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THE TEACHING OF JESUS
IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW ON
THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

By

Edwin McKennon Sweet
A.B., Asbury College

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
The Degree of Bachelor of Sacred Theology
in
The Biblical Seminary in New York

New York City
April -- 1934

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To

Ruth Swengel Sweet,

my wife,

who has rendered valuable service

by kind encouragement and

by correcting and typing this treatise,

I dedicate this thesis

as a token of

gratitude and affection.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

THE TEACHING OF JESUS
IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW ON
THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject.

1. The Subject Stated and Delimited.

One of the most prominent facts revealed in the Old and New Testaments concerning mankind is that moral evil is a reality in the world. It is the purpose of this study to make a careful investigation of the teachings of Jesus concerning this fact of sin with respect to its nature and consequences. Or, as stated in the title of this thesis, the subject is, "The Teaching of Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew on the Nature and Consequences of Sin".

Because the writer desires to get to the very source of all Christian teaching on this subject, this study will not only be centered in, but limited to the teachings of Jesus as revealed in the Gospel record. It has also been deemed advisable, for reasons of practicability of scope and method, to restrict this investigation to the first Gospel. Although there are aspects of the subject which receive additional light in the Gospels according to Mark and Luke, and especially in the Gospel according to John, yet the

Gospel of Matthew may certainly be regarded as representative.

It has also been found necessary to delimit this study further. It is exceedingly difficult when dealing with a doctrine such as that of sin to disconnect it entirely from other closely related doctrines. For example, one of the outstanding elements in Jesus' message deals with the remedy for sin. He speaks frequently about such things as repentance, faith, and forgiveness. However, this investigation will be primarily concerned with the two aspects suggested in the above title, namely, the nature and consequences of sin.

2. The Subject Justified.

Many people are affirming today that in the popular mind there is a great decline in the sense of sin. Even such a serious thinker as Sir Oliver Lodge says,

"As a matter of fact, the higher man of today is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment; his mission, if he is good for anything, is to be up and doing."¹

That this decline is present within the Church as well as without is declared to be the case by Ralph W. Sockman in the following:

"The word 'sin' is losing its scarlet color. Even church congregations no longer see red when the pulpits denounce it. There is a change going on within the sanctuary somewhat comparable to that outside, which may be

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(1) Lodge: "Man and the Universe", p.220.

symbolized by the contrast between Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter" and Ellen Glasgow's "They Stooped to Folly". If one were to listen intently at the door of the modern place of worship, he would not hear the old-fashioned agonizing of conscience which caused Walt Whitman to pay tribute to the dumb beast in contrast:

'They do not sweat and whine about their condition;
They do not lie awake and weep for their sins.'
... The Reverend William A. Sunday is touring the lesser towns. Camp-meeting revivals are not the success they once were. In short, it is about as hard to get a conviction of sin these days in the courts of God as it is to get a conviction of Volstead violation in the courts of New York."¹

Various factors have been suggested as contributing to this weakened sense of sin. Our modern life has the tendency to take man away from introspective thoughts and to keep him busy in a more objective life; he is busied with a hurried existence in which he lives almost exclusively in the senses. Under such conditions one has little time or inclination to think about the things of the soul, and hence the sense of sin is enfeebled.² In the minds of some people there has come a strong reaction to the extreme views of the wrath of God, which makes them attribute to God a weak sentimentality.³ According to their conception, God is too kind and courteous to punish and too polite to hurt anybody. Therefore, they feel safe in trusting themselves to His mercy despite their impenitence.

This decline in the sense of sin is further re-

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- (1) Sockman: "Morals of Tomorrow", pp. 23,24.
- (2) Sockman: Ibid., p.60.
- (3) cf. Snowden: "The Psychology of Religion", p.132.

garded to be due to some fundamental changes in the conception of sin. Many have ceased to regard any code of morals as having divine sanction. They point out the fact that what people call sin is an entirely relative thing, that the thing that in one century is regarded as sin is not considered sinful in the next, and vice versa. Sin appears to be a matter that is determined by public opinion and that differs according to time and locality. Any standard so changeable, it is contended, could not possess divine origin and divine sanction. Upon this point Sockman remarks:

"Almost every vice in our present American moral code has been held a virtue somewhere at some time. It is not surprising that many jump to the conclusion that morals are merely custom-made convictions sprayed with the odor of sanctity. The ideas of right and wrong are analyzed as the echoes of social approval in a particular place at a particular time. Thereupon the man who thinks in legal terms agrees with Walter Lippmann that 'A human morality has no such sanction as a divine. The sanction of a divine morality is the certainty of the believer that it originated with God. But if he has once come to think that the rule of conduct has a purely human, local and temporary origin, its sanction is gone'.¹ Where he regards codes as man-made, the legalist² can be convicted of unconventionality, but not of sin."

There is a prominent religious cult in American life today which affirms a positive denial of the very existence of sin. Many are coming to believe in Christian Science, and many more who are not actually becoming affiliated with the cult are being influenced considerably by its

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- (1) Lippmann: "A Preface to Morals", pp.49,50.
- (2) Sockman: "Morals of Tomorrow", pp.26,27.

teachings. Concerning the unreality of sin Mrs. Eddy writes:

"A sinner is not reformed merely by assuring him that he cannot be a sinner, because there is no sin; to put down the claim of sin you must detect it, remove the mark, point out the illusion, and thus get the victory over sin, and prove its unreality."¹

Scientists and philosophers are often found today supporting a theory of determinism in the universe which would destroy the reality of a moral world altogether, and hence sin would be reduced to a non-entity. In this class are the behaviorists, who hold the belief that every thought and deed, every psychical and physical action is definitely the result of discoverable causes, which are beyond the control of the individual. Concerning the theory held by these scientists, Sockman declares:

"Behaviorism excludes consciousness, purpose, and mind from psychology . . . The domestic relations of human beings are reduced by the behavioristic theory to the mere means of securing sexual gratification. Hence, marital fidelity, pre-marital chastity, and romantic love are seen as foolish fictions."²

There is a growing tendency on the part of many to charge society at large with the sins of today and to relieve the individual of much of the responsibility which formerly he was compelled to accept. The findings of social and biological science with reference to the power of environment and heredity over one's destiny have caused many to conclude that little or no guilt is to be attached to

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(1) Eddy: "Science and Health with the Key to the Scriptures", Edition of 1908, p.447

(2) Sockman: Op. Cit., pp.164,166.

to the individual for wrong-doing, but rather that the blame is to be placed at the door of the evil society which produces him. Concerning this theory that the evil is caused by the ill-fortune of a man's heritage and the accidents of his environment, Barbour says,

"This theory has led many to say that nothing is right and nothing is wrong. Everything is the result of complexes. It has resulted in an easy tolerance of sin. It has relieved some of the troublesome sense of responsibility and a depressing feeling of guilt. An individual is not held responsible when his heritage and environment are against him, nor is he to be commended when they are in his favor. He is born with an inheritance of weakness or of strength beyond his control. He is placed in a situation that he cannot change. There is, therefore, no praise for him who attains to the heights of group morality and no condemnation for him who fails. A man succeeds or fails according to his native endowments and the help or hindrance of his environment."^{1,2}

Thus, by these causes, and others which have not been mentioned, there has come an undisputed diminishing of the sense of sin today.

How deeply some of our modern writers sense the importance of this changed attitude toward sin is illustrated

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- (1) Barbour: "Sin and the New Psychology", p.17.
- (2) Concerning this same tendency Sockman remarks, "The frankness of informal discussion and the new insights of biology, psychology, and sociology have lifted the subject of sin out of the atmosphere of personal blame into the objectivity of social and statistical science. The individual shifts his focus from self to situations. . . . And while the finest natures take it to heart with real concern, the ordinary attitude is to dilute the scarlet tinge of personal guilt with the thought of society's responsibility. This is manifestly the prevailing tendency at present." Op. Cit. pp.30,31.

by the following: P. T. Forsyth writes,

"For we have lost the sense of sin, which is the central issue of all ethic because it turns on the relation of the conscience to the conscience of God. And apart from sin grace has little meaning. The decay of the sense of sin measures our loss of that central Christian idea; and it is a loss that has only to go on to extinguish Christianity."¹

The late Bishop Charles Gore of Birmingham, England, said in a sermon preached before the University of Oxford,

"It is my persuasion, which deepens with every year of experience, that there will be no revival of vital religion among us, on any large scale, or with any adequate results, except through a deepening of the sense of sin: a return to the properly Christian severity of view about the meaning of sin and its consequences; and that this is needed equally in all classes of society and among all kinds of men."²

If these men are right in their convictions, a healthy religious experience and a revitalized church are at stake in the matter of a revival of a proper sense of sin, and in the case of Bishop Gore it is believed that a restored sense of sin is to be produced by a return to the true Christian teaching regarding the nature and consequences of sin.

It appears, also, that the purity of other Christian doctrines is dependent upon a true conception of sin. All Christian truth is a unity, and consequently when one doctrine is incorrectly conceived, by the laws of logical consistency, all other doctrines are affected thereby.

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(1) Forsyth: "The Cruciality of the Cross", pp. 31,32.

(2) Gore: "The Permanent Creed and the Christian Idea of Sin", p.27.

James Orr remarks with respect to this matter, "It is in inadequate and mistaken views of sin that the root of so much misapprehension of these (higher Christian) doctrines lies".¹ Hence, the importance of a true teaching with regard to sin.

Surely there is no source of authority on such a subject to which one may go that can surpass or even equal Jesus. His teaching is taken as final in the matter. Therefore, the conviction is held, for the reasons given above, that to make a study of "The Teaching of Jesus in the Gospel According to Matthew on the Nature and Consequences of Sin" will be accompanied with more than ordinary profit.

B. The Sources for the Study.

Such a study as this, in the field of Biblical exegesis, naturally turns to the Scriptures themselves for its primary source materials. Therefore, particular use will be made of Matthew's Gospel, both in the Greek and in the English translation. In addition to the Gospel text, various commentaries, grammars, and lexical helps, together with other collateral works which will aid in understanding the Scriptural text will be utilized.

C. Plan of Procedure.

In the following chapter an attempt will be made

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(1) Orr: "Sin as a Problem Today", p. 8

to arrive at Jesus' conception of the nature of sin by a careful examination of the meaning of the various Greek words which Jesus uses to express the idea of sin. This will be accomplished by a study of these words in their etymology, classical usage, usage in the papyri, usage in the New Testament, and usage by Jesus. In chapters III and IV Jesus' teaching regarding the nature and consequences of sin will be studied by a direct examination of pertinent passages in Matthew's Gospel. The last chapter will be devoted to a general conclusion of this study.

CHAPTER II

JESUS' TERMINOLOGY FOR SIN

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A. Introduction.

It surely cannot be thought amiss to enter into such a study as this by considering the meaning of the terminology which Jesus uses to express His idea of sin. It is true that many times, if not most of the time, Jesus speaks of sin without reference to any word which itself denotes it, nevertheless, He frequently does use certain words to designate it, a careful examination of which, it should be noted, will yield great profit. Such a study at the outset should help to sharpen our understanding of His fundamental conception.

Of the nine Greek words used in the New Testament Jesus uses only three in the Gospel of Matthew. These are *ἁμαρτία*, *ἄνομία*, and *παραπτώματα*. *ἁμαρτία* is used by Him five times; *ἄνομία* is used four times; and *παραπτώματα* is used three times. Let us turn at once to an examination of these words.

B. Study of *ἁμαρτία*.

1. Etymology and Classical Usage.

The etymology of this word *ἁμαρτία* is somewhat

uncertain. Suidas¹ derives it from α privative and thus makes it a "failing to grasp". However, most scholars, of whom Buttman and Burton are representative, agree that *ἄμαρτία* is derived etymologically from α privative and *μέρος* the primary significance of this word being, "to have a part in", but more commonly in usage, "to miss the mark", "to fail to attain". In a physical sense it is used by Homer² of a spear missing the mark. It is used by Aeschylus as a "fault" committed by one³, and by Thucydides as a "fault" of judgment.⁴ Plato uses it as an abstract term designating "sin" or "guilt"⁵, and so does Aristotle⁶. Thus, in classical usage it means "a missing the mark", "fault", or "sin".⁷

2. Usage of *ἄμαρτία* in the Papyri.

In the study of the use of this word in the Greek papyri, the general sense of "missing the mark" is further borne out. This meaning with a distinctly ethical sense is revealed in a letter⁸ written by a prodigal son to his mother

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- (1) See Trench: "Synonyms of the New Testament", p.22.
- (2) Homer: "The Iliad", Vol. V, p.287.
- (3) Aeschylus: "Agamemnon", 1194.
- (4) Thucydides: 132.
- (5) Plato: "Laws" 660 C.
- (6) Aristotle: "Ethics Nic." 7. 4,2.
- (7) Burton: "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians", p.436.
- (8) "Berlmer Griechische Urhunden", Vol. III, p.846, 1st century A.D. Also cited in Milligan: "Selections from the Greek Papyri", p.93.

in the year 2 A.D., in which he tells her of the pitiful state into which he has fallen. He states that he is ashamed to come home, but he does not forget her in his prayers, and if he had only dared to hope she would actually seek him in the metropolis, he would have met her there. To continue in his own words he says, "But I was ashamed to come to Karanis, because I am going about in rags. I wrote you that I am naked. I beseech you, mother, to be reconciled to me. But I know what I have brought upon myself. Punished I have been in any case. I know that I have sinned." In the Greek ἠμαρτηκα, the perfect tense of ἁμαρτάνω, the verb form of ἁμαρτία, is used. That the verb form is no different in its essential meaning from the noun form in the papyri is assured by the use of the latter in two third century papyri¹.

In this instance also it is seen that the idea of "missing the mark" is the sense of ἁμαρτία. It has further a definite ethical meaning inasmuch as in the case of the prodigal boy there is admission that wrong has been done and guilt is implied.

3. Usage of ἁμαρτία in the New Testament, Outside of the Gospel of Matthew.

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(1) "Griechische Urkunden der Papyrus-sammlung zu Leipzig", Vol. I, 119 recto³, dated A.D. 274 and the "Oxyrhynchus Papyri", Vol. VIII, 1119¹¹, dated A.D. 254.

We shall see upon the examination of some typical New Testament passages that ἁμαρτία carries here also the meaning of "missing the mark", and always in an ethical sense. Let us examine several. Acts 2:38 reads thus:

Μετανοήσατε, καὶ βαπτισθήτω
ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἀφεσιν τῶν
ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν, —

"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." This passage records the final appeal which Peter makes in his sermon on the day of Pentecost. It is a plea for repentance and faith in Christ in which he offers the promise of forgiveness of ἁμαρτιῶν. The word ἁμαρτία here surely signifies that which is ethically and morally wrong, else there would be no need for forgiveness. To need forgiveness must imply that there has been some falling short of the standard of righteousness, some "missing of the mark" of expected righteousness.

Again in Hebrews 4:15 is this understanding of the word borne out: οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα μὴ δύναμενον συνπαθεῖναι τῆς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν, πεπεισμένον δὲ κατὰ πάντα καθ' ὁμοιότητά χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας, ---"For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our

infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Here the author of this epistle declares of our High Priest that He can be moved by a sense of our weakness, because He Himself was tempted like we are in every point, yet without *ἀμαρτίας*. He was tempted to do some things that He ought not, to fall below the standard of righteousness, but He did not yield. He did not yield to the impulse to "miss the mark" of righteousness. This is plainly the meaning here of being without *ἀμαρτίας*.

Let us examine one more passage. In I John 3:7b,8a are these words: *ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην δίκαιός ἐστιν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιός ἐστιν. ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν, —* "He that

doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous; he that doeth sin is of the devil." Here St. John points out an antithesis which is perfectly clear on the point of *ἀμαρτία*. The one that doeth righteousness is set over against the one that doeth *ἀμαρτία*. Evidently righteousness and sin are opposite. Hence, if righteousness is the measuring up to the ethical mark or standard, then sin is the failure to do so, it is the "missing of the mark".

Thus, we have shown that in these typical passages, which we might multiply at length, the New Testament meaning

of *ἁμαρτία* may be understood to be the "missing of the mark" in an ethical sense.

a. *ἁμαρτία* as the "committing of sin".

We shall see that the meaning which we have indicated before is viewed in at least two general aspects in the New Testament. Sometimes the "missing of the mark" is viewed with the idea of the acting and the sinning uppermost.

This idea in a literal sense is clearly set forth in Hebrews 4:15, which we have examined above, *οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα μὴ δυνάμενον ἁμαρτῶσαι ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν, πειραζόμενον δὲ κατὰ πάντα καθ' ὁμοιότητα χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας*,—"For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath in all points been tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Here reference is clearly made to the act of sinning. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is asserting that Jesus in all points was tempted to yield to or commit sin just as all men are, but He did not, He did not yield to the committing of sin. With this *χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας* set over against the idea of temptation, the meaning of *ἁμαρτία* here is undoubtedly "sin" with the idea of the act of sinning uppermost.

In this sense of "the committing of sin" the word is frequently personified or semi-personified, being spoken of

as one would speak of a person or a demon. Thus, in Romans 6:12, *Μὴ οὖν βασιλεύτω ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι*,—"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." *ἁμαρτία* is not here used in the sense in which we observed it just previously. There is the idea of action or the volitional element in sin, but it is as though sin itself did the acting. Here sin "reigns" as a ruler might. It is conceived as a power or person threatening to hold dominion over men. The word is distinctly personified.

b. *ἁμαρτία* as "sin committed".

In some passages, Burton¹ says, *ἁμαρτία* is viewed with respect to "sin committed", the "deed as distinguished from the doing of it". Let us examine several passages.

In John 15:22a this is recorded: *εἰ μὴ ἦλθον καὶ ἐλάλησα αὐτοῖς, ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ εἶχον*, — "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." Jesus says here that if He had not come and by His life and teaching revealed to men the true nature of righteousness, they would not have realized that they fell short of it. Their deeds would not have appeared sinful. The thought in the

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(1) Burton: Op. Cit., p.440.

mind of Jesus was not that if He had not come they would not have committed sin, but that they would not have recognized that those sins committed were evil. It is manifest, then, that in this case ἁμαρτία refers not to "committing of sin" but "sin committed". In this case it is seen that sin is referred to in a general sense.

A more specific offense is referred to in Acts 7:60 where Stephen says, *Κύριε, μὴ στήσῃς αὐτοῖς ταύτην τὴν ἁμαρτίαν*, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." This is the prayer of Stephen uttered while he was being stoned. When he prays that God should not lay to the charge of those stoning him, this ἁμαρτίαν, he is, of course, referring to the sin of stoning him. He prays that forgiveness may be granted for this sin that is committed. Here again, while it is not as clear cut as the previous example, the emphasis in this ἁμαρτίαν is on the deed as distinguished from the doing of it. Also, it may be noted, that ἁμαρτία here has reference to a certain offense and is therefore used in a specific sense.

In John 8:21 this same sense prevails with another slight change of viewpoint. This passage reads thus:

Εἶπεν οὖν πάλιν αὐτοῖς Ἐγὼ ὑπέργω καὶ ζητήσετέ με, καὶ ἐν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ὑμῶν ἀποθάνετε -
"He said therefore again unto them, I go away, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sin." Jesus is here address-

ing the Jews in Jerusalem. He is referring to their wrong attitude toward Him in their rejection of Him. In this verse He says that He is going away and that then they shall seek Him, but they shall die in their sin. It appears that reference is not made to the fact that continually until death they would be committing sins, but to the fact that at their death their sinful deeds and the guilt standing over against those deeds would still be theirs. So, at least, Thayer conceives it¹. *ἁμαρτία* is here used in a collective sense, the singular form for a plural idea. Christ does not refer to one sin, but to all their sins for which they had not received forgiveness. That this meaning is intended is confirmed by the fact that in verse 24, just three verses following this passage, when He resumes His argument, He says, "I said therefore unto you that ye shall die in your sins". Here He uses the plural form of the word.

Some Bible commentators² contend that there is still a further usage of the word in which it is used as a figure of speech, by metonymy, to represent a "sin-bearer". They declare it to be so in II Cor. 5:21: *τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἕ- πτόιντο*, - "Him who knew no sin He made to be a sin-bearer on our behalf." However, since this idea is not found in

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(1) Thayer: "A. Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament", p.31.
 (2) Among these are Augustine, Erasmus, Wolf, Lange, Miley, and Burton.

Matthew, we shall not give further evidence for the contention.

c. *ἀναπτία* Considered Abstractly.

Let us look at *ἀναπτία* in one other passage. These questions are in Romans 7:7 *τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ὁ νόμος ἀναπτία;* — "What shall we say then? Is the law sin?" In the context Paul has declared that "when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were through the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." These words might quite naturally be misunderstood so that they would cast reflection on the law. Lest this misconception be placed upon his statements he raises the question, "Is the law sin?" and proceeds to answer it. He concludes in verse 12 that the law is not sin, but it is rather "holy". It is clear by Paul's answer that "holy" is used in antithesis to *ἀναπτία*. The word therefore, must refer to a quality that is opposite to "holy", namely, "unholy". Thus *ἀναπτία* in this case is used in the abstract.

d. *ἀναπτία* and the Standard of Righteousness.

We have seen that *ἀναπτία* in general means "missing the mark". The "mark" is a standard of righteous-

ness to which conduct ought to conform, but does not. In at least one Scriptural passage the standard is conceived of as set by civil powers, as in Acts 25:8, where Paul says in his defense, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I sinned at all". But the standard is usually conceived of as set by God, as in Romans 1:32, where Paul says of the sinning Gentiles, "who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practice them".

Paul not only applies this term, *ἀμαρτία*, when referring "to the violation of the known law, but also in reference to conduct of the same character produced, where there was no law, under the impelling influence of the hereditary tendency derived from Adam".¹ This is assuredly the case in Romans 5:12, *Διὰ τοῦτο ὡςπερ δι' ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἀμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους, ὁ θάνατος διῆλθεν, ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον.* "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" In this passage *ἀμαρτία*

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(1) Burton: "Commentary on Galatians", p.440.

is declared the experience of all men including, of course, the class of mankind referred to in Romans 1:18-32 where Paul explicitly states that they were without the law.

With regard to the standard of righteousness Burton says,

"As concerns the material content of *ἁμαρτία* there was evidently room for wide difference of opinion among those who used the term. Unlike such words as *πτορνεύειν*, *κτείνω*, and *φόβος*, which in themselves describe the external character of the deeds to which they refer, and *φθόρος* and *ὀργή*, which describe an inward disposition, *ἁμαρτία* by etymology and usage describes the acts denoted simply as failing to conform to a standard (implied to be right), and among Jews and Christians conceived to be set by God."¹

e. Summary of the Usage of *ἁμαρτία* in the New Testament Outside the Gospel of Matthew.

We have seen in the brief examination of the usage of *ἁμαρτία* in the New Testament outside of Matthew's Gospel, that the word means in general "missing the mark", and always in an ethical sense. The standard or "mark" is occasionally conceived to be set by civil powers, but with practical unanimity it is viewed as of divine origin.

ἁμαρτία is viewed from at least two different aspects. Sometimes it is regarded as the "committing of sin" with the idea of the acting and the sinning uppermost. Often this idea is personified and thus modified to represent a force or principle of sin. At other times

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(1) Burton: Op. Cit., p.440.

ἁμαρτία is regarded as "sin committed", "that which is done wrong", "the deed as distinguished from the doing of it". In this sense the most usual reference is to sin in general without regard to any specific deed, but on rare occasion it may refer to a certain specific sin. Sometimes this idea is taken in a collective sense when reference is made to sins in the aggregate. In at least one passage this sense of the word is probably used figuratively, as metonymy. And occasionally *ἁμαρτία* is used in the abstract to represent the idea of sin's heinousness or sinfulness. In these major senses the New Testament usage of the word is complete.

4. Usage of *ἁμαρτία* by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.

As we have previously indicated this word, *ἁμαρτία*, is used by Jesus five times in the Gospel of Matthew. In the passage 9:1-8, this word occurs three times on the lips of Jesus. He says to the one sick of the palsy, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins (*ἁμαρτίαι*) are forgiven". Because the Pharisees thought that in making such claims Jesus was blaspheming, He says in His defense, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For which is easier to say, Thy sins (*ἁμαρτίαι*) are forgiven; or to say, arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (*ἁμαρτίας*), (then saith He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, and take up thy bed and go unto thy

house". In this passage the sense of "missing the mark of God's law" is well borne out. *ἁμαρτία* is plainly used, as we have seen to be the case elsewhere, in a generic sense to cover everything in the nature of wrong-doing which might need forgiveness.

In chapter 12 in connection with the pronouncement regarding the unpardonable sin Jesus again uses *ἁμαρτία*. He says here "Every sin (*ἁμαρτία*) and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven".¹ It is apparent that the same broad sense of "missing the mark of God's law" is here employed.

The other passage in which *ἁμαρτία* is found is the one in chapter 26, which records the institution of the Lord's Supper. Jesus says here in connection with the cup offered to His disciples, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins (*ἁμαρτιῶν*)".² Here as elsewhere Jesus employs the word with no observable change in meaning. It may be noted that in each of these cases *ἁμαρτία* is used in connection with the fact of forgiveness.

These passages serve to show that the general meaning of the word which we have gained through previous study of it in the New Testament may be properly understood

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(1) Matthew 12:31.
(2) Matthew 26: 27b, 28.

to be Jesus' meaning also.

Let us now, for the time, leave this word to turn to the study of another which Jesus occasionally uses to express the idea of sin.

C. Study of ἀνομία.

1. Etymology and Classical Usage.

This word with the α privative comes from the root, *νεμ*, which in the verb form, *νεμω*, meant "to assign" or "apportion". The noun, *νόμος*, coming from the root, means "that which is assigned or apportioned", hence "a custom", "usage", and all that becomes law thereby, "a law" or "ordinance". Hence, *ἀνομία* etymologically means "not having law" or "without law". In classical usage the word came to mean "lawlessness", or "lawless conduct", and is so used by Herodotus¹, Euripides², Isocrates³, Plutarch⁴, and Plato^{5,6}.

2. Usage of ἀνομία in the Papyri.

Moulton and Milligan⁷ refer to two examples of the use in the papyri which bear out the same general idea of "lawless conduct" found in the classical usage. In the

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- (1) Herodotus I 96, 97.
- (2) Euripides 1A. 1095
- (3) Isocrates 129 C.
- (4) Plutarch 2.755B.
- (5) Plato: "Republic", 575A.
- (6) cf. Liddell and Scott: "A Greek-English Lexicon", p.134.
- (7) Moulton and Milligan: "Vocabulary of the N.T. Greek", p.45.

"Paris Papyri"¹ it is said that "they assaulted me ἀφορ-
 ἦτω ἀνομία ἐξενεχθέντες," having carried me out with unbear-
 able lawlessness". In the "Oxyrhynchus Papyri"² are these
 words, ἀπαντα ὡς ἐν ἀνομία[ι]ς ἀπρεσύλη-
 σαν, - "lawlessly carried them all off" or "in a lawless man-
 ner carried them all off". The same idea of "lawless conduct"
 is here revealed, also.

3. Usage of ἀνομία in the New Testament Outside the Gospel
 of Matthew.

a. ἀνομία as an "act of violation of law".

We shall see that ἀνομία is used in three differ-
 ent senses in the New Testament. In I John 3:4, in which
 ἀνομία is used to designate an "act of violation of law",
 these words occur, πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν
 καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν
 ἡ ἀνομία, - "Everyone that doeth sin doeth also law-
 lessness; and sin is lawlessness". From our understanding
 of ἁμαρτία we may here gain the meaning of ἀνομία. When
 John says "everyone that doeth ἁμαρτία," the sense of ἁμαρ-
 τία is sin in the act, inasmuch as he says "doeth sin".
 But the statement is made that "everyone that doeth ἁμαρτία
 doeth also ἀνομία" and that "ἁμαρτία is ἀνομία".
 Hence, we may understand ἀνομία to mean an act of "missing

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(1) "Paris Papyri", 14²⁷, dating back to the 2nd C. B.C.
 (2) "Oxyrhynchus Papyri", Vol. VIII, 1121²⁰, dating back
 to 295 A.D.

the mark", or, if the "mark" should be considered more specifically as the "law", as we shall later show to be the case¹, then ἄνομία would be the "act of missing or violating the law". Robinson says in this connection, "ἁμαρτία is the more general term, and ἄνομία the more definite and specific. Hence, commonly, ἄνομία is used as parallel and nearly synonymous with ἁμαρτία".²

b. ἄνομία in the Abstract.

In other passages the word is used to express the abstract idea of "unrighteousness". This idea is clearly shown by the appearance of ἄνομία in antithesis to δικαιοσύνη as in II Cor. 6:14, τίς γὰρ μετόχη δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἄνομίας,—"For what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity". Thus it refers to just the opposite of δικαιοσύνη. In this passage Thayer³ says, δικαιοσύνη means the abstract quality of "integrity" or "uprightness". Hence, ἄνομία is here used to express the abstract idea of "unrighteousness".

c. ἄνομία as a Figure of Speech.

In at least one passage ἄνομία is used as a personification of the idea of sinfulness. It is so used

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(1) cf. this thesis, p. 29

(2) Robinson: "A Greek and English Lexicon of the N.T.", p. 61.

(3) Thayer: "A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament", p. 149.

in Romans 6:19, ὥσπερ γὰρ παρεστήσατε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν δοῦλα τῇ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ καὶ τῇ ἀνομίᾳ εἰς τὴν ἀνομίαν, οὕτως νῦν παραστήσατε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν δοῦλα τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ εἰς ἀγίασμόν, -

"For as ye presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification". When Paul here speaks of "presenting your members as servants to ἀνομία," he evidently thinks of ἀνομία as being a person or master to whom one would render service. He exhorts the Romans not to be servants of iniquity, but of righteousness. Here again ἀνομία is used in antithesis to δικαιοσύνη. Thus, a third usage of the word is employed, namely, that of "unrighteousness" personified.

d. ἀνομία and the Standard of Righteousness.

With regard to the relations of ἀνομία to the law of God, Trench says,

" ἀνομία is never there (in the New Testament) the condition of one being without law, but always the condition or deed of one who acts contrary to law. . . . It will follow that where there is no law (Romans 5:15), there may be ἀμαρτία but certainly not ἀνομία. . . . Thus, the Gentiles, not having a law (Romans 2:14), might be charged with sin; but they, sinning without the law (ἀνομῶς = χωρὶς νόμου, Romans 2:12) could not be charged with ἀνομία. It is true, indeed, that, behind that law of Moses, which they never had, there is another law, the original law and revelation of the righteousness of God, written on the hearts of all (Romans 2:14,15); and as this in no human heart is obliterated quite, all

sin, even that of the darkest and most ignorant savage, must still in a secondary sense remain as *ἀνομία* a violation of this older, though partially obscured, law."¹

e. Summary of the Usage of *ἀνομία* in the New Testament Outside the Gospel of Matthew.

ἀνομία in the New Testament maintains its classical meaning of "lawlessness", or "lawless conduct", but puts into it a distinctly ethical sense, and is always regarded as a violation of the revealed and known law of God. It may refer in a secondary sense to a violation of the inner law of unenlightened conscience, but this is not its primary meaning. The word is used to refer to an "act of violation of law", to the abstract idea of "iniquity" or "unrighteousness", and also to the personification of "iniquity". It differs from the New Testament usage of *ἀμαρτία* in that it is more definite and specific, and always refers to a violation of a revealed and known law of God.

4. Usage of *ἀνομία* by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.

Jesus uses this word, *ἀνομία*, in connection with four different situations. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, with regard to the Judgment, that many shall say unto Him in that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, And then will I profess unto them, I

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(1) Trench: "Synonyms of the New Testament", p.230.

never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity" (*ἀνομίαν*).¹ In the preceding verse Jesus declares that those only should enter the kingdom of heaven who do the will of His Father. Here "iniquity" is set over against doing the will of God, thus confirming our understanding previously arrived at of the idea of the "violation of the law of God".

In Jesus' explanation of His Parable of the Tares, in chapter 13, He says, "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity (*ἀνομίαν*) and shall cast them into the furnace of fire".² There is nothing here that would imply any different understanding of the word. Here, as in the reference before, the idea of punishment is present and consequently implies in *ἀνομία* the idea of guilt.

In pronouncing the "woes" upon the Pharisees Jesus says in chapter 23, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, Even so ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (*ἀνομίας*)".³ Apparently our present under-

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(1) Matthew 7:22-23.
 (2) Matthew 13:41,42.
 (3) Matthew 24:27,28.

standing of the word is here borne out also.

And finally, in chapter 24, when speaking of the time preceding His return, Jesus says, "and because iniquity (*ἀνομία*) shall be multiplied, the love of many shall wax cold".¹ In this passage, as in the others examined, Jesus seems to employ the word in the general sense which we have discovered it to bear in other New Testament passages, namely, the "violation of the law of God".

There is one other word used by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew which we may well investigate in connection with this study. To this we shall now turn.

D. Study of *παράπτωμα*.

1. Etymology and Classical Usage.

This word is a combination of the prefix, *παρά*, and the verb root *πτω*, which becomes the verb, *πτω*. This verb means "to fasten to" or, in the middle voice, "to touch" or "to affect". In a secondary sense the word came to mean "to have intercourse with" a woman. From this derivative sense *παράπτωμα* comes to mean "a false step", "a slip", "a blunder", "a defeat".² Longinus³ uses the term in reference to literary faults. The first three of these meanings are employed by Polybius⁴ as well as Longinus, and

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- (1) Matthew 24:12.
- (2) Liddell and Scott: "A Greek-English Lexicon", p.1140.
- (3) Longinus 36.2.
- (4) Polybius 9.10,6.

the fourth by Diodorus.^{1,2}

2. Usage of *παράπτωμα* in the Papyri.

In the royal ordinance, the "Tebtunis Papyri",³ it is laid down that the measures used by revenue officers shall be tested and that they must not exceed the government measure by more than the two [- - -] allowed for errors,

*τῶν εἰς τὰ παράπτωμα ἐπιπέσει
ῥημένω [- - β].*" In speaking of this passage Moulton

and Milligan⁴ say that "a 'slip' or 'lapse' rather than a willful 'sin' is the connotation suggested". This same

sense may be found in the "Greek Papyri in the British Museum"⁵, in which the writer speaks of a *παράπτωμα διαβολικὴν*

into which he had fallen. In this connection Moulton and Milligan refer to Bell, the editor, as suggesting that this "may not mean more than that he had stayed too long in the vegetable garden mentioned just before".

From these references it may be seen that the classical meaning of "slip", "error", or "blunder" is here retained, and that probably no element of the ethical, such as willful wrong-doing, is intended to be conveyed.

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- (1) Diodorus 19.100.
- (2) cf. Liddell and Scott: *Op. Cit.*, p.1140.
- (3) "Tebtunis Papyri", Vol. I, 5⁹¹, dated 118 B.C.
- (4) Moulton and Milligan: "Vocabulary of New Testament Greek", p.489.
- (5) "Greek Papyri in the British Museum", 1917¹⁴, dated around 330 to 340 A.D.

3. Usage of παράπτωμα in the New Testament Outside the Gospel of Matthew.

We shall see that in the New Testament παράπτωμα is not used in the lax sense in which it is used in classical Greek and in the papyri. In II Cor. 5:19 the idea of a "trespass" involving guilt is clearly represented: *ΘΕΟΣ ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ πόσον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ, μὴ λογισόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παράπτωμάτα αὐτῶν,* - "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses". The sense of παράπτωμα in this clause, "not reckoning unto them their παράπτωμάτα", manifestly is "not reckoning unto them their 'guilt of evil deeds'". The connotation of guilt is uppermost in this conception and in order that there may be guilt there must be some sort of violation of law. From this passage then, παράπτωμα refers to a "trespass" or "violation of law" which involves guilt.

Again, in Mark 11:25 this conception of the word is clearly revealed. Thus it reads, *καὶ ὅταν στήκετε προσευχόμενοι, ἀφίετε εἴ τι ἔχετε κατὰ τινος, ἵνα καὶ ὁ Πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ἀφῆ ὑμῖν τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν,* - "And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against anyone; that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses". Here the reference to forgiveness implies in

παράπτωμα the idea of guilt. And we are not left in doubt with respect to the cause of guilt. In the first part of the verse Jesus exhorts to forgive other people their wrongs "if ye have aught against any one", if any one has failed to do right toward you. This is evidently the essential content of *παράπτωμα*, for Jesus says that one is to forgive these failures to do right toward him "that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses". "Your trespasses" is apparently used as synonymous with other people's failures to do right toward you. Hence, *παράπτωμα* in this case also refers to a "failure to do right" or "violation of the law", which is conceived to be God's judgment of right, and implies guilt.

Cremer says *παράπτωμα* "denoted sin as a missing and violation of right. It therefore may be regarded as synonymous with *παράβρις*, which designates sin as the transgression of a known rule of life, and as involving guilt".¹ Cremer says further, "The word has come to be used both of great and serious guilt, and generally of all sin, even though unknown and unintentional (Gal. 6:11), so far as this is simply a missing of the right or involves but little guilt, therefore a 'missing' or 'failure', including the activity and passivity of the acting subject."² He says

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(1) Cremer: "Biblico-Theological Lexicon of the New Testament Greek", p.498.

(2) Cremer: Op. Cit., p.499.

further, "Like its verb, *παράπτωμι* is used synonymously with *ἀμαρτία* as the generic word (Romans 5:20) . . . and is thus 'a missing of the mark'."¹

c. Summary of the Usage of *παράπτωμι* in New Testament Outside the Gospel of Matthew.

παράπτωμι in the New Testament we have seen to be used in the ethical sense of "trespass" or "violation of the law". It designates sin as the transgression of a known law of life, and, although different degrees are represented, it always implies guilt.

4. Usage of *παράπτωμι* by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.

Only in one passage of Matthew does Jesus use this word *παράπτωμι*. In the Sermon on the Mount when He gives to His disciples the model prayer, He adds this explanation to the petition for forgiveness: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses (*παράπτωματα*) your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive men not their trespasses (*παράπτωματα*), neither will your Father forgive your trespasses". There is borne out here the general idea which we have come in this study to associate with the word. The idea of "trespass", in a generic sense, with the definite connotation of guilt,

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(1) Cremer: Op. Cit., p.499.

is in these cases surely meant.

Let us now turn to a general summary of the study of these synonyms.

E. Conclusion.

We have shown at the conclusion of the discussions on each of these three words used by Jesus, that we have no reason to doubt that Jesus used them with virtually the same content as did other New Testament writers. Hence, in comparing their meanings, as we understand them from New Testament usage, we may feel reasonably sure that we are getting very near some of the fundamental elements in Jesus' conception of sin.

We have seen that *ἀμαρτία* means in general a "missing of the mark" and that the "mark" is understood to be the law of God. The word is employed sometimes with the thought of the "act" of missing the mark uppermost, and at other times with the thought of the "resultant deed", as distinguished from the doing of it, uppermost. These meanings are also considered from two or more aspects. Hence, the content of the word, in the large, refers to "missing the mark of God's law". It seemingly is applied regardless of whether the person involved knew the law or not.

ἁνομία is used to express the idea of an "act of violation of law", the abstract idea of "unrighteousness", and the personification of this abstract idea. There is

virtually the same conception in this word as there is in *ἀμαρτία* with but two exceptions. In the first place, *ἄνομία* is more definite and specific than *ἀμαρτία*. In the second place, *ἄνομία* is applied only to the violation of a law of God when that law is known by the person violating it, whereas, *ἀμαρτία* may be applied to action contrary to the law of God regardless of whether the law is known to the offender.

παράπτωμα is employed to express the idea of "trespass", "violation of the law", or "a missing of the mark". It is nearly synonymous in its usual meaning with *ἄνομία*, with respect to its being a violation of a known law. Occasionally it refers to the trespass of a law that is not known, but this is not its customary meaning. It may be used with respect to great sins or small sins, but there is always attached to the word the connotation of guilt.

With these results of our investigation before us, may we not then make an application of them to the problem of this thesis - Jesus' teaching concerning sin. It appears to me that we may properly make a few basic propositions with respect to Jesus' idea of sin which may logically be deduced from our findings thus far.

1. Sin is a moral evil. We have seen throughout that, often contrary to the classical ideas, these synonyms have always in the New Testament without exception borne an

ethical meaning. 2. Sin is regarded as a failure to measure up to a moral standard. In *ἁμαρτία* this standard is represented by the "mark". In *ἄνομία* the standard is "the law of God". In *παράπτωμα* the standard is not specifically expressed, but the idea of "trespass" implies that something else ought to have been. 3. Sin is a failure which may be either active or passive. To "miss the mark" rather expresses uppermost the idea of a passive "omitting" to come to it. On the other hand, "violation of the law" rather contains the idea of an active commission of a deed contrary to the law. 4. Sin is a failure to measure up to a moral standard which is usually, if not always, regarded as of divine origin. This idea, as we have seen, is explicit in the case of *ἁμαρτία* and *ἄνομία* and is very probably contained in the meaning of *παράπτωμα*. 5. Sin usually, if not always, is accompanied by guilt. This is without question true of *παράπτωμα*. And since *ἄνομία* always refers to an offense where the offender knows the law, and as *ἁμαρτία* usually has that meaning, it is valid to infer the strong probability, at least, that these words also carry with them the idea of guilt. More than this, with respect to our problem we cannot say, on the basis of the materials considered thus far. We must leave the fuller development of Jesus' teaching about to sin to the succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER III

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON THE NATURE OF SIN

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THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON THE NATURE OF SIN

A. Introduction.

So far as we know Jesus never attempted a systematic treatment of the nature of sin. His was not a speculative but a practical interest in the subject. He seldom taught about sin in general terms, but frequently about particular sins and individuals guilty of committing them. We shall therefore not expect a complete answer to all the questions that might arise in our minds, but shall have to remain content with the information which we may be able to secure from sermons, conversations, experiences, and events found in the Gospel record.

Upon examination of the passages in Matthew pertinent to the nature of sin, it appears that they may well be treated under the following heads: 1. The fundamental nature of sin, 2. Sin as a motive, 3. Sin as neglect, 4. Sin as a corruption of nature, 5. Certain specific sins, 6. The universality of sin. The chapter will be concluded with a brief summary.

B. The Fundamental Nature of Sin.

In the preceding chapter in the study of the terminology of sin used by Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, we dis-

covered that sin basically is a deviation from or violation of a standard of righteousness. If this be true, our first inquiry concerning the nature of sin might well be to determine just what that standard of righteousness is the violation of which may be regarded as sin.

At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus makes this solemn statement, "Not every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven".¹ Evidently, if the will of God is the standard of righteousness necessary for one to measure up to in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven, surely to fall below this standard is to commit sin, for the exclusion from the kingdom is without meaning save as it is understood to represent the penalty for wrong-doing. That this is Jesus' meaning is made explicit in the two verses which follow. In them Jesus says,

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity".²

Here Christ says it is "iniquity" that keeps men out of the kingdom. In the passage before quoted it was said that not to do the will of God excludes men from the kingdom. Hence, we may be sure that Jesus considered the failure to do the

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- (1) Matthew 7:21.
- (2) Matthew 7:22,23.

will of God as sin.

The expression, "the will of God", is without content in itself, and is only meaningful as that will is revealed to mankind. To the Jews, which Jesus addressed, that will had been made known especially through the law given by Moses. God had many times enjoined this law upon the people through the prophets, through whom He had expounded it in its true inwardness and spirituality and it was therefore considered the true revelation of God's will. Jesus also regarded this Mosaic law as the revelation of the will of God and consequently the divine standard of righteousness. On one occasion Jesus said to His disciples, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat: and all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe: but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not".¹ The "therefore" here indicates that Jesus defended the law of Moses and enjoined it upon His followers. In the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount He again supports the law in these words,

"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away for the law, till all things be accomplished."²

However, when Jesus makes such reference to the law He does not consider it in the same way in which the

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(1) Matthew 23:2,3.
(2) Matthew 5:17,18.

Jews of His day did. He does not seem to lend any support to the ritual part of the law in distinction from the moral part of it. Apparently He considered the ritual law as having no binding power upon the conscience, at least in its literal meaning. By implication this is quite clear in the reference He makes to the Golden Rule. After stating this rule of love to one's neighbor, He adds, "For this is the law and the prophets".¹ Beyschlag in reference to this statement of Christ says, "The ritual commandments are to Him so unessential that He treats them in this expression as though they had no existence".² That these laws are not regarded as a part of the binding law of Moses is further revealed in the fact that with regard to the commandments relating to sacrifice Christ quotes the prophet Hosea in saying, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice".³

And neither did the traditions of the elders have any binding force with Christ. Indeed, He was violently opposed to them because He sensed that many of them were in direct collision with the true spiritual interpretation of the moral law. And it was just here that He came into His severest clash with the Pharisees and incurred their intensest hatred. It was on this issue that Jesus came to

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(1) Matthew 7:12.

(2) Beyschlag: "New Testament Theology", Vol. I, p.108.

(3) Matthew 9:13.

grips with the Pharisees with regard to fasting¹, and also with regard to the observance of the Sabbath². But it is in connection with the Pharisees' question about the disciples eating with unwashed hands that Jesus makes His position most clear.

He replies to the Pharisees' interrogation with regard to this matter by this counter question, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"³ In this question He reveals one reason why He opposes their traditions, namely, because in obeying them they disobey the commandments of God. He thereupon cites one definite tradition where the conflict of the two are clearly in evidence. He says to them,

"For God said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God; he shall not honor his father. And ye have made void the law of God by your tradition."⁴

Christ then calls these Pharisees hypocrites and cites Isaiah's prophecy,

"This people honoreth me with their lips;
But their heart is far from me.
But in vain do they worship me,
Teaching as their doctrines the precepts
of men."⁵

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- (1) Matthew 9:14,17.
- (2) Matthew 12:1-8.
- (3) Matthew 15:3.
- (4) Matthew 15:4-6.
- (5) Matthew 15:8-9.

In this statement and in what follows, Jesus shows that His opposition to the traditions of the elders is also in the fact that observances of them are external practices, while true righteousness is a thing of the heart. He concludes His discussion with the multitude by saying,

"For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings: these are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man."¹

In this statement Christ shows the inwardness of sin and righteousness in distinction from the outwardness of this tradition. Thus, Jesus shows that He does not regard the traditions of the elders as a part of the Mosaic law and therefore as binding upon men's consciences.

While Jesus does regard the moral precepts of the Mosaic law as the revelation of the will of God and hence the standard of righteousness, nevertheless, He does not even regard these as the true standard in their literal sense. In at least four different instances does He put His own authority against the very words of Moses. Over against Moses' words, "Thou shalt not kill", He puts His own "But I say unto you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment".² Again He quotes the law as saying, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths", and says,

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(1) Matthew 15:19,20.
(2) Matthew 5:21,22.

"But I say unto you, Swear not at all".¹ Further on in the Sermon He declares, "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil".² At still another time He opposes the Mosaic permission of divorce by means of a bill of divorcement. He affirms that this permission was given because of their "hardness of heart". Then He says, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery".³ In all these cases Jesus has undeniably and consciously annulled the Mosaic letter as such, and if one were to judge superficially, he might conclude that the law itself had been done away.

However, Jesus does support the law in its spiritual content. He was not speaking amiss when He said, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfill".⁴ Evidently the meaning of Jesus here lies in the understanding of this word "fulfill". Such a splendid discussion is given at this point by Bey-schlag that we quote him at length:

"That this word (fulfill) cannot mean here the actual fulfillment of the law nor the fulfillment of the prophets as announcers of future things, follows . . . from the whole connection. For the whole argument that fol-

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- (1) Matthew 5:33,34.
- (2) Matthew 5:38,39.
- (3) Matthew 19: 8,9.
- (4) Matthew 5: 17.

lows does not discuss the actual performance of the law or the realization of the Messianic predictions, but the development of the Mosaic commandments to the fulness of the divine meanings lying at their basis. But the word cannot signify in one and the same breath an actual and a didactic fulfilling, but only the latter; and this is what Jesus (from verse 21) does with a whole series of legal precepts. He frees them from the imperfection of the letter and reveals the fulness of the divine intention, and so fulfills them, that is, makes them complete or perfect The full development necessarily bursts open the imperfect forms in which the divine will was still enclosed in the law of Moses, just as the fulfillment which the bud gains as a blossom inevitably bursts the sheath in which it was enclosed."¹

Thus, we see that the spiritual content of the law of Moses is revealed in perfection in what follows in this Sermon on the Mount. This Sermon, then, becomes the new and spiritual revelation of the divine standard of righteousness. However, we are not to conclude this solely from our interpretation of the word "fulfill", for there is still other evidence.

At the conclusion of Jesus' Sermon He gives the parable of the wise and foolish men. He says,

"Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock."

Over against this picture is that of the foolish man:

"And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof."²

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(1) Beyschlag: Op. Cit., p.107.
(2) Matthew 7:24-27.

In this figurative form Jesus declares that the man who fails in his life to measure up to the standard of righteousness set forth in the preceding Sermon is doomed to destruction. Regardless of the nature of this destruction, it undoubtedly represents the natural consequence or penalty of a life of sin as Jesus conceived it. From this passage, then, we may justly conclude that the law of Moses and the will of God are here in the Sermon on the Mount given their proper spiritual interpretation and content.

But in our search for Jesus' standard of righteousness we need not stop here, for He reduces it to still greater simplicity. The Pharisees conceived the law as existing in a thousand individual commandments and there was great difference of opinion as to which of these were the most important. On the other hand, Jesus finds all the law in one single principle, the principle of love, with its Godward and manward relationship. When questioned as to which of the commandments was the greatest, Jesus replied,

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets".¹

In this conversation Jesus goes beyond the lawyer's question to the second commandment and declares that upon these hangs

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(1) Matthew 22:37-40.

the whole law. Here, then, we have Jesus' standard of righteousness compacted into its simplest form. Let us examine its meaning and illustrate its application.

Beyschlag analyzes the love of God into five elements, namely, sincerity, humility, holy awe, trust, and obedience.¹ He supports his contention very admirably, but perhaps by such analysis the intended unity of the principle is rendered less effective. He follows this analysis with a splendid descriptive definition:

"The inalienable law and commandment to love God with all the heart, means, that the heart be not divided between God and any of His creatures; that it love no finite good beside Him, and at the cost of fidelity to Him, but that it be prepared, on the contrary, in case of collision, to sacrifice every such good for Him."²

Upon the examination of Jesus' teaching regarding sin and righteousness one sees how this principle underlies well-nigh all of it, if not all. Two passages will prove sufficient to illustrate the application of this principle. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says,

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also."³

Jesus does not here forbid possessing wealth, but He warns against seeking for riches as though there were in money

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- (1) Beyschlag: Op. Cit., pp.118-120.
- (2) Beyschlag: Ibid. p.124.
- (3) Matthew 6:19,20.

any real treasure, for He says "where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also". He then enunciates the principle upon which the warning is based:

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."¹

In this case the laying up of "treasure" upon earth He declares to be sinful, for it is serving mammon, and Jesus affirms that one cannot serve both God and mammon. Here the principle of supreme love to God renders the love of money a sin.

In sending His disciples forth to preach Jesus says to them,

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."²

This same thought is completed in Luke's Gospel in these words, "And if any man hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciples".³ The disapproval of the inferior love in both passages, is expressed, but in Luke's record the "not worthy of me", of Matthew, is shown to mean an exclusion from discipleship. That which Christ here demands in His own name, the supreme love of

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- (1) Matthew 6:24.
- (2) Matthew 10:37.
- (3) Luke 14:26.

those who claim to be His disciples, He demands indeed in the name of the Father whose cause He represents. He declares that the standard of righteousness in His kingdom is supreme love to God, and that nothing short of this is acceptable.

The second commandment, which together with the first He asserted constitutes the single principle from which all the law issues, was "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself". This principle was in the old Jewish law, as was also the first commandment, but in the Jewish law it was set over against "and hate thine enemy". Jesus, however, conceives "neighbor" as including "enemy" and makes no such distinction. He says rather, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you".¹ With Christ there is no limit to the application of this law of love. His disciples are to apply it in their relations with all people, even their enemies, even as the Father "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust".

By way of making this law of love to one's neighbor more clearly understood with respect to its application, Jesus sums it up in what we speak of as the Golden Rule. He says, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should

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(1) Matthew 7:44.

do unto you, even so do ye also unto them", for this is the law and the prophets".¹ The human heart is so constituted that it knows very well what the law of love would require others to do for it in certain instances, but it is slow to see its duty to others. Hence, this practical rule was given by Christ to make it easier for one to determine what this law of love requires. It suggests that in any instance when one is in doubt as to what to do in his relationship with another, to consider what he would desire in the same case if he were the other person.

The application of this principle of love to one's neighbor is seen in the case of the sin of causing another to stumble. On one occasion Jesus said to His disciples,

"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me: but whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea."²

The highest aim of love is to bring another into the kingdom of God, but in this case there is not only the neglect of realizing this aim, but a positive hindrance placed in the way, so that the neighbor is caused to stumble. This meets with Christ's severe condemnation. Obviously it is a sin because it violates the principle of love to one's neighbor.

Jesus condemns also the practice of Corban, be-

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(1) Matthew 7:12.

(2) Matthew 18:5,6.

cause it is contrary to this fundamental law of love. He says,

"But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God; he shall not honor his father. And ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition."¹

Jesus here declares that the refusal to share with parents that which might otherwise be given to them because of having "given it to God" is a transgression against the commandment to "honor thy father and mother", but in this it is also a violation of the more fundamental commandment of love; hence its sinfulness.

We have come to the conclusion, thus far in our study, that Jesus regards the principle of love to God and to one's neighbor as the standard of righteousness and therefore any conduct falling below this standard should rightly be called sin. Scott remarks in this connection,

"It does not seem to be wide of the mark to say that to Jesus single-hearted love to God and loving one's neighbor as oneself, that is, regarding every man, self and neighbor, as an end of highest value, comprise the Law. At any rate, Love to God and Love to man are the two great commandments, and any conduct or feeling that falls short of their fulfillment is transgression of the Law, and, as such, is sin."²

To stop here, however, would be to stop short of the whole truth. It would appear from what has been said thus far, that, since sin is the failure to measure up to

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(1) Matthew 15:5,6.

(2) Scott: "Christ, Sin and Redemption", p.14.

this law of love to God and man, it is something merely negative. But this is far from the truth. Hovey expresses our feeling thus:

"Sin appears to be more than a lack of moral power, more than an absence of suitable love: it appears to be often positive, energetic, and hostile to good, - hatred, instead of love; power, turned in a wrong direction."¹

It may more truly be said from Jesus' teaching in Matthew that sin is primarily seeking one's own will instead of the will of God. It is the love of self as opposed to the love of God and one's neighbor. This is implied in the prayer of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane when He says, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt".² Christ reveals in this statement the force which opposes the divine will, namely, the human will set upon its own desires. The dominance of the human will over the divine will when they come into collision with each other is the essence of sin. This is further revealed in the great paradox of Christ: "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it".³ In one passage in Luke's Gospel the meaning of the first part of the statement is clarified by the use of the words: "Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it".⁴ Here, regardless of our under-

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- (1) Hovey: "Manual of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics", p.139.
- (2) Matthew 26:39.
- (3) Matthew 10:39.
- (4) Luke 17:33.

standing of the interpretation of every word, it is clear that that force which sets itself up to oppose a life lived out of supreme love to God, or "for my sake", is the selfish will which is seeking its own ends. Thus, love of self in opposition to love of God and man is the fundamental principle of sin. Tullock states the matter thus:

"As love, or the going forth of the human will in harmony towards the Divine, is the highest expression of moral duty, so the opposite of all this, or the concentration of the will upon itself in opposition to the Divine, is the uttermost expression of sin."¹

We may also quote Muller at this point:

"But sin is not only the absence of love to God; for with the negation of our true relation to Him there is the affirmation of a false one Upon the disappearance of the divine principle, there immediately ensues the entrance of a principle opposed to God, according to the saying of Christ, 'He who is not with me is against me'. Man cannot abandon his true relation to God without setting up an idol in God's stead. . . . The idol which man in sin sets up in the place of God can be none other than himself. He makes self and self-satisfaction the highest aim of his life. To self his efforts ultimately tend, however the modes and directions of sin may vary. The innermost essence of sin, the ruling and penetrating principle in all its forms, is selfishness."²

We may then regard sin in its fundamental nature as being the assertion of the selfish human will against the principle of love, supreme love to God and sincere love to one's fellowmen.

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- (1) Tullock: "The Christian Doctrine of Sin", p.121.
- (2) Muller: "Christian Doctrine of Sin", pp.133, 136, as quoted by Tullock in his book "The Christian Doctrine of Sin", p.233.

C. Sin as a Motive.

Judging by the general principle which we have thus far laid down from our study of Jesus' teaching, we would unquestionably call any act a sin which in itself deviated in any way from the standard of love toward God and man. We may go even further than this. By a careful examination of Jesus' teaching on the matter of sin we shall see that even an act which in itself is good and commendable may be rendered sinful by being motivated by a selfish aim. The giving of alms to the needy is in itself a praiseworthy act, but Jesus denounces the act as sinful when it is performed out of a selfish desire to receive the praise of men. Praying and fasting are in themselves splendid acts of piety, but when engaged in for the sake of popular applause, Jesus pronounces them sinful.

In the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus begins to speak on this matter of purity of intention in the righteous life, He prefaces his remarks by this warning: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven".¹ He says in this passage that the doing of "righteousness" does not find favor or approval with God when done "before men, to be seen of them". Let us observe that Jesus finds no fault with doing righteousness in public as an ex-

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(1) Matthew 6:1.

ample to mankind, for earlier in this same Sermon He exhorts His disciples: "Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven". His warning, on the contrary, is against doing deeds of piety and charity with the express purpose of winning men's honor and esteem, "to be seen of men".

After giving this general warning Jesus gives three typical practices in which this selfish motive operated in His day, and warns His disciples against them. The first which He considers is the giving of alms. He says,

"When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men, Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee."¹

The practice in Jesus' day of those whom He stigmatizes as hypocrites was by ostentatious display to do their works of charity, such as the giving of alms, so that men might observe how "righteous" they were and give them praise. He declares that they get the reward which they are seeking, but none from God. He tells His disciples to do their alms in secret and not to "let thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth", to give their alms in such a way that not only would others fail to praise them, but that they themselves would be unconscious of any special goodness on their part.

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(1) Matthew 6:2-4.

By so doing He promises that they would be rewarded by their heavenly Father. The sin of such an act as is here portrayed is in the domination of the selfish motive of desire for the "glory of men" over the pure motive of love to one's needy fellow-beings.

In like manner Jesus denounces the hypocrites who when they pray "love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men"¹, and the hypocrites who when they fast "disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast".² The basis of denunciation in both of these cases is identical to that in the previous one. Excellent practices of piety are declared sinful because an evil motive has crept in. It is the motive of the hypocrite who is an "actor". He acts as though he were sincerely serving and loving God and his fellow-creatures, when in reality he is seeking his own ends. It is in connection with this sin of hypocrisy that Jesus pronounces His severest denunciation upon the Scribes and Pharisees. Concerning them He speaks on this wise to His disciples:

"But all their works they do to be seen of men: for they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called of men, Rabbi."³

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- (1) Matthew 6:5.
- (2) Matthew 6:16.
- (3) Matthew 23:5-7.

Not only does an impure motive render an outward act sinful, but Jesus teaches that merely to harbor in one's heart an evil thought, feeling, or desire that is contrary to the spirit of love, is itself a sin, apart from any outward act or deed that might issue therefrom. This truth is manifest in at least two passages in Matthew's Gospel. In the first of these Jesus says,

"Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire."¹

The startling thing about this statement of Christ is the fact that the one who "kills" is, in Jesus' mind, on the same plane with the one who is "angry with his brother". Regardless of the different degrees of judgment represented by the "judgment", the "council", and the "hell of fire", the significant thing in this connection is that the one who kills and the one who is angry with his brother are both subject to the same "judgment". Apparently both are regarded as crimes of the same magnitude. The least that can be said is that Jesus regarded the being merely angry with one's brother as constituting a grave sin.

Another passage which has particular bearing on

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(1) Matthew 5:21,22.

this point is the one in the Sermon on the Mount dealing with adultery. It reads:

"Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."¹

The Jews taught that the sin of adultery inhered in the outward act alone, but in this statement Christ teaches that adultery is not only a matter of outward sin but is harboring the lustful thought. We are surely not to suppose that in this passage Jesus is denouncing as sin the casual and fleeting sensual thought that frequently comes unbidden to one's mind, but He is declaring sinful the entertaining, the welcoming, the harboring of lustful thoughts. That the wilful element does enter in to the thing here denounced is revealed by the words, "looketh on a woman to lust after her". The looking is deliberate with the intention of arousing evil thoughts.

It is not to be understood that Jesus here condemns the evil desire because He realizes that the thought is father of the act and that a desire entertained continuously inevitably issues in outward conduct. Jesus doubtless believed this to be true, but this is not here the point, for He says that the one who has fostered an evil desire by looking upon a woman "hath committed adultery with her already in his heart". The sin, therefore, is not in the

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(1) Matthew 6:27,28.

fact that fostered lust will lead to the outward act of adultery, but that the evil thought in itself is wrong.

By way of summary we may say, then, that sin is not to be attributed merely to the act which in itself is contrary to the law of love, but even when the act considered by itself be commendable, if it issues from a heart which is actuated by a selfish motive, the act thereby is rendered sinful. We may say even more. According to the teaching of Jesus, any thought, feeling, or desire which is contrary to love is itself a sin, if willfully harbored in the soul, regardless of whether it ever expresses itself in outward evil.

D. Sin as Neglect.

Another element of sin which is given special prominence in Matthew's Gospel is that of omitting to do that service to God and man which a vital love would dictate. It will be observed that Jesus teaches that sin consists not merely in the doing of positive evil, or the willful possessing of thoughts, feelings, desires, and motives which are contrary to the spirit of love, but that sin inheres also in the neglect of those opportunities for expression of love which one's circumstances of life afford. This conception of sin finds its chief embodiment in two long passages recording a portion of Jesus' Passion Week ministry.

The first of these passages is that containing

the Parable of the Talents. In this parable Jesus represents the kingdom of heaven as being "as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods". According to their ability he gives them talents. To one five, to another two, and to the third one. The first two servants make good use of their talents in their lord's absence, and upon his return they present to him double the number of talents which they received. But the servant who received only one talent, having buried it in the earth, returns only the one talent to his lord. The first two servants receive the lord's praise and a reward, but not so the last. Of him the parable speaks thus:

"And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter; and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own. But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. And cast out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth."¹

The significant thing in the parable with respect to the point now under consideration is the fact that this third servant was consigned to the "outer darkness" because

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(1) Matthew 25:24-30.

he had not been profitable to his lord. The charge which the lord makes against him is that he failed to put his money out to the bankers and therefore had no interest to give to him. Because of this neglect his lord calls him a "wicked and slothful servant" and commands that he be cast into the "outer darkness". Let it be observed here that the punishment was not imposed upon him because he spent his master's goods in riotous living, or because in some way he wasted his master's money, but simply because he did nothing with it, he neglected his opportunities to make use of it. We may then understand that Jesus here is teaching that a man sins when he simply neglects to make use of his abilities in the service of his Master. In commenting upon this parable Taylor says,

"Not the doing of positive wrong, but the neglect to do that which God has given us the means of doing; not the commission of grievous sin, but the leaving undone of that which we have the ability and opportunity to do, is what here is charged, on his own confession, on this slothful servant."¹

This same truth is given expression to again in Jesus' picture of the Judgment. In this great Assize there are gathered before Christ all nations, "and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand but the goats on the left".² To those on His

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- (1) Taylor: "The Parables of Our Saviour", p.188.
- (2) Matthew 25:32,33.

right hand He grants the inheritance of "the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world", and by virtue of the fact that they had been compassionate and had ministered to the needs of their fellow-beings about them. But concerning the other company Jesus says,

"Then shall he (the Son of man) say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me, And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life."¹

In this solemn picture of the Judgment Jesus teaches that eternal doom shall be the portion of the "cursed", because they neglected to show the spirit of love and service toward their needy brothers in the flesh, and apparently for no other reason. Sin here is shown to inhere in the fact that these "did it not". Surely there is much in this story that lends itself to debate with regard to interpretation, but this may be said with assurance, that sin consists in mere neglect to do those helpful deeds to one's fellowmen that sincere love would impel one to do. Concerning his interpretation of this passage Lange writes:

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(1) Matthew 25:41-46.

"Only sins of omission are mentioned here; showing that the absence of good works, the destitution of love, or the dominion of selfishness, disqualifies man for blessedness, and is sufficient, even without positive crimes, to exclude from heaven."¹

From the study of these typical passages we may conclude that, according to the teaching of Jesus, to merely neglect to express love in service to God and man is to be worthy of severe punishment and consequently constitutes sin.

E. Sin as a Corruption of Nature.

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus teaches further, as we shall see, that sin is a corruption of human nature. Sin is a disordered condition of our moral natures. It is an inclination or tendency to commit outward transgressions. This teaching is to be found in the following passage:

"And it came to pass, as he sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Teacher with the publicans and sinners? But when he heard it, he said, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice: for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."²

Here the Pharisees are wondering why Jesus is breaking their custom of the segregating of the "righteous" and the "sinners". The prevailing view among them was that they should stay clear of all who were not ceremonially clean, lest they

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- (1) Lange: "The Gospel According to Matthew", p.449, in his "Commentary on the Holy Scriptures".
- (2) Matthew 9:110-13.

should be defiled not only ceremonially, but morally. Hence, they ask the disciples of Jesus, "Why eateth your Teacher with the publicans and sinners?" When Jesus hears of the question He answers by an analogy. He says, "They that are whole ("strong", margin) have no need of a physician, but they that are sick". The implication is, of course, that even as the sick and not the healthy need a physician, so they that are sinners, spiritually sick, and not the righteous need Christ. Then He expresses in the closing words of the passage that it is His very mission in life to call not the righteous, but sinners. We are not to understand, of course, by this that there was a class of people who were really righteous. Jesus uses the term, righteous, either as irony, in referring to the Pharisees¹, or as "a general way of contrast²".

We may understand also by this passage that as there are elements in sickness which tend to keep the patient ill and which need the help of a physician to overcome, so there are forces and tendencies in spiritual sickness which incline the patient to a continuance in his illness and which need the aid of a spiritual physician to overpower. We believe we are not forcing the analogy to say that in this passage Jesus represents mankind as being

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(1) cf. Lange: "The Gospel According to Matthew", p.170.

(2) cf. Broadus: "Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew", p.201.

in the grips of a corrupting moral tendency within each individual, which impels him to outward sin and wickedness.

Another passage in Matthew which still more convincingly teaches this conception of sin is the following:

"Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by its fruit. Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of his good treasure bringeth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."¹

These words occur after Jesus has cured a blind, dumb, demon-possessed man and made him to speak and see, upon His being charged by the Pharisees that this miracle had been accomplished "by Beelzebub, the prince of demons". Jesus sets in to show the folly of their accusation and then gives the warning that "Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven". Then follows the words quoted above. Jesus means by "either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by its fruit", according to Plumptre:

"Be consistent!" "Reckon the tree and the fruit as having the same character. If to cast out demons be a good work, then the power from which it flows must be good also. Works of that kind do not come from a corrupt source."²

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(1) Matthew 12:33-37.

(2) Plumptre: "The Gospel According to St. Matthew", p.170.

Then He turns on the Pharisees, having laid down the general principle that "the tree is known by its fruit", and raises the rhetorical question, "Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh". He declares that these Pharisees have spoken evil because they are evil. The fruit is naturally corrupt because the tree is corrupt. Here Jesus traces outward acts to the evil nature within. These Pharisees having the natures of "vipers" and "being evil" naturally express these evil natures in words and other outward actions. Jesus further explains this by saying that "the good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things". Evil things come out of an evil store in the heart. He goes on to say that in the day of judgment every idle word will have to be accounted for "for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned". The idle word shall justify or condemn one, because it reveals that the nature of the heart is good or evil. Here beyond doubt we are to understand that sin is an evil nature, a condition of the heart which inclines it to evil, a tendency and bias toward sin.

We quote another passage which reveals the same truth in much the same fashion:

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns,

or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them."¹

Jesus immediately preceding this passage exhorts his hearers to "enter ye in by the narrow gate". He here warns them against false teachers, who may outwardly appear acceptable, but who inwardly have natures as "ravening wolves". Then the general principle is laid down that "by their fruits ye shall know them". Christ says here that men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles, for every good tree brings forth good fruit and only good fruit; and every corrupt tree brings forth corrupt fruit and only corrupt fruit. By this analogy Jesus is saying that just as the nature of the fruit of a tree is determined by the essential nature of the tree itself, so the outward acts of men are influenced by the inner nature of their hearts. We are taught here that there is in man, in some men at least, a corrupt nature, which tends to shape outward action.

With regard to this conception of sin Beyschlag remarks in referring to Matthew 12:32-35:

"From evil deeds the penetrating look of Jesus goes back to the evil word and the evil thought (Matthew 5:22), and again from all these particular phenomena to the fundamental tendency of the mind, to the tree which bears such fruits, to the treasure of the heart, the inner con-

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(1) Matthew 7:15-20.

dition and store which has been formed by the totality of the individual moral acts, and is now the source of further individual action in word or work."¹

Also, with reference to the three passages which we have examined, Tulloch remarks:

"The import of such language, . . . even when bearing a special application . . . is sufficiently obvious. Sin is set forth as a disease or corruption of human nature. It is not merely an act, but a state which clings to the race, a tendency lying in our nature, and which is constantly coming forth into action."²

While it is admitted that the human heart has this tendency to sin in its very nature, it is doubted by some whether or not this bias toward evil can correctly be denominated "sin". While Paul does definitely call it sin³, yet out of all fairness it is to be admitted that Jesus never applies the word "sin" to it. Nevertheless, we have seen that He compares it to an "evil treasure"⁴ and a "corrupt tree". He surely does not excuse those who possess it and declares that in the judgment men are to be judged by the expressions of that nature. Hence, condemnation is associated with it. And since its outworkings are contrary to God's will, it appears that we do not misrepresent Jesus' teaching to call it sin.

In so representing Jesus we have the support of Muller. He says, in speaking of *ἀμαρτία*, that some the-

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- (1) Beyschlag: Op. Cit., p.91.
- (2) Tulloch: Op. Cit., p.124.
- (3) Romans 7
- (4) Matthew 12:36.

ologians claim that the word refers only to sinful acts. He admits that that may be true exegetically, but he insists that it doesn't settle the question of sin's nature. Then he continues,

"For supposing that *ἀμαρτία* were only used in this sense, there are still passages such as Matthew 12:33, 35, 39 (where Jesus' teaching is revealed)¹, I John 2:15, James 1:14,15, which leave no doubt that the New Testament looks upon sin as perverted constitution, out of which the individual acts of sin originate."²

The question which quite naturally may arise here is whether every individual in his natural state has this corruption of nature or just the more out-and-out sinners. In all the instances which we have presented to support this teaching it might appear that the latter were true. In the first case reference is made to "publicans and sinners" especially³, in the next case to Pharisees who went so far as to attribute to Christ an unholy alliance with Beelzebub⁴, and in the last case to false teachers who inwardly are "ravening wolves"⁵. It may properly be said that doubtless in these cases Jesus refers to the corrupt nature because in them the expression of the heart is clearly seen and they merely afforded excellent occasions for such discussion. Even if we had no more evidence, it would not be logical to

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- (1) These are my parentheses, not his.
- (2) Muller: "Christian Doctrine of Sin", Vol. I, p.193.
- (3) Matthew 9:12.
- (4) Matthew 12:33,34.
- (5) Matthew 7:16-18.

argue from silence that such a nature was not resident in every life.

It may be said, however, that Jesus does seem to attach this evil nature to all men. In one passage He declares to His disciples, whom He had chosen out of all others men as the most promising builders of His kingdom: "Verily, I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."¹ There seems to be here an inner tendency in His disciples which renders them unfit for the kingdom, and if in the best, then surely in men of less spirituality. In the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus is speaking to the multitude at large, He says, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things unto them that ask him?"² In this passage Jesus applies the "being evil" universally to all those before Him, and hence we are justified in applying it to all men. Here it appears that He is attributing evil to the very being and nature of man. However, we would not overly press this matter of the universality of depravity with the evidence which we find in Matthew's Gospel alone. There is certainly in Matthew nothing inconsistent with such a view and there is some evidence which at least strongly suggests it.

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(1) Matthew 18:3.
(2) Matthew 7:11.

Let it be said in passing that what has been disclosed about sin as attaching to the very nature of man reveals how far Jesus' conception of sin differed from the Jewish conception with respect to its inwardness. Defilement with the Jews was a matter of eating with unwashed hands, of outwardly breaking the ceremonial law, but with Jesus it was a matter of the heart.¹ Tulloch remarks in this connection:

"... He (Jesus) speaks of all defilement as being from within, and not from without - a part of the self-life, and not of the accidental or external life. The external character should be without blame; but it is within the heart that the real character is formed. 'Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, that defileth a man. . . . Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies'."²

To summarize this study, then, we may say that, according to the teaching of Jesus in Matthew, sin is regarded as a corruption of the nature of man, which expresses itself in a tendency toward the outward commission of sin. This sinful bias is not only the possession of the worst class of sinners, but, from the evidence in Matthew alone, it appears highly probable that it is also the universal possession of mankind.

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(1) Matthew 15:2,11.

(2) Tulloch: Op. Cit., p.123.

F. Certain Specific Sins.

We have incidentally called attention to many specific sins in the discussion thus far, but we have left unmentioned at least four which are particularly significant and without which this study would be incomplete. Hence, we desire briefly to consider them at this point.

The first of these is the sin of an unforgiving spirit. In Jesus' day the Jews felt that they were fulfilling their obligation to their offending brothers when they took only "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"¹, but Jesus teaches that one should "resist not him that is evil"², but, instead of returning evil for evil, "love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you".³ This loving attitude even toward enemies demands that one forgive his enemies for any injuries which they may have inflicted. This demand for forgiveness is set forth clearly in the following passage:

"Then came Peter, and said to Him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven."⁴

Jesus doubtless means by "seventy times seven" that one should forgive his brother freely an unlimited number of times. The fact that He regards any failure to forgive as

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- (1) Matthew 5:38.
- (2) Matthew 5:39.
- (3) Matthew 5:44.
- (4) Matthew 18:21,22.

definitely a sin is revealed by the comment Jesus makes after concluding the parable which was told immediately following the above conversation. He had represented the lord as having delivered the unforgiving servant to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due. He then says, "So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."¹ Of course, it was impossible for an unforgiving spirit to be regarded as anything short of sin in the mind of Him who considered all things sinful which did not measure up to the principle of love toward God and man.

Another sin denounced by Christ is that of divorce. The Jews thought one justified in divorcing his wife if the Mosaic requirement of a bill of divorcement were granted her, but Jesus teaches that the marriage bond cannot be severed without sin on the part of one or both parties. In response to the Pharisees' question as to whether it was lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause, Jesus answers,

"Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder."²

The Pharisees then appeal to Moses as granting a man permission to put away his wife upon giving her a bill of di-

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(1) Matthew 18:35.

(2) Matthew 19:4-6.

forcement. To this Jesus affirms in reply,

"Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery."¹

In another passage Jesus makes a similar statement with regard to divorce:

"But I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery."²

These passages differ slightly on account of viewing the sin in the first instance from the standpoint of the man, and in the second instance from the standpoint of the woman. In both passages, however, it is declared that the sin of adultery is committed when either party to a marriage contract regards the marriage bond as non-existent by a re-marriage, except in the case where one party is guilty of infidelity.³ Here Jesus teaches that any definite repudiation of the marriage bond, except in the one case mentioned, is a sin. Broadus mentions in connection with these passages that in the case of extreme marital difficulties it may be expedient for separation to take place and even that legal

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(1) Matthew 19:8,9.

(2) Matthew 5:32.

(3) In the clause "maketh her an adulteress", in Matthew 5:32, the idea of "in case another marriage is contracted by her" is to be understood. So declare Lange: Op. Cit., p.115; and Broadus: Op. Cit., p.112.

divorce be obtained, but in any such case it must be recognized that in actuality the marriage contract in the eyes of God is still existent (except in the one case) and may not be repudiated without the sin here mentioned.¹ With regard to these two passages in Matthew and two others found in Mark 10:11,12 and Luke 16:18, in which nothing substantially is added to the texts found in Matthew, Lyttelton says,

"And the general sense to be gathered from all four passages is that Christ in the main reverts to the stricter view of this question which 'hath been from the beginning', viz. that the marriage contract can never be as if it had not been, nor can the parties to it look upon themselves as wholly absolved from its obligation, except in the case when the wife has been guilty of infidelity, when it is implied that the husband is free."²

Wendt speaks more directly to the point when he says,

"The exception (cause of fornication)³ noted by the first evangelist is no real exception to the rule which Jesus so emphatically laid down, that the obligation of marriage is absolute, and no dissolution of it is possible without incurring the guilt of adultery."⁴

We may understand, then, from the teaching available in Matthew, that Jesus denounces as sin the dissolution of the marriage bond in every case except in that of fornication. In the light of Christ's standard, of course, such dissolution is a sin, because it violates the principle of love toward man.

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- (1) Broadus: Op. Cit., p.112.
- (2) Lyttelton : "Studies on the Sermon on the Mount", p. 175.
- (3) These are my parentheses, not his.
- (4) Wendt: "The Teaching of Jesus", Vol.I, p.354.

There is a sin that may be committed, which is so heinous that Jesus declares it to be unpardonable. Regarding this sin, blasphemy against the Spirit, He says,

"Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come."¹

A glance at the context will help us to understand the meaning of these words. Let it be observed that Jesus' reference to an unpardonable sin came in response to the sneering and contemptuous words of Christ's bitterest enemies, the Pharisees, when they said, upon observing Christ's cure of a blind, dumb, and demon-possessed man, "This man doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of demons".² Having thus been charged with an unholy alliance with Beelzebub, He shows how unfounded and ridiculous such an accusation is. He declares that in doing such good deeds He could not be the instrument of Satan, for "if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself", and therefore his kingdom could not stand. He points out the inconsistency of attributing to Him an evil source in casting out demons, and not attributing the same to their own sons who cast them out. He shows further that His power to cast out demons proves that He opposes Satan with a Force that is stronger

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(1) Matthew 12:31,32.
(2) Matthew 12:24.

than his. Only after thus having shown the utter folly and blindness of the Pharisees does Jesus make the above declaration with regard to the blasphemy against the Spirit.

In view of this context, what are we to understand by this sin, which is declared to be unpardonable? Soames says of it:

"It is, then, plain, I think, that the 'sin against the Holy Ghost' is to purposely, deliberately, and malignantly ascribe to the agency of the devil, those good and wonderful works and words of which the Holy Spirit of God is the real Author."¹

Meyer reveals virtually the same conception when he says:

"In general the *βλασφημία τοῦ πνεύματος* may be defined to be the sin which a man commits when he rejects the undoubted revelation of the Holy Spirit, and that not merely with a contemptuous moral indifference, but with the evil will struggling to shut out the light of that revelation; and even goes the length of expressing in hostile language his deliberate and conscious opposition to this divine principle, thereby avowing his adherence to his anti-spiritual 'confession'."²

This blasphemy against the Spirit is sinful, then, inasmuch as it issues from a heart so confirmed in its hatred of goodness that no amount of evidence is able to make it believe the truth.

The other sin which is to be noted is that of denying Christ. In addressing His disciples Jesus affirms;

"Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also

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- (1) Soames: "Old Theology", p.61.
- (2) Meyer: "Critical and Exegetical Handbook of the Gospel of Matthew", p.242.

deny before my Father who is in heaven."¹

A denial of Christ or a refusal to confess Him before men is to be met with His denial before the Father in heaven, according to this passage, and, hence, is regarded by Christ a sin. J. R. Smith says of this sin:

"Since the heinousness of sin is measured by the degree of light enjoyed, the rejection of Christ, who is the light, the supreme and perfect revelation of God, is the crowning sin."²

Judging by the principle of Christ, of course, to deny Him is a sin, because to do so is to violate the law of supreme love to God, whom He represents.

G. The Universality of Sin.

In the further study of Jesus' teaching we shall see that Beyschlag is correct when he says, "Without hesitation He (Jesus) presupposes the universality of sin".³ He takes it for granted that it is universally admitted. As we have pointed out earlier in our discussion, Jesus considered His own disciples, the choicest men of His day for spiritual leadership, as standing in need of repentance of sin. He says to them, "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven".⁴ Surely if He regarded these select men as all being sinners,

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- (1) Matthew 10:32,33.
- (2) Smith: "The Teaching of the Gospel of John", p.210.
- (3) Beyschlag: Op. Cit., p.91.
- (4) Matthew 18:3.

we are justified in the generalization that He attributed sin to all men.

At the beginning of His ministry Jesus began to preach by saying, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand".¹ Here by this call to repentance addressed to all men as a prerequisite of entering into the kingdom of heaven, Jesus presupposes the universality of sin.

This same assumption that all have sinned and therefore need forgiveness is manifest in the prayer which He teaches all of His followers as a model prayer, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors".² There is no question about the fact that all men have "debts". It is taken for granted that on this point there is no argument.

We have made reference before to the fact that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"³ If we cannot be positive that in this statement Jesus is referring to the evil nature of man, we can be sure that, at least, it refers to a quality of sinfulness attributed to men because they are guilty of sinful action. In speaking to the multitude, which doubtless

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- (1) Matthew 4:17.
- (2) Matthew 6:12.
- (3) Matthew 7:11.

was typical of humanity at large, Jesus remarks, "ye then, being evil". Here beyond question Jesus implies the universality of sin.

There is yet a very important passage which bears directly on this point. When Peter comes to Jesus asking how often he should forgive his brother who sins against him Jesus answers by saying, "Until seventy times seven", and tells this parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would make a reckoning with his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, that owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred shillings: and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. So his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him unto him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldst not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due. So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."¹

The purpose of this whole parable is to show the foundation upon which rests the duty to forgive one's fellow men. That

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(1) Matthew 18:21-35.

foundation is declared to be the fact that God in His mercy has forgiven a man his sins; and because of that fact a man is obliged to show the same mercy towards his fellows. This parable, while it was spoken directly to Peter, is surely meant to apply to all men inasmuch as it deals with a general principle. The universality of sin is assumed in the need and bestowal of divine forgiveness. The parable does not stop with the fact of sin in man, but it teaches the enormity of the guilt. It represents the servant as owing his king a debt of "ten thousand talents", the equivalent roughly of about 10 million dollars. The greatness of this debt to the king is further emphasized by the contrasted smallness of the debt which the fellow-servant owed the king's servant, which was "a hundred shillings", or the equivalent of about 17 dollars. Thus, in this passage not only is the universality of sin clearly recognized, but the sin of the individual against God is conceived as enormously great.

It is true that in addition to these clear cut assumptions of the universality of sin Jesus seems to make discrimination between members of the human race. We have pointed out previously that Jesus affirms that "they that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick I came not to call the righteous, but sinners".¹ Again, on another occasion Jesus makes this statement: "He

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(1) Matthew 9:12,13.

(God) maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust".¹ It might appear that Jesus in these passages is denying the universality of sin, but, as we have indicated in the first instance, both may be properly explained without bringing this truth in question.

Concerning the first of these references Muller says,

"Those who are whole, and who do not need the physician, are just those who are whole in their own estimation; assuming their stand-point Christ, the Savior of sinners, the Physician of the sick says to them, that so long as they have such satisfaction in their own righteousness, . . . He could not be anything to them."²

And in considering both of these passages, but especially the last, Tulloch says,

". . . such passages are plainly capable of an explanation, which leaves the fact of universal sinfulness without challenge. They find their explanation in the fact, that our Lord's language, here and everywhere, is not the language of theological analysis, but of common life. And as we say that there are good and bad men in the world, without meaning to affirm that there are any men without sin, so the Gospels speak of the evil and the good, the just and the unjust."³

In conclusion, then we may say, in the words of Tulloch: "The language of the Psalmist, 'There is no man that doeth good and sinneth not', is plainly the affirmation, if not in so many words, of Christ".⁴

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- (1) Matthew 5:45.
- (2) Muller: *Op. Cit.*, p. 282.
- (3) Tulloch: "Christian Doctrine of Sin", p. 128.
- (4) Tulloch: *Ibid.* p. 127.

H. Summary.

We may say by way of summary that Jesus regarded sin fundamentally as a violation of the standard of righteousness revealed to be the will of God. He simplified the conception of this standard by declaring that all the law was embraced in the two commandments of love to God and sincere love to one's neighbor. The deviation from this standard is caused primarily by the substitution of the love of self for the love of God and man. Hence, the essence of sin is the assertion of the selfish human will against the will of God.

Sin is not only an outward act which is in itself contrary to the love of God and man, but it inheres in wrong motive as well. Jesus considers an act sinful, even though it is good in itself, if it is actuated by an evil motive. Not only so, but He regards as sin any thought, feeling, or desire, contrary to the spirit of love, which is harbored in the soul. Sin, with Christ, is a matter of motive as well as outward action.

We have seen that Jesus not only considered sin a matter of actual commission of an evil deed or the possession of evil desire and motive, but that sin is omission, it is the neglect of those opportunities for the expression of love to God and man which the circumstances of life afford.

Sin is also a corruption of the nature of man. It is a disordered condition of man's moral nature, which

expresses itself in a tendency toward the commission of outward transgressions. From the evidence in Matthew alone, no positive assertion can be made with confidence, but it appears that Jesus teaches that this distorted nature is the universal possession of mankind.

And finally, Jesus regards sin to be not the experience of a limited number, but universal in its scope. He assumes that all men have sinned and therefore stand in need of divine forgiveness.

CHAPTER IV

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

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A. Introduction.

In this chapter an attempt will be made to study the consequences which follow the commission of sin as they are set forth in the Gospel of Matthew. All the results which we shall examine do not necessarily follow in the life of the person which is given to sin; some follow only certain specific sins, as we shall see. However, most of them are the natural consequence of all habitual sin. Of course, it is understood that these are the evil results that naturally come after the exercise of wrong choice when there is no interruption of divine grace. When salutary divine influences break into the lives of sinful men, many if not all of these consequences are mitigated or entirely done away. However, this saving process is not within the bounds of our present discussion.

It appears from an examination of pertinent passages that we may well study Jesus' teaching on the consequences of sin under the following heads: 1. Guilt, 2. Exclusion from the kingdom, 3. Uselessness to God and the kingdom, 4. Increase of sinful disposition, 5. Spiritual blindness, 6. Spiritual helplessness, 7. A state of soul beyond redemption, 8. Suffering entailed upon others than

the sinner, 9. Consequences in the life to come, 10. Other consequences. This will be followed by a brief summary.

B. Guilt.

One of the chief consequences of sin observable from a study of Matthew is that of guilt. By this word is meant not only amenability to punishment, but also and primarily blameworthiness for failure to discharge moral responsibility. Jesus held a man accountable for his deeds, and for any failure to measure up to the requirements of duty He regarded him strictly responsible.

It is true that Christ recognized that there were many forces playing upon man to induce him to yield to sin. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness one of the conditions which made His temptation more acute than otherwise was the fact that "when he had fasted forty days and nights, he afterward hungered"¹, for one of the temptations was to make bread and satisfy that hunger.² In this instance it is clear that Jesus recognized the desires of the flesh to be a potential factor in the commission of wrong. He also acknowledged environment to be another element which might lead one toward the exercise of an evil choice when He said, "Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for

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- (1) Matthew 4:2.
- (2) Matthew 4:3.

it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh".¹ Another tendency toward evil of which Jesus was aware as influencing the personality was that of one's inherent corruption of nature, for in addressing His followers He said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children,"etc.² And in addition to these factors which play a part in personal choice, Jesus frequently mentioned the influence of Satan, as when in the explanation of the Parable of the Sower He asserted, "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart".³

In spite of the fact that recognition is given to these influences as having some power over the individual, nevertheless, Jesus regards a person as entirely responsible for his personal choices, and hence guilty when he violates the standard of righteousness. He nowhere declares the freedom of the human will, yet His words everywhere infer that He assumes it. No example of this inference is better, perhaps, than the words of His lamentation over the city of Jerusalem,

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets,
and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would
I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen

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- (1) Matthew 18:7.
- (2) Matthew 7:11.
- (3) Matthew 13:19.

gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."¹

Here the reason for Jerusalem's rejection of Christ is not given as any of those influences mentioned above, even though they all perhaps had a part, but it is regarded as the collective will which "would not" yield to Christ's urgent invitations. Such a lamentation on the part of Christ would not have been possible if He had not regarded the people of Jerusalem as having freedom of choice in the matter.

The fact of guilt is implied again and again in Jesus' statements in the Gospel record, but it will suffice to make mention of but a few. In instituting the Lord's Supper Jesus says, "For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins".²

There is within the very idea of forgiveness the implication of guilt, and here as elsewhere where forgiveness is mentioned the reality of guilt is inferred. When Jesus finishes the series of "woes" which He pronounces upon the Pharisees, He reaches the height of His condemnation in saying, "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell."³ Such a rhetorical question as this is highly condemnatory and could not have been spoken by Christ if He had not felt that there was guilt on

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- (1) Matthew 23:37.
- (2) Matthew 26:28.
- (3) Matthew 23:33.

the part of the Pharisees to whom He addresses it. In this utterance Jesus implies that certain punishment is the rightful lot of these hypocrites. But apart from guilt punishment would be an injustice. Hence, the certainty of guilt in this instance. By this same process of thought it is apparent that guilt is also implied where Jesus states in the Parable of the Talents, "And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth".¹ These instances are sufficient to show that Jesus regards one who commits sin as blameworthy and guilty of the offense.

An examination of the Gospel of Matthew reveals that there are varying degrees of guilt to be attached to sin. The same principle expressed in Luke by our Lord when He said,

"And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes",²

is revealed also in Matthew's Gospel. It is found in these words,

"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you."³

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- (1) Matthew 25:30.
- (2) Luke 12:47,48.
- (3) Matthew 11:21,22.

The same principle is also implied in this passage,

"The men of Ninevah shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here."^{1,2}

In both of these references the implication is made that punishment in the judgment shall be meted out according to the amount of light and opportunity that one has possessed. Inasmuch, then, as the severity of punishment is properly determined by the degree of guilt, it may be understood to be the implication from Jesus' teaching that the degree of one's guilt is proportionate to the amount of light against which one has sinned.

There appears to be another principle in Matthew's Gospel which determines the degree of guilt, although the evidence for its support in this Gospel alone is not entirely conclusive. Expressed in the words of Conner it is, "The degree of one's guilt might be said to be determined by the measure of willfulness that enters into one's sinning".³ Jesus is very mild in His criticism of the sins of the "publicans and sinners", those who are partially victimized by the condemnation of society and the power of the flesh, but none of His words of condemnation can compare in severity with those which He hurls at the hypocritical Pharisees. He observed that when the "sinners" found in Him a

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(1) Matthew 12:41.

(2) cf. also Matthew 12:42 and 10:14,15 in this connection.

(3) Conner: "A System of Christian Doctrine", p.330.

power to overcome their sins, many of them turned in repentance, but not so with the Pharisees and the religious leaders of the people. Jesus said to the latter, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you".¹ The severity of His condemnation of the Pharisees is expressed in these unparalleled words, "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how can ye escape the judgment of hell?"² It may be forcing the interpretation of these passages when limited to them alone, but surely Jesus' teaching is not misrepresented when the principle is laid down that the degree of guilt is measured by the deliberateness and willfulness which enters in to the opposition to God and right.

In addition to this fact of guilt there is also the sense of guilt which comes as a consequence of sin. This, however, is not explicit in Jesus' teaching. He doubtless has this in mind in part when in speaking of Judas by prophecy He says, "Woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed".³ This "woe" is experienced in the subsequent remorse of Judas related in these words,

"Then Judas, who betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood. . . .

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- (1) Matthew 21:31.
- (2) Matthew 23:33.
- (3) Matthew 26:24.

And he cast down the pieces of silver into the sanctuary, and departed; and he went away and hanged himself."¹

C. Exclusion from the Kingdom.

Jesus teaches in this Gospel that sin excludes one from the kingdom of heaven. He says to those about Him on the Mount, "For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven".¹ Here declaration is made that one cannot enter the kingdom if he falls short of a standard of righteousness higher than that of the Pharisees. Again, at the conclusion of this discourse Christ affirms, "Not every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven".² The condition here made for entering the kingdom is the doing of the Father's will, and the affirmation is made that to merely call upon the Lord is not sufficient for admission. Hence, to fall short of the Father's will is to be excluded. And on another occasion He declares to His disciples, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven".³ In this passage Jesus states that His disciples are spiritually

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- (1) Matthew 5:20.
- (2) Matthew 7:21.
- (3) Matthew 18:3.

unfit for entrance into the kingdom and except they repent will be excluded. In all of these utterances Christ declares that a failure to measure up to a certain standard of righteousness is met with exclusion from the kingdom.

D. Uselessness to God and the Kingdom.

Sin also renders one useless so far as God and the kingdom are concerned. Jesus asserts that a man cannot be of service to God while he serves mammon. He says, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon".¹ Here this consequence seems to follow upon the commission of a specific sin, that of serving "mammon", but it does not seem to be so limited elsewhere. Jesus utters these words at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men".^{2,3} Jesus has been previously teaching the ideal character of His followers, the perfect ideal of righteousness. In this figure He doubtless seeks to teach that that quality of character has the

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(1) Matthew 6:24.

(2) Matthew 5:13.

(3) cf. Matthew 13:22 also on this point.

power of salt, and that the life which falls short by virtue of sin is bereft of that influence, "it is good for nothing". Thus, Jesus teaches that one of the results of sin is an incapacity to be of service to God and His kingdom.

E. Increase of Sinful Disposition.

Jesus affirmed by way of a parable that in the case of His own generation wickedness should continue to grow more and more. He related this parable after condemning His generation for its blindness in not recognizing Him,

"But the unclean spirit, when he is gone out of the man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest, and findeth it not. Then he saith, I will return into my house whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this evil generation."¹

In explanation of this parable Meyer says,

"The case of this generation, He says, will be very much like that of a demoniac, into whom the demon that has been expelled from him is ever seeking to return. The demon finds his former abode ready for his reception, and, reinforced by seven others still more wicked than himself, he again enters the demoniac, making his latter condition worse than the former. So will it be with this generation, which, though it should happen to undergo a temporary amendment, will relapse into its old state of confirmed wickedness, and become worse than before."²

This parable refers specifically to the generation which Christ was addressing, but it contains the general principle

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(1) Matthew 12:43-45.

(2) Meyer: "Critical and Exegetical Handbook of the Gospel of Matthew", p.247.

for all generations that unless some higher spiritual force is brought to bear upon mankind wickedness waxes worse and worse as time goes on.

F. Spiritual Blindness.

Another consequence which Jesus declares befalls the sinner is an incapacity to grasp spiritual truth. Sin dims one's spiritual sight, so that one becomes spiritually blind. In connection with His speaking to the people in parables, Jesus says,

"Therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith,
By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand;
And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive:
For this people's heart is waxed gross."¹

In this passage Jesus attributes the people's dullness of understanding of the truth which He is preaching, to the grossness of their hearts. Upon being asked for a sign of His Messiahship by the Pharisees, He replies, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall not sign be given unto it, but the sign of Jonah".² Here Christ gives the same explanation of the people's inability to perceive spiritual things. By implication Jesus is saying that He would be recognized as the Messiah by His words and

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- (1) Matthew 13:13-15.
- (2) Matthew 16:4 and 12:39.

works, if men's minds were not blinded by sin, but a special sign is sought because the generation is "evil and adulterous". Thus, Jesus teaches that sin is accompanied by a dullness of understanding that renders a man unqualified to discern spiritual things.¹

G. Spiritual Helplessness.

More is said in some of the other Gospels, especially in John, about the bondage of the sinner to his sin, but here in Matthew there are at least two references to a spiritual condition of helplessness which is the lot of the sinner. Upon being questioned by the Pharisees why He sat at meat with publicans and sinners, Jesus replies, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. . . . For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."² He here reveals that just as those who are physically sick stand in need of help from a physician of the body, so those who are spiritually infirm stand in need of Someone who can bring them to spiritual health. Their sin renders them entirely insufficient to liberate themselves from their spiritual bondage. Jesus refers twice to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel".³ This figure of the "lost sheep" reveals the same fact which the above passage does. Sheep that are

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(1) cf. also Matthew 11:25 and 15:14.

(2) Matthew 9:12-13.

(3) Matthew 10:6 and 15:24.

lost are pathetically helpless and are in dire need of some aid in order to find their way back into the fold. No figure could express more perfectly the utter helplessness of those in sin, and Jesus applies it to the "house of Israel". Hence, we are to understand that the one who commits sin finds himself in bondage to it and stands in need of some special spiritual help.

H. A State of Soul beyond Redemption.

It has already been observed in another connection that Jesus declares that there is a sin which is unpardonable. He speaks thus:

"Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come."¹

The nature of this blasphemy has already been observed and it is sufficient here merely to call attention to the fact that there is one sin that is so completely evil that it cannot be forgiven. Let it be understood that this does not mean the God ceases to be merciful toward one who has committed such a sin. The fact is that God is still just as disposed to forgive as ever. The limitation is not on God's side, but on man's side. The man who goes so far into sin that he has reached this stage places himself outside the

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(1) Matthew 12:31,32.

pale of God's forgiveness by rendering himself incapable of meeting its condition, namely, repentance. With respect to the cause of this consequence of blasphemy against the Spirit, Spencer has this enlightening word to say,

"We may trace the origin of this mortal disease of the soul from the initial sin of not helping. For if a man refuses to help another in distress, and at the same time wishes to regard himself as righteous, he is driven to the conclusion that not to help is good and to help is bad. When, therefore, he sees a signal instance of helping, such as Jesus delivering a poor lunatic from a devil, he is logically committed to the proposition that it is an evil work. And if this be an evil work, then he is likely to regard all actions of the Holy Spirit as evil, even when directed towards his own salvation. It is a sin which can never be forgiven, because it can never be repented of, being a settled myopia of soul distorting the whole moral outlook."¹

There is one sin, then, that partakes of such extreme evil that it results in a state of soul which is beyond redemption.

I. Suffering Entailed upon Others than the Sinner.

The teaching of Jesus in this Gospel reveals that not only the sinner himself is harmed by his sins, but that others who may not in any wise be responsible for them are compelled to suffer on their account. Two passages indicate that in some cases sin produces domestic strife. In speaking to His disciples with regard to the sure persecution which would devolve upon them in giving faithful witness to Him, Jesus prophesies, "And brother shall deliver up brother to death, and the father his child: and children shall rise

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(1) Spencer: "The Ethics of the Gospel", pp.149,150.

up against parents, and cause them to be put to death".¹ And in this same connection He says, "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household".² In these cases sin is shown to be in such opposition to righteousness that those who are righteous are compelled to suffer innocently for the sin of the members of their own household. And not only is such suffering confined to the members of one's household. That the righteous must suffer persecution at the hands of sinners outside their own family circles is shown to be the case in these words of Jesus,

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to councils, and in their synagogues they will scourge you."³

Others are called upon to suffer also by virtue of the fact that sin is contagious. The sinner has an evil influence over another which often assumes tremendous power. Because Jesus realizes the evil influence of a sinner over other people to be great, He utters this severe warning,

"Whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling."⁴

In denouncing the Pharisees for their hypocrisy He says,

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! be-

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- (1) Matthew 10:21.
- (2) Matthew 10:36.
- (3) Matthew 10:16,17.
- (4) Matthew 18:6,7.

cause ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves."¹

In this passage Jesus indicates that the evil influence of the Pharisees is so great that they "shut the kingdom of heaven against men" and "make him (one proselyte) twofold more a son of hell" than themselves. Thus, sin is shown to result in innocent suffering and iniquity in the lives of others.

J. Consequences in the Life to Come.

It is well nigh impossible to draw a clear line of demarkation between the evil consequences of sin in this life and that which is to come. Some of those mentioned thus far doubtless continue to exist on beyond the confines of this life and there are certain figurative expressions, yet to be examined, which, though indefinite, probably are meant to refer to future consequences. However, there are some references about which there can be little doubt. We shall see that these teach definitely that the evil results of sin do not cease with death, but that in the world to come the confirmed sinner continues to suffer for his sin.

There is a term which is frequently repeated in Matthew's Gospel that without question has reference to a

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(1) Matthew 23:13,15.

place or state in the future world in which the evil operations of a man's sin follow him. That word is "Gehenna". Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, "And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the Gehenna (margin) of fire".¹ A little later in the same Sermon He exhorts,

"And if thy right eye cause thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into Gehenna. And if thy right hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body go into Gehenna."²

Again Christ says,

"And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."³

On another occasion Christ makes the statement:

"And if thine eye cause thee to stumble pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the Gehenna of fire."⁴

In still another passage Jesus asks the rhetorical question,

"Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of Gehenna".^{5,6} In all of these passages the judgment of Gehenna is connected with the commission of sin.

In one instance the sin is anger; in another, lust; and in the others, unfaithfulness to Christ, causing another to

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- (1) Matthew 5:22.
- (2) Matthew 5:29,30.
- (3) Matthew 10:28.
- (4) Matthew 18:9.
- (5) Matthew 23:33.
- (6) cf. also Matthew 23:15.

stumble, and hypocrisy. In each reference the punishment of sin is declared to be Gehenna.

With regard to the meaning of Gehenna, Thayer writes, "This name was transferred to that place in Hades where the wicked after death will suffer punishment".¹

Respecting this word Shedd remarks,

"There is no dispute respecting the meaning of Gehenna. It denotes the place of retributive suffering. . . . It is derived from . . . , valley of Hinnom It was a valley southeast of Jerusalem, in which the Moloch worship was practiced. It was called Tophet, "abomination". King Josiah caused the filth of Jerusalem to be carried thither and burned. Robinson asserts that there is no evidence that the place was used in Christ's day for the deposit and burning of offal. 'Gehenna', at the time of the Advent, had become a technical term for endless torment; as 'Paradise' and 'Abraham's bosom' had for endless blessedness."²

With respect to the nature of the punishment in the world to come Jesus leaves us in much ignorance; however, several things are revealed concerning it. In speaking of the wicked who say, "Lord, Lord", but do not the will of the Father in heaven, when they are gathered before Him "in that day", Jesus says, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity".³ Again, in referring to the Judgment, He remarks, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil

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- (1) Thayer: Op. Cit., p.111.
- (2) Shedd: "The Doctrine of Endless Punishment", pp.42,43.
- (3) Matthew 7:23.

and his angels".¹ In both of these passages Jesus affirms that the wicked shall "depart from me". Evidently we are to understand that in that world of evil spirits they shall in some way be separated from the presence of God. In this consists one of the elements of punishment.

It appears also from Matthew's record that the wicked are to be confined to a place or condition apart from the righteous. This fact is manifest in these words,

"And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness."²

This separation is more explicit in these words of Jesus, "So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous".^{3,4} Such separation from the influences of goodness, truth, and light is further suggested by the thrice recurring expression, "the outer darkness".⁵ Thus the sinful are to be left to their own devices apparently in utter separation from all ennobling influences.

Other passages in Matthew's Gospel reveal that a wicked person is not to be confined to solitude, but is to have the greater punishment of being thrust with others of

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- (1) Matthew 25:41.
- (2) Matthew 8:11,12.
- (3) Matthew 13:49.
- (4) cf. also Matthew 13:42, and 25:46.
- (5) cf. Matthew 8:12; 22:13; and 25:30.

his kind. One such passage reads,

"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire."¹

The plural "them" in this assertion of Christ makes clear that there is to be evil company and associations in this future abode of the wicked. This same fact is made known also in the statement,

"The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites."²

The phrase, "portion with the hypocrites", declares the social nature of this future punishment of the confirmed sinner.

The intensity of the suffering in this realm of the damned is revealed by several solemn and dreadful expressions. Six times Matthew records Jesus' declaration that in that place of the sinful dead there shall be "the weeping and gnashing of teeth".³ The expression, "furnace of fire", occurs twice on Jesus' lips⁴; "Gehenna of fire", twice⁵; and "eternal fire", twice⁶. These, indeed, are terrifying expressions. Doubtless they are figurative phrases, but even so they are symbolic of something, and

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(1) Matthew 13:41,42.

(2) Matthew 24:50,51.

(3) cf. Matthew 8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; and 25:30.

(4) Matthew 13:42, 50.

(5) Matthew 5:22 and 18:9.

(6) Matthew 18:8 and 25:41.

it is difficult to conceive of Jesus using language that misrepresents the reality of things. In this connection Broadus very aptly says,

"All descriptions and conceptions of things unseen and eternal are necessarily dependent upon material analogies, even as our own mental action can be defined only in terms drawn from physical action. We may be very sure that the spiritual and eternal reality will be something far more solemn and instructive than any conception we are able to derive from the simplest or the most sublime images. . . . Whether eternal punishment involves any physical reality corresponding to fire, we know not; there will be something as bad as fire, and doubtless worse, for no earthly image can be adequate."¹

Surely we may conclude, in the light of this language, that the sinner exists in a conscious state, for suffering, regardless of how it may be conceived, is not suffering, apart from consciousness.

From the data revealed in this Gospel we must conclude that this condition of the lost is eternally fixed and permanent. Three times is the word "eternal" used in connection with punishment.² This is the same word that is used in connection with the life of the blessed in the world to come, as is shown in this statement of Christ, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life".³ There have been many attempts to prove that this word rendered here "eternal" means something less than everlasting and endless, but according to the best authority

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- (1) Broadus: Op. Cit., pp.509,511.
- (2) Matthew 8:18; 25:41; and 25:46.
- (3) Matthew 25:46.

we know, no such meanings are allowable. Thayer gives only three possible definitions of this word and none of them weaken the force of the word as it is given above in the American Revised Version.¹

There is a passage in Matthew which might lend itself to an opposite interpretation if taken alone, but when interpreted in the light of other passages cannot bear a contradictory meaning. It is as follows:

"And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come."²

Concerning this passage Broadus remarks,

"This is simply a strong and expanded declaration that it will never be forgiven. . . . Our Lord's expression might in itself imply that some sins not forgiven in this world will be forgiven in the world to come; but it does not necessarily, nor even very naturally teach this; and as the idea is unsupported by, and inconsistent with, the general teachings of Scripture on that subject, it is quite improper to base so important a doctrine as that of 'a second probation' in the future life, upon the merely possible meaning of this one passage, with perhaps the addition of I Peter 3:19, according to one possible interpretation. That He only means to say it will never be forgiven, is confirmed by Mark 3:29 (correct text), 'hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin'."³

From this study, then, we are to conclude that sin produces severe consequences in the world to come. The lot of the impenitent sinner will be that of eternal punishment consisting of great suffering, a part of which will be the separa-

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- (1) Thayer's definitions are: 1. "Without beginning or end, that which has been and always will be", 2. "Without beginning", and 3. "Without end, never to cease, everlasting".
Op. Cit., p.20.
- (2) Matthew 12:32.
- (3) Broadus: Op. Cit., p.273.

tion from all ennobling and uplifting influences and the association with those who are likewise bent upon evil.

K. Other Consequences.

There are in this Gospel of Matthew several other references to the results of sin which have not been included in any of the sections thus far and which would render this chapter incomplete if not examined. Among these is the loss of "life", the higher life of the soul. Jesus says, "For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it".¹ In this paradox Jesus declares that the man who is seeking selfishly to live his life shall lose it. Plumptre, in commenting on this verse, remarks,

"The truth is, of course, put in the form of a paradox, and hence, with a contrast between the two aspects of the soul, or psyche. To be bent on saving it in its relation to the body, is to lose it in its relation to the higher life of the spirit."²

One other consequence of sin, then, is the loss of the higher life of the spirit.

That sin brings forth sorrow is indicated by the fact that Jesus warns frequently against sin by pronouncing "woe" upon offenders.³ The nature of that woe in every case is made more specific in the context and has already in pre-

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(1) Matthew 16:25.

(2) Plumptre: "The Gospel According to St. Matthew", p.238.

(3) cf. Matthew 18:7; 23:13,15,16,23,25,27,29; 26:24.

vious sections claimed our attention; hence, we shall not further consider these references.

Jesus exhorts at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby".¹ Here "destruction" doubtless means the destruction of life, since in the verse which follows Jesus points out by way of contrast that the straight way leads to "life". Sin in this case is shown to lead to "destruction".

In figurative language Jesus declares what will befall the unbelieving and impenitent thus: "And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken to pieces: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust".² This is another way of saying what was declared above, that sin leads to "destruction".

There are two other figurative expressions used by Jesus in parables to portray the fortunes of the wicked. In one of these parables He says,

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof."³

In the other parable Jesus declares that the lot of one who

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- (1) Matthew 7:13.
- (2) Matthew 21:44.
- (3) Matthew 7:26,27.

does not forgive his brother is the same as that of the wicked servant who refused to have mercy on his fellow-servant who owed him a debt; he was delivered "to the tormentors".¹ In the first of these parables Jesus asserts that the result of sin is something comparable to a house built upon the sand that is destroyed by the storm; and in the last He declares that the consequence of a certain sin is suffering inflicted by the "tormentors". To be more definite with this figurative language is difficult, and to attempt to is probably unwise.

L. Summary.

We have seen in this chapter that Jesus teaches that sin has many and dire consequences. It produces guilt in the life of the individual who has committed it, and often, if not always, a sense of guilt. Sin is represented as disqualifying one for a place in the kingdom of heaven and as rendering one useless so far as God's purpose is concerned. Sin, if it has its own way in a life, results in a more corrupt disposition, a dullness of spiritual perception, and a bondage to self and evil from which one is powerless to free himself without divine aid. Jesus teaches that there is a sin so utterly corrupting that one is unable to repent of it and hence is in a state of soul that is beyond redemp-

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(1) Matthew 18:34.

tion. Not only does sin affect the life of the one committing it in a tragic way, but it causes suffering on the part of the innocent, and often by the power of its contagion corrupts other lives with its presence. In the world to come the consequences of a man's sin continue to follow him. There it shuts him away from the presence of God and all good and holy influences and leaves him to suffer eternal punishment with others of his kind who have persistently chosen the path of sin. There are still other consequences, one of which is the loss of the higher life of the spirit. The others may be suggested by such expressions as "woe", "destruction", and deliverance "to the tormentors". These represent the price which the confirmed sinner must pay for his impenitence.

CHAPTER V
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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

We proposed in this study by a careful examination of the Scriptural record to determine "The Teaching of Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew on the Nature and Consequences of Sin". Our purpose has now been accomplished. In conclusion we may well bring together by way of summary the results of our research.

By an examination of certain Greek words used by Jesus to convey the idea of sin, we were able to draw up several general propositions with regard to its nature and consequences from the concepts which these words symbolize. The propositions reveal that sin is regarded as a failure, either by commission or omission, to measure up to a divinely revealed standard of righteousness, and as such usually, if not always, involves guilt.

In the subsequent study of various passages in Matthew's Gospel which are pertinent to our problem, this conception of sin was confirmed and supplemented. It was noted that Jesus regarded the standard of righteousness to be the law of Moses as it is interpreted in its true spirituality and inwardness in His Sermon on the Mount. Jesus reduced this standard of righteousness to a single principle, namely, love, with its Godward and manward relationship, and

regarded sin as the love of self in opposition to the love of God and man.

It was observed that Jesus taught that sin is not merely a matter of outward action that is in itself contrary to the law of love, but it inheres also in wrong motive. He considered any action sinful, even though in itself it be good and praiseworthy, if it proceeds out of a heart actuated by a selfish motive. Not only so, but even to harbor in the soul any thought, desire, or motive, contrary to the spirit of love, regardless of whether it ever expresses itself in outward form, He declared to be sinful.

We observed from our further study that Jesus laid great emphasis upon the sinfulness of omission as well as commission. He taught that a man is committing a grave sin when he simply fails to render a service of love which his circumstances of life make possible. Severe indeed was His condemnation of the man who merely neglected to properly discharge his stewardship of the gifts of life.

From the evidence in Matthew's Gospel we concluded that in some lives, at least, according to Jesus' teaching, there is a perversion of nature, which tends toward the commission of sin, and that the probability is great that this corruption of disposition is true not only of a few, but is the universal characteristic of mankind. While we did not feel warranted in pressing the matter of the universality of this evil nature, upon the data available in

Matthew alone, yet the teaching of Jesus in this Gospel is indisputably clear respecting the fact that all men are sinners and stand in need of divine forgiveness.

Having arrived at these conclusions with respect to the nature of sin, we turned to the study of its consequences in human life. We observed that sin results in guilt, varying in degree according to the amount of light and opportunity possessed by the one committing the sin and according to the willfulness which entered into its execution. Sin not only shuts one out from the kingdom of heaven, but renders one useless so far as God is concerned. It weakens one's power of spiritual understanding, leads to greater moral corruption, so binds one in its power that one is helpless to free himself from its hold, and finally may bring one to such a hopeless moral degradation that he is past the possibility of spiritual renewal.

It was noted also that sin extends its tragic consequences beyond the bounds of the guilty person's life into the experiences of other people. Sin may not only cause suffering to innocent parties, but so great is the power of its contagion that the sinner may greatly corrupt the lives of associates by his influence.

And finally we observed that sin follows one even into the world to come with its destructive results. It separates one from the presence of God, righteous people, and every other ennobling and uplifting influence, and leaves

one to suffer eternally in the presence of others who have like himself consistently refused to turn from their sins.

Having come to such an understanding respecting Jesus' teaching concerning our subject, we cannot but be impressed with the fact that to Him sin was a thing which was tragically real and unutterably heinous. We are certainly in a position to agree with D. R. Scott, when he affirms, "We can never cite Jesus in the interests of a shallow optimism or a shallow doctrine of healthy-mindedness which ignores the terrible reality of sin and sin's consequences."¹ He saw man as being made in the image of God and capable of the highest spiritual development. To Him the humblest and most insignificant person was of infinite worth. It was against the background of such a conception that whatever debased and ruined the personality of man appeared to Him so terrible. Because He saw as no man has ever seen the exceeding sinfulness of sin, He pleaded with men to suffer the loss of hands and feet and life itself rather than by continuing in sin to suffer the destruction of their souls. So great was His sense of the tragedy of sin that not only did He give His whole life to one ceaseless effort to warn men concerning the error of their ways and to lead them to repentance, but He finally gave Himself to the unspeakable anguish of the cross that atonement might be made and men

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(1) Scott: "Christ, Sin, and Redemption", p.21.

might be redeemed from this great destroyer of souls.

One must sense deeply after having thus examined Jesus' teaching that no man can claim to have the mind of Christ and still possess a flippant, easy-going attitude toward sin. This age-long enemy of mankind is still with us and is today taking its dreadful toll in the personalities of men. The mind of Christ permits of no compromise with sin, but summons us to a frank recognition of its stark reality and devastating consequences and to an earnest promulgation of these truths to all mankind.

In conclusion we may say that while Jesus has much to say about the reality of sin and its fearful consequences, this is not His last word. The last word is with life and redemption. There is a way of escape from sin and its dreadful results to which Jesus calls men's attention in this Gospel. Having seen afresh in this study the nature of sin and its bitter fruitage, we may rejoice the more in the fact that He who said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees",¹ also said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."²

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(1) Matthew 23:13.

(2) Matthew 11:28-30.

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