great contribution which I John makes to the doctrine of sin is a paradox. Nowhere is the reality of sin more strongly insisted on as occurring in Christian life and nowhere is the sinlessness of the Christian life more distinctly asserted" (1).

(1) E.R.Barnard: Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, Vol.IV, pg. 535-6.

## II The Atmosphere of the Passages.

### A. The atmosphere of 1:7-2:2.

The leading aspects of John's thought in this passage of the Epistle are the key to its atmosphere: first, the cleansing from all sin (vs. 7) καὶ τὸ ἁμαρτανου τοῦ ἐλθοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρῶς ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάντων ἁμαρτιῶν; second, the consciousness of sin (vs. 8) ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν; third, the confession of sin (vs. 9) ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν; fourth, the denial of the fact of sin (vs. 10) ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήσαμεν, ψεύτην ποιούμεν αὐτοὺς; fifth, a declaration against and a provision in case of sin (2:1), ὅτι μὴ ἁμαρτήτε.... καὶ ἐὰν τις ἁμαρτή; sixth, a propitiation for our sin (2:2), καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. The treatment of sin as a fact is one of the significant factors in the development of these verses. In vs. 7 sin is assumed as a vital fact in the believer's life, and in vs. 8 his consciousness of the fact is considered; then in vs. 9 the confession of incidental sins resulting in forgiveness presumes the recognition of sin as an actuality but in vs. 10 the denial of the reality of sin makes Him a liar, a climax in the denial of sin as a fact. The Apostle's own statement of his purpose in writing (that his readers might not sin), the presence of an Advocate for any contingency of sin, and the propitiation of Christ continue the treatment of sin as a fact. From the standpoint of experience the atmosphere of the section is significant, for it is essentially true to life

and the reality of sin: we are conscious of our sin, our need of forgiveness and cleansing, our hope in an Advocate and a propitiation, even as we are aware of the presence of Christ and the method of approach to Him. Consequently, the atmosphere of this passage is that of contemplation of the believer from the standpoint of human experience, and its significance results from the treatment of sin as a fact.

B. The Atmosphere of 3:4-9.

An adequate treatment of this passage by Findlay contains an admirable summary (1) of the leading aspects of John's thought here: "1. Sin is ruinous (3:4f). 2. Sin is illegal (3:4). 3. Sin is unchristian (3:5,6). 4. Sin is diabolical (3:8). 5. Sin is unnatural (3:9)". An idea of primary significance in the atmosphere of 3:4-9 is the nature of sin; the first vs. defines the nature of sin from the standpoint of both activity and description; the subsequent verses enlarge upon this along the aspects listed above. In general sin is viewed as opposed to the will or law of God, irreconcilable with the mission and character of Christ, impotent against the abiding believer, produced in man by the activity of the devil, impossible for the

(1) Findlay: Fellowship in the Life Eternal, pgs.253-69.

begotten of God: all sin by nature is opposed to the will and law of God, and accordingly inconsonant with the life of the children of God. Furthermore, this passage comprehends the believer from the Divine standpoint: for sin is considered as that which is contrary to (His) law, the removal of sin as the purpose of the Christ's manifestation, the condition of sinlessness as the result of abiding in Him, the position of sinner devoid of knowledge of Him, the state of sinlessness as the outcome of being begotten of God. In all these verses the significance of the atmosphere results from a discussion of the nature of sin, looking upon the believer from the divine standpoint. By way of comparison it may be noted that the first passage treats the fact of sin, viewing the believer from the human standpoint; and the second, the nature of sin, the believer from the divine standpoint.

### III The Statements at Issue.

John insists upon the reality of the fact of sin in the life of believers in 1:10 by his statement that, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (*ἐάν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμάρτηκαμεν, ψεύδεται ποιῶμεν αὐτὸν καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῶν*). On the other hand 3:9 states the sinlessness of Christians: "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God (*πᾶς ὁ*

γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ  
ποιεῖ, ὅτι ἡ πύρρα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει.  
καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν, ὅτι  
ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγεννητά.

Thus, these apparently contradictory statements concerning the possibility of sin in the life of the Christian must be studied in connection with their contexts and then related. In a discussion in the British Weekly, David Smith has suitably recognized the fact that "It is unfortunate that our (English) Version has failed to reproduce the studious precision of the Apostle's language in dealing with the question of the relation between the believer and sin".

#### IV Restatement of the Meaning of 1:10 and 3:9.

##### A. Restatement of 1:10.

Up to this point the Apostle has dealt with the two main aspects of the revelation that God is light: first, the character which it fixes for the man who is to have fellowship with Him (if we walk in the light)(vs.7); and second, the method by which this character may be obtained (if we confess our sins) (vs.9) (1). Furthermore, man's relation to God is considered in connection with three false pleas; the first is a denial of what is distinctly known, a denial of the reality of the truth (vs.6); the second, is a denial of the abiding

(1) Westcott: Epistles of St. John, pg.25.



power of sin as a principle in one's life. Verse 1:10, third of these pleas, is concerned with the consequences of a denial of the fact of having committed sin: *Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν* i.e., "If we say we are in the position (state) of not having sinned, (we not only deny the past commission but also the present consequences of our sinful activity) we make him a liar and his word is not in us".

#### B. Restatement of 3:9.

In 3:9 the antagonism of the Christian to sin is placed in its most decisive aspect in this passage. Two things are affirmed of him: "he that doeth no sin", and "he cannot sin". The universal application of the other truths of the passage (introduced by *πάντες οἱ* here reaches its climax: sin has been defined as lawlessness, the manifesting of Christ to take away sins, abiding in him as the condition of sinlessness, are all preparatory to the concluding statement that "Whosoever is begotten of God *ἀμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ* (a habit), because his seed abideth in him (a principle); and *οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν* (an expression of character), because he is begotten of God".

V The Relationship of 1:10 to 3:9 in View of Their Context.

The atmosphere of the context of 1:10 views the believer from the human standpoint and treats sin as a fact; the leading aspects of John's thought which form the background of this verse are concerned with the human relationships, requirements, and attitudes. The use of the first and second person, the direct address, the personal tone indicate that sin is considered from the human standpoint; for to man sin is a vital fact in life. Consequently, the human touch is brought out in 1:10; the supposition is probably one put forward by a group within the church and therefore is of human concern; this denial of the actual commission of or the reality of sin is true to the spirit of the passage, as is also the answer which John makes. Thus 1:10 treats the fact of sin in the life of the believer from a human viewpoint. As the last verse of the second passage, 3:9 likewise seems to reflect the atmosphere of its context, treating the nature of sin and looking at it from the standpoint of Christ. Here the emphasis is upon the Divine rather than the human aspect of sin: the definition of sin, the taking away of sin, the statement of the sinlessness of Christ, the necessity of abiding in Christ, the affirmation that human sin has its source in the devil, and the conclusion that the children of God are sinless. Particularly is this true in 3:9 for the Divine basis of sinlessness is

given twice; the fact of sin is assumed, but the nature of sin is here developed in detail-its character, source, etc. Accordingly, the relationship of these verses in view of their contexts is that 1:10 involves the fact of sin, the believer being looked at from the standpoint of human experience; and 3:9 the nature of sin, the believer being looked at from the standpoint of Christ.

#### VI The Solution and Justification.

As stated above 1:10 treats the fact of sin; it may be rendered thus, "If we say that we are in a position (state) of not having committed sin, we make him a liar and his word is not in us". Accordingly, the question arises as to what aspect of sin the apparently contradictory statement of 3:9 refers; this having been determined as that of the nature of sin, the solution of the paradox must evidently lie in relating the fact and nature of sin. The meaning of the two phrases occurring in 3:9 has previously been determined: *πολεῖν ἁμαρτίαν* referring to the practicing of sin- "a habit"; and *ἁμαρτάνειν* referring to the act of sinning - an expression of character; but the basis or principle of not "doing sin" involved here is "because his seed abideth in him". Thus, in distinction from 1:10 as Forsyth points out, "Cannot sin" (3:9) means not that he is not able to sin, but that his principle will not

allow him to sin. As the regenerate personality he cannot do it. 'You cannot, consistently with your principles, do it; you cannot with your nature do it. Ideally, whosoever is born of God cannot sin. That is the absolute truth. These texts of John are all judgments of faith, formed from his knowledge of the absolute holiness and power of Christ. He has forgotten for the moment the actuality of man. He is possessed with the sense of the omnipotence of Christ. That will be 'finally' as actual as it is now ideal. It is 'the ultimate reality' " (1).

(1) Forsyth: Christian Perfection, pgs. 25-6.

CHAPTER V

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TRANSLATIONS:  
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