A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE NATURE OF SIN IN THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

Chapter Page

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem of the Thesis

a. The Problem Stated

> "Through the deeper introspection of psychology sin rises out of the innermost substance of our being more brutish, more venomous, more subtle, persistent and invincible than ever. We are more totally depraved than John Calvin thought. Never were Christ's cross and the redemptive program of the Christian religion so urgently needed as since psychology explored the sub-conscious."[1]

This statement of William C. Covert's which would be flatly denied by the vast majority of our psychologists, strikes at the very heart of the problem with which this thesis shall concern itself: Has the psychological analysis of sin as personality maladjustment abrogated the Christian doctrine of sin?

b. The Problem Defined and Justified

An explication of this problem is the task of the first chapter of this thesis. However, that the nature of the problem might be more clearly defined at the outset, it is advisable to point out the long-established cleavage which has existed between the psychological and theological approaches to this question. The Christian religion looks upon sin as a fundamental perversion of human nature which has robbed man of fellowship with God. Its destructive work could only be effaced through that divine act of perfect love of which Calvary's cross is the visible manifestation.

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1. Covert: Facing Our Day, p. 121

On the other hand, the psychological approach has been dominantly humanistic, with the consequent discrediting of the divine aspect of the problem. Evil is defined in purely negative terms as the failure of the personality to adjust itself completely to its environment. Sin disappears when full self-realization is achieved. The term "traditional" has been chosen to designate this characteristic psychological approach which will be contrasted with the "new" psychological interpretation which allies itself with Christian theism. For Christianity, then, the question has been one of the relationship between God and man; for psychology, the harmonious functioning of the human personality.

Psycho-analysis, the most recent development in the field of psychology which has delved into the powerful unconscious life of man and analyzed the conflicts between the conscious and unconscious, far from looking favorably on Christianity, raises its voice even more violently against the objective reality of sin, explaining it in terms of mental complexes. Here, then, is a vital issue. Man is asking: Must I choose between the findings of psychology or the teachings of Christianity? For, to reject the reality of sin, is to shake the very foundation of the Christian religion. Many, accepting the truth of psychological investigation, and considering it to be in direct conflict with Christianity, are abandoning their faith. Others, clinging desperately to faith, are, nevertheless, in intellectual confusion at this point.

Any light which can be thrown on this problem, then, must surely not be withheld. It is the belief of the writer that Clifford A. Barbour of Edinburgh has made a real psychological contribution toward the resolution of this pressing issue.[1] The purpose of this thesis is to point out a possible path of reconciliation between psychology and theology in the interpretation of the nature of sin. It is our aim to demonstrate that the divine and human aspects of the same problem are being discussed, that the teachings of Christianity are essential to a complete psychological analysis of the problem. Granting the fact that sin results in a maladjustment of personality, it will be our purpose to show that this is only an effect, issuing from a more fundamental disharmony of the soul with God. This is our thesis. Once psychologically grounded, this great Christian principle will be subjected to severe pragmatic testing.

c. The Problem Delimited

As the thesis title suggest, this study will limit itself very definitely to an attempt to establish a psychological foundation for the distinctly Christian doctrine of sin. The world's great literature will be surveyed for its authentication of the Christian analysis of the sin problem, and the study into personal experience will be limited to that of Christians.

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1. Cf., Barbour: Sin of the New Psychology

Perhaps an additional statement regarding the specific purpose for entering the fields of literature and experience might be made. Of course, an exhaustive study into the nature of sin as portrayed in the world's literature and as revealed in Christian experience, is far beyond the limits of this thesis. However, representative studies have been carried out in each of the above fields, and, on the basis of this detailed work, which was accompanied by a general survey in each instance, generalizations have been made and afford weighty evidence in substantiation of the sin analysis which has been psychologically established.

B. Method of Procedure

There are three steps in this study. The first is concerned with a psychological justification of the Christian doctrine of sin. After a survey of the traditional psychological analysis of the sin problem, the new interpretation of C. A. Barbour will be advanced, and the path of reconciliation between psychology and theology made clear. In the second and third chapters, respectively, this Christian psychology of sin is authenticated through a study into the world's great literature and into Christian experience. The two literary artists with whom we shall deal at length are William Shakespeare and Nathaniel Hawthorne, both universally recognized as genuine interpreters of life. The work in the field of Christian

experience will consist first of a general survey of two scientific studies, one by Starbuck, and the other by Warner, into the nature of conversion, and then an examination into the personal sin experience of two of the great leaders of the Church of Christ. A concluding chapter will draw together the results of this study into the psychology of sin.

C. Sources of Study

In surveying the psychological approach to the problem the views of the various writers have been culled from an examination of their writings. William McDougall in his "Outline of Abnormal Psychology" gives a very fine treatment of the work of the psycho-analysts. Reference is again made to the work of C. A. Barbour, who, in his "Sin and the New Psychology" had made a real contribution toward the justifying of Christianity at the bar of modern psychology. The dramas of Shakespeare and Hawthorne's two novels , "The Scarlet Letter" and "The Marble Faun," are the primary sources for the work of the second chapter. Augustus Strong[1] and Austin Phelps[2] have aided the writer in organizing the literary analysis of sin. With regard to the study into Christian experience, E. D. Starbuck's "The Psychology of Religion" and H. E. Warner's "The Psychology of the Christian Life" provide us with the

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1. Cf., Strong: The Great Poets and Their Theology
2. Cf., Phelps: My Portfolio

general surveys of religious experience. The "Confessions" of St. Augustine and the "Journal" of John Wesley serve as primary sources. John Owen[1] has been of real assistance to the writer in deepening his appreciation of St. Augustine.

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1. Cf., Owen: Discourse on the Holy Spirit

CHAPTER I

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE NATURE OF SIN

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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE NATURE OF SIN

INTRODUCTION

With regard to the specific problem which faces us in this study, that is, the analysis of the nature of sin, the history of the science of psychology presents a predominantly humanistic interpretation which is in direct opposition to the Christian teaching on this subject. As the field of psychology is surveyed it will become evident that there is fairly general agreement in considering the essence of sin as maladjustment of the human personality. The Christian doctrine that sin involves the severing of a divine-human relationship is strongly discountenanced. The contructive task of this chapter will be the presentation of Clifford A. Barbour's refutation of this traditional psychological interpretation, followed by a positive statement of his analysis of the sin problem. This new psychological approach will then be harmonized with the position of Christian theology as exemplified by one of its representative scholars, Dr. Augustus H. Strong.[1] A possible path of reconciliation between psychology and theology in the interpretation of the nature of sin will thus be advanced.

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1. Cf., Strong: Systematic Theology

PART ONE: A SURVEY OF THE TRADITIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE NATURE OF SIN

A. Academic Psychology

a. The Academic Approach

The academic psychology of the past century was greatly handicapped in its work by the fact that its field of inquiry was limited to the area of conscious life, no insight having been gained as yet into the powerful unconscious life of man. Probing into the conscious mind to discover the laws of its functioning,, these pioneers in the new science considered sin as a negative factor: the failure of the personality to adjust itself completely to its environment.

b. George A. Coe

Writing in the field of educational psychology, George A. Coe gives us a very clear presentation of this social theory of the nature of sin:

> "The need for any such term as sin lies in the fact that we men, in addition to constructing the human society in which God and man are both sharers, also obstruct and destroy it. Sin is man retarding the process of social upbuilding...The root of all sin is the anti-social development of the instincts."[1]

The enjoyment one experiences in an anti-social reaction leads to repetition and consequent habit formation. "Sin, then, is

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1. Coe: A Social Theory of Religious Education, p. 164

rooted in instinct, confirmed by habit and propagated by informal social education."[1] Whatever of conscience a man possesses, then, arises from the approval or disapproval of his fellows; our sense of "ought" is nothing more than the necessity of conforming to social expectation. The cure for sin, says Coe, lies in the regulation of what is socially approved so that the spirit of selfishness in the child shall be replaced by a spirit of cooperation. This selfishness is not the true nature of the child but is developed by anti-social environmental factors. Sin does not involve a personal relationship between God and man, but only between man and man. Sin arises from the false education of the child. Socialize the child, that is, remove the anti-social traits which a false environment has produced, and you bring him to "God." Coe is truly representative of the academic psychological approach.

B. The Behavioristic School

During the early years of the present century there arose a new psychological school, the Behavioristic, of which J. B. Watson is the recognized leader. Behaviorism very quickly dominated the field over the older psychology. This school posits but one reality, that is, matter; what we term consciousness is simply nerve activity:

"Thought, then, is a form of general bodily activity just

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1. Coe, op. cit., p. 168

> as simple (or just as complex) as tennis playing...It might be better to give up the term thinking and use the term implicit behavior in its place."[1]

Man is just a bundle of stimulus-response bonds, the product of his heredity and environment. It is evident that such a psychology, denying the freedom of man, can have little to say of the fact of sin, for where there is no responsibility there can be no guilt. Behaviorism with its denial of the reality of mind, was no improvement upon, in fact, was decidedly less true to the facts of life than the earlier academic approach.

C. Recent Trends in Psychology

However, psychology has awakened to the utter foolishness of the attempt to dismiss purposive activity from the picture of the universe. As a direct reaction to Behaviorism there has arisen the school of Psycho-analysis, at present the most influential development in the psychological world. We shall discuss briefly three of the chief exponents of this latest psychological approach: Sigmund Freud, Carl G. Jung and William McDougall, who with their methods of psycho-analysis, have largely displaced the academic psychology of former years, which limited itself to a study of the normal conscious mind. In completing this survey of the recent trend in the psychological interpretation of the nature of sin, we shall consider

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1. Watson: The Ways of Behaviorism, pp. 84-85

two of the leading American students in this field: Walter M. Horton of Oberlin and Henry N. Wieman of Chicago. The purpose will be to demonstrate the fact that, despite the opening up of this new field whereby psychology is now studying the conflicts between the conscious and unconscious life of man, a field pregnant with possibilities for a possible rapproachment between psychology and Christianity, the tendency nevertheless has been to reemphasize the psychological conviction of the unreality of sin. Self-realization remains the ideal and evil is simply failure to attain thereunto. Sin and psychic evil are now identified, that is, the sinner is mentally sick. There is no objective standard established, that is, no standard higher than what one could attain through the medium of self-realization. Sin, lifted out of the divine sphere, is still a purely human problem.

a. Psycho-analysis

1. Sigmund Freud

Freud is the father of Psycho-analysis. Discarding the Watsonian mechanistic psychology, he sees purposive activity as the chief characteristic of men and animals. The instincts are for him those native impulses which lead the person on to self-development, to the attainment of his ego ideal; and predominant among these is, of course, the sex instinct, the importance of which Freud has greatly exaggerated. Moral conflict within the human soul takes place in the unconscious;

one of the instinctive urges is repressed, but, living on in the realm below the level of consciousness, seeks expression indirectly. The Unconscious is the store of all such submerged tendencies. Sin or psychic evil is mental maladjustment which results from this repression of the instincts, for a conflict is then on between one's natural impulses and his ideal. The therapeutic task of psycho-analysis, then, is that of

> "translating the unconscious into the conscious...By projecting the unconscious into the conscious, we do away with repressions, we remove conditions of symptom formation... This is the only psychic change we produce in our patients."1

Strike a balance between the conscious and the unconscious, and mental health will follow. The problem, then, is that of permitting full self-realization by harmonizing the life purpose and the instincts, that of aiding man to resolve the conflict existing between his ego ideal and his psychic constitution.

2. Carl Jung

C. G. Jung is a disciple of Freud, incorporating into his psychology the former's emphasis on the moral conflict being the result of the repression of the instinctive drives into the unconscious realm. However, he rejects Freud's limitation of the Unconscious chiefly to the activity of the sex urge, and rather includes under that term not only complexes, but all the innate tendencies of our mental life. With this more inclusive

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1.Freud: A General Introduction to Psycho-analysis, p. 375

use of the term "Libido"[1] to denote all instinct-energies, Jung looks beyond repression for the origin of psychic evil, laying great stress on the difficulties involved in a changing environment. Regression is the cause of personality maladjustment, and by regression he implies failure to adapt to life situations with the consequent lapse back into infantile experiences:

> "When a man meets a difficult task which he cannot master with the means at his command, a retrograde movement of the libido automatically begins, that is, a regression occurs. The libido draws away from the problem of the moment, becomes introverted, and activates a more or less primitive analogy of the conscious situation in the unconscious together with an earlier mode of adaptation."[2]

A damming up of vital energy results, and life's forward movement is checked. The cure lies in a reorienting of the neurotic so that he can once again make the normal adaptations to his environment. With the cause of the neurosis clearly before the conscious mind, the individual can use his psychic energy to overcome it, and a gradual return to normalcy will be realized.

3. William McDougall

William McDougall attempts a synthesis of the permanent values to be found in the teachings of the various

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1. Cf., Jung: Psychology of the Unconscious, pp. 135-140
2. Jung: Psychological Types, p. 231

psycho-analytical schools. His diagnosis of the problem is essentially the same as that of Freud and Jung:

> "Neurotic disorder is the expression of disintegration or failure of integration of the personality or of character. In the neurotic patient, the various tendencies of character, the sentiments, are not organized as they should be, in one harmonious system. Rather they are more or less divided into conflicting systems."[1]

The resolution of the conflict lies in harmonizing the conscious and unconscious forces so that there is a unified effort toward the attainment of the ego ideal. A perfect personality is that one which has a mastery over the whole organism in both its conscious and unconscious phases. To produce this type of character is the aim of all true education.

4. Summary and Criticism

The psycho-analysts, delving into the unconscious life, resolve sin into a conflict between man's conscious and unconscious life. There is no place provided for a divine activity. Sin is a negative factor, a failure of the conscious life to direct the unconscious toward the attainment of the life purpose. Open the way for the full realization of the self and you have resolved the conflict.

One is led to ask the question whether psychoanalysis has really explained the nature of sin, or,

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1. McDougall: Outline of Abnormal Psychology, pp. 54-55

granting the possibility of God working through human nature, has merely been labeling the process by which the interaction between God and man takes place. For, who knows all the factors of the Unconscious? Who has explored this realm so thoroughly that he is ready to deny God access thereunto? In a later chapter, which will treat the Christian experience of sin, the work of H. E. Warner[1] in pointing out the facility with which the states of Christian experience, especially the conversion experience, fit into this psychological framework of the interaction between the conscious and unconscious life, will shed real light on this issue. Clifford Barbour,[2] to whom we shall shortly turn, also grapples with this problem. For the present, in concluding this survey of the psycho-analytical school, it is only necessary to make clear that the idea of a rapproachment between Christianity and psychology is anathema to its members. Religious experience is rejected as having no objective validity. There is no divine element in the sin experience.

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1. Warner: The Psychology of the Christian Life
2. Barbour, op.cit.

b. Two American Psychologists

Let us now turn to two independent students in the field of religious psychology: Walter M. Horton[1] and Henry M. Wieman.[2] These men use the term "God" or "Cosmic Reality" in their analyses of the sin problem, but on a careful examination into their thinking, it becomes clear that their position is fundamentally the same as that of Coe and the psycho-analysts. Sin is not a personal relationship involving two parties, God and man, but the failure of the human personality to relate itself adequately to its environment.

1. Walter M. Horton

(a) The Definition of Sin

Limiting the field of religion, which seeks the harmonious adjustment and full development of personality, Horton then proceeds to determine the exact nature of the religious malady, that is, sin. He first distinguishes between sin and moral disease, that is, disorders of an involuntary character, such as kleptomania. Moral diseases fall within the field of psychiatry, as do nervous disorders. A morally diseased person must not be treated as a sinner, for moral disease is "undesired, uncontrollable and its cause unrecognized,"[3] for it arises from

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1. Horton; A Psychological Approach to Theology
2. Wieman: Normative Psychology of Religion
3. Horton: op.cit., p. 74

morbid complexes. But sin is "wilful and controllable and therefore blameworthy."[1] The major criterion by which we distinguish sin from other maladies is, then, that it is a "disorder of the will."[2] This definition is, like the others we have previously examined, thoroughly psychological, involving personality adjustment.

(b) An Impersonal Cosmic Reality

Horton, however, goes on to say that the concept "sin" involves much more than this, for it takes in man's relationship to the ultimate reality on which his life depends. This sounds very good, but we soon discover that for Horton this reality is in no sense personal, but rather energizing and inspiring cosmic forces. His religious content of sin is nothing more than failure to accomplish the best possible self-realization through maladjustment to these cosmic forces. Sin is not a single entity, nor an hereditary curse; rather are the forms of sin multiple, for sin is:

> ". . .any defect or perversion in a man's purposes, ideals, sentiments or attitudes which tend to throw him out of harmonious adjustment with the cosmic reality. . . Evil is plural, a form of disintegration or disorganization preying like a parasite upon the unity of the good. . . Sin therefore is the collective term applicable to all disorders of the will which tend to destroy normal harmonious relations between the individual and those cosmic sources

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1. Horton: op.cit., p. 73
2. Ibid.: p. 74

> of energy and inspiration [impersonal] on which the health and vigor of the higher life depend."[1]

Horton does not personalize his Cosmic Reality.

(c) The Effects of Sin

Once again we have a purely human set-up, for the effects of sin are to create friction between man and his neighbors and ultimately to set him at war within himself. The final effect of sin is the disintegrating of the human personality. Horton treats the varieties of sin as individual, social and cosmic; even cosmic sin falls far below the Christian conception, being simply the "withdrawal of the individual from life."[2] The sinner is a "contractive" who has been isolated from his fellows and the world and is living a self-centered existence with no center of devotion or reservoir of energy outside himself. The how of this self-centered existence is the misdirection of the impulsive drives which destroy the harmonious development of personality.

(d) Criticism

Horton prefers to look upon the sinner "from the standpoint of his need, not his guilt,"[3] and neglects the

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1. Horton: op.cit., p. 75
2. Ibid.: p. 77
3. Ibid.: p. 79

theological approach to the problem. But the need is a consequence of the guilt; the two cannot be divorced. Horton claims that he is not minimizing the guilt of the sinner, nevertheless he disregards the Biblical approach which is but the other side of the truth: "Thy sins be forgiven thee... Arise, take up thy bed and walk."[1] The guilt and the need must go together. Horton is but describing the consequences of the sinner's guild, and fails to get behind the results of sin to its underlying cause.

2. Henry N. Wieman

(a) The Definition of Sin

Wieman seeks to get beneath the traditional idea of sin as departure from the will of God to the reality underlying it. The sense of sin is "the sense of reality without which no person can live."[2] At a first glance, he, like Horton, seems quite sound when he says that sin is "disloyalty to God, that is, the insubordination of any interest or impulse to the complete sovereignty of God."[3] One should be dominated by this supreme devotion, and is a sinner when he fails to be so controlled.

(b) An Impersonal Cosmic Reality

But what content does Wieman put into the term "God"? Nothing personal: "God as one finds him working

1. Gospel of Mark: 2:2, 11
2. Wieman: op. cit., p. 147
3. Ibid.: p. 148

in human life and the world is the growth of meaning and value...Sin is disloyalty to growth."[1] He lists four ways in which this disloyalty to growth can manifest itself:[2] (1) incomplete loyalty to the cause which the individual has chosen as the practical medium through which he shall serve God; (2) conflict of loyalties preventing one from devoting himself wholly to God; (3) no loyalty--one neglects the meanings and value of life; (4) fixed loyalty to any organization or institution which prevents one from giving loyalty to that unlimited growth of meaning and value. This last sin is inescapable, for everyone must have a working loyalty. But, despite the use of the term "god", this discussion is most impersonal throughout. No personal "other" confronts us.

(c) A Specific Versus a General Sense of Sin

Wieman sees the sense of sin as an outgrowth of the primitive sense of guilt at the breaking of tribal custom; when these customs become the requirements of God, and not only of man's fellows, then guilt passes into sin. But, at all stages of the process, sin is always disloyalty to what one serves as highest. The only true and wholesome sense of sin is that which arises from a man's discovering

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1. Wieman: op. cit., p. 148
2. Ibid.: pp. 148-151

a specific act whereby he has been disloyal. Wieman makes light of the Christian conception as a "general" sense of sin which does not spring from any feeling of disloyalty to God, for it is not connected with anything the person has felt or done. This is not a just criticism of Christianity. It is no doubt true that on the periphery of Christianity there are certain groups whose methods and practices justify Wieman in saying that the sense of sin is nothing more than "a feeling superinduced by the massive and ceaseless stimulation of social suggestion."[1] But this is not the experience of the average Christian. True, there arises a feeling of general inferiority and insufficiency, but it is born of specific failures to be loyal to the Christian God. The specific disloyalties reveal the disloyal nature. There would be no specific failures if there were no deeper general maladjustment. The Christian's sense of sin is much more specific than Wieman's "disloyalty to growth" can ever hope to be. But, to conclude Wieman's theory, the true sense of sin is that which springs from specific disloyalty. The keener one's sense of values, the deeper one's sense of sin. If, then, one could grasp the reality of God in his Wholeness, he would have a perfect sense of sin. It may be that this is the basis of the Christian's feeling of general disloyalty!

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1. Wieman: op.cit., p. 155

(d) Criticism

For Wieman, then, the sense of guilt, arising from man's appreciation of values, is a noble quality revealing the richness of life. Man sees the glory that might and ought to be. This is all very true, the glory which ought to be; yes, but which is not! Take this additional step, and you have the Christian position which Wieman must accept if he is to be consistent. Let us grant Wieman his thesis that the sense of sin is a mark of man's dignity, a sign of his awareness of higher values that might and ought to be. This is very fine, and essentially Christian, but it is only one side of the picture. Man must recognize not only the reality of higher values but also his failure to attain unto them. Then, and only then, does he prove his true dignity. Failing to do this, he remains a fool. A true sense of sin is just this feeling of man's general insufficiency to realize the values he knows ought to be, an insufficiency made evident to him by specific failures.

3. Summary

Horton and Wieman attempt to straddle the fence. Their terminology would imply a personal, divine aspect to the sin problem, but an examination into their theories proves that they are one with Coe and the psycho-analysts in regarding sin as a failure of the personality to adjust itself to its environment.

D. A Summary of the Traditional Psychological Interpretation

This concludes the survey of the traditional psychological approach to the problem of sin. From Coe through Wieman there is an essential agreement in the solution presented. Sin in the Christian sense of the term is discountenanced. It is identified with psychic evil, or, to put it more plainly, sin is explained away as neurosis, that is, mental sickness. Sin is personality maladjustment: the conscious mind is failing to direct the unconscious in the attainment of the life purpose. The cure lies in a readjustment of the patient's mental life whereby he can successfully relate himself to his environment. The whole problem is kept on the human level; there is no divine factor involved. Sin is not a personal affair between two parties, God and man, but only a deficiency in man's adaptation to his environment. If, and when, the personality fully realizes itself, sin vanishes, for the self is not judged by any objective standard outside itself, but only by its ego ideal. This is the answer of psychology to the sin problem: open the way for the personality to fully realize itself and you have solved the problem of sin, for sin is mental sickness.

PART TWO: A NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE NATURE OF SIN

There are two writers in our field of inquiry who take the Christian doctrine of sin seriously, as involving a severing of the relationship between two personalities, man and God. They are in essential agreement in their interpretation of the nature of sin. C. A. Barbour, in his recent book "Sin and the New Psychology," has made a real contribution toward establishing the Christian doctrine of sin on a firm psychological basis. He demonstrates the psychological inadequacy of the traditional theory of self-realization, that is, that the balancing of the ego ideal and the unconscious impulses will assure a perfect personality adjustment with a consequent eradication of sin, and proves that the psychic constitution of man makes the Christian doctrine of sin indispensable. Let us first consider his refutation of the traditional position, then proceed to a positive statement of his viewpoint, identifying it with that of James Snowden[1], who, approaching the problem largely from a theological angle, has not made as original a contribution.

A. The Psychological Inadequacy of the Traditional Interpretation

Sin, says the traditionalist, is the lack of

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1. Snowden: The Psychology of Religion

perfect self-realization; balance the life purpose with the individual psychic constitution, and sin is eliminated, for the personality is completely integrated. But such a theory is psychologically unsound, for if you did bring the ideal into conformity with the natural impulses, stagnation would result and ultimately the extinction of personality. One's ideal must be higher than his natural impulses else there can be no progress. It is a biological certainty that species die out not only from failure to adapt but also from too complete adaptation. It is evident, then, that the self-realization theory will not hold water. Psychologically speaking, man develops as he holds before him an ideal which he considers a worthy goal, and which serves as his standard by which he adapts himself to his changing environment. McDougall has well stated this fundamental thesis:

> "Integration of personality results from the formation of some dominant purpose, the adoption of some goal felt to be of supreme value, a goal to which all others are subordinated as of less urgency and lower value."[1]

Moreover, external stimuli exert a great influence on the developing psyche. One's life purpose is produced by his reactions to objective standards. But this ideal cannot be anything which is possible of full attainment, for then, with the life purposes and the impulses in balance, stagna-

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1. McDougall: op.cit., p. 526

tion would result. Therefore, the only standard which is psychologically adequate is that of absolute perfection.

B. The Psychological Necessity of Christianity's Absolute Objective Standard

How does Christianity fit into this psychological framework, that is, this demand that man have a life purpose transcending his natural impulses, a life purpose which is produced by his reaction to the external stimuli influencing his life? Christianity presents Christ as this ideal; his life is the objective standard toward which the Christian must daily progress. Is this life purpose of Christianity a satisfactory one psychologically? Yes, it is indeed the only one which meets the above demands. Christ is the only perfectly balanced personality in history. Even those who reject his divine claims can find no fault with his life and teaching; love dominated his personality. Here, then, you have an ideal which is permanent, assuring mankind's continued progressive development. This unattainable ideal, complete personality integration, which is psychologically demanded, is found only in Jesus Christ. Barbour puts his conclusion in the form of a syllogism:[1]

1. Man needs an ideal of absolute perfection if he is to grow.

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1. Barbour: op.cit., p. 75

2. An objective standard must generate this ideal.

3. Christ is the only perfect objective standard.

4. Therefore, man's ideal must be fashioned after Christ.

In theological language the term sanctification is used to denote this process of progressive development toward Christ. The traditional theory of self-realization is thus proved to be inadequate psychologically. Christianity alone provides the absolute ego ideal demanded by the psychic constitution of man.

C. The Distinction Between Sin and Psychic Evil

Barbour is quick to distinguish between sin and psychic evil. The neurotic has failed to adapt himself to his environment, but the sinner is at odds with God. The neurotic has no choice, for he is mentally sick; but the sinner always decides for himself, his established habit being the result of a series of false choices.[1] It is true that psychic evil often results from sin but the two must never be confused. The sinner is psychologically free for there is no reason why perfect integration of the life in conformity to the ego ideal should not be accomplished. It only waits upon the choice of the individual to organize his sentiments about a master sentiment; failure so to integrate life about an ego ideal is sin. This ties right in with Christianity, if you posit the ego ideal as Christ. Sin is failure to live as Christ did, failure to organize

1. Cf. Barbour: op. cit., p. 90.

life about his ideal of perfect love. If you identify the ego ideal with the standard of perfection as revealed in Christ, then psychology and Christianity are one, describing the human and divine aspects of the same problem. This is Barbour's thesis.

D. The New Psychological Definition of Sin

Sin, then, is any deviation from the standard of absolute perfection as revealed in Christ. Here is an ideal, perfect Christ-likeness, which can be fully achieved only in eternity. Sin is "any transgression or lack of conformity to the standard of Christ,"[1] with the presupposition that Christ's life is the final and complete revelation of the will and law of God. Whether it be conscious or unconscious, any deviation from Christ's perfectly integrated life is sin. Here is a sound psychological interpretation of the Biblical doctrine of sin.

E. The Essence of Sin

Looking at the problem subjectively, Barbour defines sin as "putting the self above God. . . all sin is born of a feeling of self-sufficiency."[2] This is the essence of evil, the underlying cause of man's obvious

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1. Barbour: op.cit., p. 82
2. Ibid.: p. 112

failure to organize his life after the pattern established by Christ, who was the living embodiment of the law of God. Man, abusing his freedom, sets his own standard and rejects the God-given standard of Christ. Sin goes beyond mere selfishness, that is, the satisfaction of the pleasure principle, to self-sufficiency. Man, making himself a law unto himself, defies God.

F. An Identical Subjective Analysis

James Snowden, a much earlier writer than Barbour, presents an identical subjective analysis of the sin problem:

> "Sin is essentially selfishness, a perversion of self-love, which consists in putting the interests and passions of the self in the center and on the throne as the supreme principle of life. . . Man chooses his own will against God."[1]

Snowden uses the expression "law of God" in a way which identifies it with Barbour's"standard of Christ." Men sin when they aim at a lower mark of their own choosing and thus transgress the law of God through the seeking of their own will. But Snowden posits Christ as the one who completely fulfilled the law of God. Therefore, we can well supply "standard of Christ" for "law of God." Doing this, it is clear that the two are in complete agreement: sin is something positive, an activity of the human will, whereby man usurps the power of God and asserts himself as the supreme

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1. Snowden: op.cit., p. 109

authority. Sin is man putting himself in God's place, and thus failing at the crucial point of submission to pattern his life after the absolute standard of Christ who:

> ". . .existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man, and being in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross."[1]

G. A Summary of the New Psychological Interpretation

Barbour and Snowden present a psychological analysis of the nature of sin which is radically opposed to the traditional interpretation. Sin is not psychic evil, but is the activity of a responsible being who deliberately chooses the lower of two goods. Sin is not merely man's failure to adapt to his environment, but involves a second party, God, from whom man is separated by his sinning. The problem is raised from the human to the divine sphere. An objective standard replaces self-realization as the ideal. Viewed subjectively, sin is man's failure to integrate his life around the only adequate ego ideal, that is, perfect love as found in Christ. Viewed objectively, sin is conscious or unconscious deviation from the objective standard of perfection as revealed in Christ. Sin is man positing his self-sufficiency in defiance of God - man making himself God. Here is a psychological approach to the sin

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1. Philippians: 2:6-8

problem which is soundly Biblical, a thesis which will be verified by a comparison of this psychological analysis with the theological doctrine of sin.

PART THREE: THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION TO THE THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINE OF SIN

The plan of procedure in this section will be to present the Biblical idea of sin through a study of Scriptural terminology and its interpretation by theology, A. H. Strong[1] having been chosen as a representative theologian. The purpose is to demonstrate that the psychological analysis of Barbour and Snowden harmonizes perfectly with the theological doctrine of the nature of sin.

A. New Testament Terminology for Sin

One is startled by the variety of terminology in the New Testament for sin. W. Webster[2] lists no less than ten synonyms. The most frequent term is ἁμαρτία which implies a missing of one's aim or mark, and is applicable to all forms of sin, whether of thought or action. παράπτωμα is a "falling aside" whether from ignorance or negligence, and refers more particularly to the special act of sin.

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1. Strong: Systematic Theology
2. Webster: The Syntax and Synonyms of the Greek Testament, cited from the Greek Student's Monthly, July-August, 1937

παράβασις is an "over-stepping, a transgression." ἀνομία is translated "no law," that is, lawlessness. ἀδικία is "an unrighteous act." Sin is a missing of one's mark, a falling away, an over-stepping, a transgression of law, an unrighteous action. Let us first notice that in every one of the above instances there is implied a standard apart from man to which he must conform. His sin consists in failure to realize that given objective standard. It is evident, then, that Scripture denies the self-realization theory, the psychological inadequacy of which has already been demonstrated. The existence of an objective standard in this sin problem has been established both psychologically and Biblically. Sin arises through transgression of or lack of conformity to this standard.

B. An Identical Objective Standard

But what is this standard? Is there continued agreement between psychology and the Scriptures? Christian psychology defined the objective standard as that of absolute perfection as manifested in Christ, who is the final revelation of the will and law of God. Turning to the Bible we find that even in the Old Testament God is made the standard. This fact is clearly illustrated in the words of the Psalmist: "Blessed is the man against whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity."[1] With the

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1. Psalm 32: 2

New Testament, Christ, as the incarnate God, becomes the standard. He posits himself as the law's fulfillment: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law. . . I am come to fulfill."[1] The New Testament writers, following Christ's lead, judged him to be the revelation of the invisible God, and set him up as the standard: "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. . ."[2]; "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. ."[3] The final Biblical standard, then, is also the standard of Christ. It is true that theology defines this standard as the "law of God,"[4] but there is no real difficulty, for all truly Biblical theology proceeds to stipulate that Christ is the revelation of God's law of life. Theology and Christian psychology, then, are one in defining sin as deviation from the standard of absolute perfection in Christ.

C. The Theological Doctrine of Human Depravity

Is sin a state of the soul? This is a vital issue for theology. Can we justify this thesis psychologically? Let us first review the theological position of

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1. Matt: 5:17
2. Col.: 2:9
3. Phil.: 2:5
4. Salmond, S.D.F.: An Exposition of the Shorter Catechism, pp. 36, 56
   Strong: op.cit., p. 549

Augustus Strong. The root of sin lies beneath conscious volitions in a depraved state of the soul. The transgression of the standard of Christ, that is, the overt act, springs from an inherent lack of conformity to that standard. The acts issue from a twisted nature. The outward act is but the revelation of the inward condition. Sin is not only transgression of, but primarily lack of conformity to the standard of Christ.[1] All this seems to say is that behind the evil act is an evil-motivated individual, a fact universally recognized, even in our civil courts. A later study into Christian experience will further substantiate this statement. Moreover, the Biblical terminology for sin is applicable to states as well as to acts.[2] The doctrine of depravity, then, seems quite tenable. The common objection to this analysis of sin as a state of the soul is that it destroys man's freedom. But this is a false conclusion, for the character of the soul is itself determined by the choices of the individual. It is only through the accumulated effect of evil choices that the soul manifests an evil character. Character is formed only as man's choices are crystallized by repetition into habit. Depravity does not release man from responsibility; even in our civil courts, premeditated crime, springing from an evil disposition, is the most

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1. Strong: op.cit., pp. 549-550.
2. Ante, pp. 33-34

severely judged. The theological doctrine of a depraved human nature is unassailable, when rightly understood. No theologian would consider the soul wholly evil, that is, immune to the influence of the good. This may be, in fact, is, true of man apart from God; but alongside of the evil bent of the human will, there is also a divine power exerting the opposite influence. Apart from God man is evil, but there is also inherent in his nature that which will respond to the divine influence. If not, then Christianity has no reason for being. When rightly comprehended, then, theology's doctrine of sin as a state of the soul is an eternal verity.

What has psychology to say at this point? Sin was defined as any deviation from the standard of Christ, whether it be transgression of or lack of conformity to. The way is thus opened up for the theological doctrine of sin as a state out of which flow the specific evil acts. Whether it be the result of ignorance or done in the light of knowledge, deviation from the standard of Christ is sin. The doctrine of a depraved nature is but the spiritual parallel of the law of repression in the psychical realm.[1] A repression, whether it be conscious or unconscious, will prevent self-realization. Neuroses may result from repressions for which the individual has not been consciously

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1. Barbour: op.cit., p. 82

responsible. In like manner, a man who through ignorance of Christ, the true standard, fails to conform thereunto, is just as much a sinner as he who, knowing the standard, deliberately chooses to set his life according to a lower one. Sin includes "all the evil in the race that separates man from God. . ."[1] - conscious or unconscious deviation from Christ's life. The way is thus opened psychologically for theology's definition of sin as a "depravity of the affections and perversion of the will which constitutes man's inmost character."[2]

D. The Essence of Sin

When Strong turns to the subjective aspect of the sin problem, and seeks the motivating power explaining the existence of sin, he presents an analysis identical with that of Barbour and Snowden:

> "Sin is the selfish state of the will. . . that choice of a self as the supreme end which constitutes the antithesis of supreme love to God."[3]

The self is made the center of life; his own interest is the dominating force behind all man's actions, and his own will is the supreme basis of judgment. All sin is enmity

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1. Barbour: op.cit., p. 83
2. Strong: op.cit., p. 572
3. Ibid.: p. 567

against God. Love to God is the essence of virtue. The sinner follows just the opposite course and makes himself the supreme end. He is conscious of sin because he knows that he has been severed from his true self, God. Sin, then, is self-sufficiency, man usurping the power of God:

> "Instead of making God the center of his life, surrendering himself unconditionally to God and possessing himself only in subordination to God's will, the sinner makes self the center of his life, sets himself directly against God. . ."[1]

E. Summary

A psychological demonstration of the inadequacy of the purely naturalistic interpretation of the nature of sin, which approach dominates the field of psychology today, has been presented, and the Biblical doctrine of sin has been given a firm psychological basis. The Christian standard of absolute perfection has been shown to be the necessary complement of the traditional psychological interpretation of sin as personality maladjustment. A path of reconciliation between psychology and theology in the analysis of the sin problem has thus been advanced.

Sin roots itself in a depraved state of the soul out of which flow the overt evil acts. A depraved nature, constituting his inmost character, lies beneath man's

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1. Strong: op.cit., p. 572

sinful consciousness. All sin is committed against the person of God and establishes a barrier between man and God. The rigid demand which sin made, even on God, if its power were to be destroyed, will be developed more fully in a later chapter,[1] when the sin experience of the Christian is studied; for the vision of the Christ, the absolute standard of perfection, laying down his life to redeem a perverted race, is the heart of Christianity.

Sin is conscious or unconscious deviation from the standard of absolute perfection in Christ. Its essence is self-sufficiency. Man, putting himself in the place of God, rejects God's standard of life as revealed in Christ, and establishes his own standard. Sin is man deifying himself, man making God in his own image.

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1. Chapter III

CHAPTER II

A VERIFICATION OF THE NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE NATURE OF SIN THROUGH A STUDY INTO LITERATURE

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A VERIFICATION OF THE NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE NATURE OF SIN THROUGH A STUDY INTO LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we propose to approach the sin problem by a fresh path: through a study into the world's great literature. This will provide the first pragmatic test for the psychological interpretation of the nature of sin which has been established. Do the great seers of literature, who are genuine witnesses to the fundamental laws of life, agree with our analysis of sin as a depraved state of the soul, constituting man's inmost character, and leading him to reject God's standard of life as revealed in Christ and assert his self-sufficiency? Or is sin mental sickness, purely a matter of personality adjustment, the balancing of one's conscious impulses with his ego ideal?

It is universally acknowledged that the essence of great literature lies in its genuine interpretation of life; in order to live it must be true to the basal facts of human experience. Let us, then, hear the testimony of literary genius on our problem, for it crystallizes the

experiences of mankind. "A great book," says Dinsmore, "is the distillation of an epoch, the nectar of a civilization."[1] The insight of literary genius into the nature of sin is, then, most authoritative, and demands our immediate consideration. It is evident that the field of study must needs be greatly delimited, for the problem of sin is one of the great themes in literature, occupying the minds of all the great thinkers of the race. We propose to treat William Shakespeare, who, together with Homer and Dante, critics would agree, forms the first rank in the history of poetry; then, turning to the field of fiction we shall study Nathaniel Hawthorne, who ranks high in American literature as a portrayer of life. The purpose will be to discover the nature of sin as the literary genius sees it in the living world of men and women. Such an investigation will serve as a practical test of the validity of our psychological interpretation of the nature of sin.

PART ONE: SHAKESPEARE'S INTERPRETATION OF SIN

William Shakespeare is undoubtedly the greatest poet the English-speaking world has produced; yes, the vast majority of literary critics would agree with Augustus

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1. Dinsmore, Charles Allen: Atonement in Literature and Life, p. 8

Strong in crowning him "the poet laureate of the race."[1] Here is a genius who had a unique grasp on elemental human nature; he is a master in the creation of real characters, true to life. Who is better prepared than he to reveal to us the true nature of sin? Here is a common ground on which all will agree as a starting point for our inquiry. Shakespeare is "the poet of secular humanity."[2] He has no theological axe to grind, for his interest is only in the temporal, his vision never extending beyond into the eternal. His characters belong to this world and his one aim is to depict human nature. In this work he is surpassed by no other literary artist. His testimony, therefore, will be most authoritative, since it comes from one who has no particular religious prejudice but is simply creating character. We are to consider the nature of sin as it presented itself to him who is universally recognized as the poet supreme in the realm of secular life and character.

Despite the fact that Shakespeare had no particular religious interest to forward, nevertheless, it is apparent to anyone who makes a careful study of his plays that he accepted all the fundamental truths of Christianity. One fails to find any anti-Christian

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1. Strong: The Great Poets and Their Theology, p. 216
2. Burgess, William: The Bible in Shakespeare, p. vii

emphasis in his writings, whereas underlying all of them one senses a definitely Christian undercurrent. The work of this paper must necessarily be limited to an examination into his interpretation of the nature of sin as it is developed in his dramatic works.

A. The Freedom of Man

Shakespeare believed firmly in the freedom of the will. Man cannot dodge personal accountability. He is much more than the product of hereditary and environmental influences, being a free moral agent with the power to choose either the right or the wrong, and therefore himself responsible for the false choices which he makes. Henry V corrects the false notion of his soldiers that he as king is responsible for their actions, that ". . .if his cause be wrong, our obedience to the king wipes the crime of it out of us.":[1]

> "So, if a son, that is by his father sent about merchandise, do sinfully miscarry upon the sea, the imputation of his wickedness, by your rule, should be imposed upon his father that sent him: or if a servant, under his master's command, transporting a sum of money, be assailed by robbers, and die in many irreconciled iniquities, you may call the business of the master the author of the servant's damnation. But this is not so: the king is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers, the father of his son, nor the master of his servant; for they purpose not their death, when they purpose their services. . . Every subject's duty
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> . . . . . .

1. Henry V: 4:1:143

> is the king's; but every subject's soul is his own. Therefore, should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed, wash every mote out of his conscience; and dying so, death is to him advantage; . ."[1]

Suffolk testifies to individual responsibility when he confesses:

> "Faith, I have been a truant in the law;
> And never yet could frame my will to it;
> And, therefore, frame the law unto my will."[2]

B. Sin: The Abuse of Freedom

Sin enters when man abuses his God-given freedom. It is not a negative factor, that is, lack of complete personality integration, but a positive force - man falsely asserting his free will in opposition to God. Wolsey, in his advice to Cromwell, puts his finger on the root of all sin:

> "Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition:
> For by that sin fell the angels; how can
> Man, then, the image of his Maker, hope to win by it?"[3]

Sin is a disruption of the proper relation between God and man. Man refuses to recognize his state of dependence. One abuse of freedom provokes another more radical self-assertion, until finally man becomes a slave to evil. Macbeth and Richard III afford splendid illustrations of the

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1. Henry V: 4:1:160
2. Henry VIII: 3:2:440
3. I Henry VI: 2:4:7

process whereby man's nature is thoroughly perverted, so that he comes to love the evil instead of the good. Hear Malcolm's testimony, which was even more true in the case of Macbeth:

> "The King-becoming graces
> As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,
> Bounty, perseverence, mercy, lowliness,
> Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,
> I have no relish of them but abound
> In the division of each several crime,
> Acting in many ways. Nay, had I power,
> I should pour the sweet milk of concord into Hell, [1]
> Uproar the universal peace, confound all unity on earth."

C. The Essence of Sin

The ultimate issue of this abuse of free will is a self-deification. Man rebels against God:

> "Now God, delay our rebellion!
> As we are ourselves, what things are we -
> Merely our own traitors."[2]

and finally deifies himself:

> "Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye
> And all my soul, and all my every part;
> And for this sin there is no remedy,
> It is so grounded inward in my heart.
> Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,
> No shape so true, no truth of such account;
> And for myself mine own worth do define,
> As I all other in all worths surmount.
> But when my glass shows me myself indeed,
> Beaten and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity,
> Mine own self-love quite contrary I read:
> Self so self-loving were iniquity. . ." [3]

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1. Macbeth: 4:3:91
2. All's Well That Ends Well: 4:3:23
3. Sonnet 62

Man asserts his self-sufficiency in defiance both of God and his fellows. He usurps the very throne of God - this is the final outcome of sin.

D. Human Depravity

What has Shakespeare to say regarding the cause of this abuse by man of his freedom? Does sin root itself in a depraved state of the soul out of which issue the overt acts? Has human nature been perverted? One can cite innumerable passages which prove that Shakespeare believed firmly that the natural man is essentially depraved, that the image of God in him has been marred. There is a philosophical presentation of this great truth in "The Rape of Lucrece":

> "Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud?
> Or hateful cuckoos hatch in sparrows' nests?
> Or toads infect fair fruits with venom mud?
> Or tyrant folly lurk in gentle breasts?
> Or kings be breakers of their own behests?
> But no perfection is so absolute
> That some impurity doth not pollute."[1]

The two servant-clowns in "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" stress further Shakespeare's belief in congenital depravity. They are recounting the vices of women:

> "'Item: She is proud'
> 'Out with that too: it was Eve's legacy, and cannot be ta'en from her.'"[2]

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1. The Rape of Lucrece, line 848
2. Two Gentlemen of Verona: 3:1:341

Once again we read in"The Rape of Lucrece":

> "Guilty thou art of murder and of theft,
> Guilty of perjury and subornation,
> Guilty of treason, forgery and shift,
> Guilty of incest, that abomination;
> An accessory, by thine inclination,
> To all sins past, and all that are to come,
> From the creation, to the general doom."[1]

Human nature is tending away from God:

> "Our natures do pursue like rats that
> Raven down their proper bane
> A thirsty evil; and when we drink we die."[2]

This is Shakespeare's estimate of human nature. John Calvin put it mildly in comparison to the bard of Avon.

E. A Disruption of the Divine-Human Fellowship

A study into the workings of conscience in the experiences of the various characters is most revealing. Guilt attaches itself to man's sinning, despite his depravity. Sin is real; man's conscience reveals to him its objective reality, that it is a transgression of the divine will and must be punished. This is the only force preventing Hamlet from accomplishing his quietus "with a bare bodkin.":

> ". . .who would these fardels bare,
> To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
> But that the dread of something after death,
>
> . . . . . .

1. The Rape of Lucrece, line 918
2. Measure for Measure: 1:2:131

> The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
> No traveller returns, puzzles the will
> And makes us rather bear those ills we have
> Than fly to others that we know not of?
> Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all; . ."[1]

God is the other party in the sin problem. Henry V recognizes this fact, when, commenting on the failure of civil courts to bring men to justice, he says:

> "Now, if these men have defeated the law, and
> Outrun native punishment, though they can outstrip
> Men, they have no wings to fly from God."[2]

Sin involves the disruption of the fellowship between God and man. The conscience of King John makes this fact very clear to him, when he exclaims to Hubert, to whom he had issued the warrant for Prince Arthur's murder:

> "O, when the last account 'twixt heaven and earth
> Is to be made, then shall this hand and seal
> Witness against us to damnation!"[3]

Yes, sin is a stark reality - man's revolt against the divine will. So disruptive are its effects on the divine-human relationship, that divine action alone can forestall its awful consequences. Nothing man can do will avail, but God must take the initiative. He alone can provide an atonement:

> "Alas, alas!
> Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once;
> And He that might the vantage best have took,
> Found out the remedy." [4]

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1. Hamlet: 3:1:77
2. Henry V: 4:1:175
3. King John: 4:2:216
4. Measure for Measure: 2:2:72

Sin is so horrible that it exacted a supreme sacrifice, even of God. King Edward on his death bed is calmly trusting in the finished work of Christ:

> "I every day expect an embassage
> From my Redeemer to redeem me hence
> And more in peace my soul shall part to heaven
> Since I have made my friends at peace on earth."[1]

The blood of Christ alone suffices to free human nature from the accursed power of sin.

F. Summary

Such is Shakespeare's interpretation of the nature of sin. What a testimony from the world's genius in the creation of character! Here is one who has so vividly portrayed life that his characters are appealed to as living men. And he puts the weight of his authority with the Christian interpretation of sin. Approaching the problem from a purely secular angle, interested in man only as a creature of this world, whose true nature he seeks to portray, he makes an analysis of sin which coincides point for point with the psychological interpretation which has been established.

Sin, far from being mental sickness, man's failure in adapting himself to his environment, is rather man's abusing his God-given free will and bolting against his Creator. The natural outcome of this process is an apotheosis

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1. Richard III: 2:1:3

of the self in direct defiance of God, whereby man is completely severed from God, . Moreover, all mankind lies under this curse; the racial bloodstream has been tainted. Sin is so real a barrier between God and man that only God in Christ can restore man to the divine image which has been marred. Sin is not failure of self-realization, but a failure to realize God's ideal for man as revealed in Christ, the standard of absolute perfection. Christ came to remove the curse of sin under which mankind chafed, and thus to open the way for man's realizing the end for which he was created. This is Shakespeare's analysis of the nature of sin; whoever rejects such an interpretation, faces the denial of Shakespeare's genius as a portrayer of human nature.

PART TWO: HAWTHORNE'S INTERPRETATION OF SIN

Let us consider yet another literary interpretation of the nature of sin, this time in the field of the novel. Nathaniel Hawthorne is unquestionably the genius among American writers in this field; in fact, he has won for himself a high place among the world's great novelists. "The Scarlet Letter" and "The Marble Faun" assure for him first place in our literature as a creator of character; the former of these two books is considered by many literary critics as the most powerful work of fiction America

has produced. Once again, then, as was the case with Shakespeare, here is a master in the portrayal of real life, and we put to him the identical question: What is sin? Is it psychic evil, a failure of the personality to fully realize itself, or does sin transcend the human sphere, involving man's relationship to the divine? Our study into Hawthorne must necessarily limit itself to the two novels referred to above, which, however, represent the high point in the development of the literary skill of this illustrious son of New England. Both of these novels are masterful presentations of the awful reality of sin as it works itself out in the human soul. The theme ever dominant in Hawthorne's mind is the retributive workings of conscience.

A. The Scarlet Letter

a. The Path of Reconciliation

The reading of "The Scarlet Letter" is a most fascinating undertaking. Its characters seem to walk right out of its pages into the living world of men and women. The evident purpose of the author is to present the way by which the soul can find release from the stain of guilt. The ruggedness of the pathway upward is abundant evidence to the reality of sin for Hawthorne. Let us compare the experiences of the hero and heroine, Arthur Dimmesdale

and Hester Prynne, in purifying their souls from the sin of adultery. The path of reconciliation is well defined: it is the narrow way of genuine repentance leading to open confession and consequent reparation. Hester patiently pursued this course, but Arthur shrinks from it in cowardice.

b. The Need of Confession

Hester Prynne, while still a mere child, is deluded by a wealthy man many years her senior, who takes advantage of her inexperience and the financial reversals of her family, and carries her off with him to a foreign city. So inhuman is he that he deserts his young wife, sending her to America, promising to join her after he has further satiated his thirst for knowledge. In the new world Hester meets her true mate, a talented young clergyman, Arthur Dimmesdale. But the grim laws of Puritan society stood forever between these two lovers. The clergyman weakens under the great disappointment which thus rocked his very soul, and the marriage law is broken.

The book opens with the scene in the market place, where, before the righteous community of Boston, Hester makes her open confession on the scaffold, the scarlet letter embroidered upon her bosom. Dimmesdale cannot make his confession; fear and pride, together with his oath of silence made to Hester, sealed his lips. It is a most

dramatic scene where the clergyman eloquently pleads with his fellow-sufferer to betray the man who has wronged her, even for his own sake, that he might be spared the torture of carrying a guilty secret through life. The man in Dimmesdale bade him take his place on the scaffold with Hester, bearing his share of the guilt, even though it meant death; but his sensitive nature shrank back in fear. One victim has taken the vital step of confession, the other has refused. The development of the novel traces, on the one hand, the consequent restoration of the woman into the good will of the community, and, on the other hand, the consequent downfall of the man who is at the mercy of an outraged conscience. The key to the unfolding of the drama of these two lives lies in this issue of confession:

> "That night," says Hillis, "this daughter of suffering, sleeping in a dungeon, seemed the child of liberty, while Dimmesdale, who seemed a free man, became the bond-slave of sin and the prisoner of fear and remorse."[1]

c. The Disruption of the Divine-Human Fellowship

This, then, is Hawthorne's great thesis: the vital need of confession before sin can be forgiven. And what does this imply but that sin involves one's relationship to God and his fellows? It is not a merely subjective experience, a failure of the personality to properly integrate the conscious with the unconscious, for, then, confession

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1. Hillis, N. D.: Great Books as Life Teachers, pp. 101-102

would be superfluous. Dimmesdale is at odds with God. When Pearl, the baby born of their adultery, requests of him in that heart-rending night vigil at the scaffold to "stand here with mother and me tomorrow noon-tide," he answers:

> "Not so, my child; I shall indeed stand with thy mother and thee one other day, not tomorrow. At the great judgment day, then and there, before the judgment seat, thy mother and thou and I must stand together."[1]

What is more, the clergyman is separated from the community. Sin has not only a vertical but a horizontal outreach which has cut him off from his fellows. Listen to him when he is alone with Hester who is trying to comfort him with the argument that his good works are sufficient penance without open confession:

> "Of penance there has been none. Happy are you, Hester, that wears the scarlet letter openly upon your bosom. Mine burns in secret. Thou little knowest what a relief it is, after the torture of a seven years' cheat, to look into an eye that recognizes me for what I am. Had I one friend, or were it my worst enemy, to whom, when sickened with the praises of all other men, I could daily betake myself, and be known as the vilest sinner, methinks my soul might keep itself alive thereby."[2]

But he is deluding himself, for one friend is not sufficient; he could not rest until he was reconciled to the community. His thought of fleeing to the old world with Hester, his partner in crime, and there in new surroundings to begin

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1. Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter, p. 186
2. Ibid.: p. 230

life anew, was a self-deception. Peace came only when he stood on the scaffold and openly revealed his guilt. Baring the awful secret which wrangled in his bosom, he dies in triumph. There, in truth, the only place where he could escape from the power of Roger Chillingworth, but even more, from his own conscience, he exclaims: "Thanks be to him who hath led me hither. . . Let me make haste to take my shame upon me."[1] After humbly confessing, he gives his testimony to the awful power of sin to disrupt the peace of the soul: "Stand any here who question God's judgment on a sinner? Behold! behold, a dreadful witness to it!"[2]

d. The Need of Reparation

Turning to a survey of Hester Prynn's experience, we find that Hawthorne demanded even more than contrition and confession as the price of sin. Hester must make amends for her guilt by a righteous life; reparation is essential to reconciliation. Her adulterous act has shocked the moral sense of the community, and before she can be restored to its graces, she must prove by a pure and useful life that her contrition is genuine. This is the final step in Hester's path upward:

> "But there was a more real life for Hester Prynne here in New England. Here had been her sin, here her sorrow, and here was yet to be her penitence.

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1. Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter, p. 300
2. Ibid.: p. 302

> She had returned therefore and resumed - of her own free will, for not the sternest magistrate of that iron period would have imposed it - resumed the symbol of which we have related so dark a tale. But in the lapse of the toilsome, thoughtful, and self-devoted years that made up Hester's life, the scarlet letter ceased to be a stigma which attracted the world's scorn and bitterness, and became a type of something to be sorrowed over and looked upon with awe and yet with reverence. And as Hester had no selfish ends, nor lived in any measure for her own profit and enjoyment, people brought all their sorrows and perplexities and besought her counsel."[1]

How rugged is the pathway to forgiveness! Only by a life of sacrifice and faithfulness are the evil effects of Hester's transgression upon her own soul and the community overcome. Not only God, but society has now forgiven her.

e. Summary

Tracing in this general survey the course of reconciliation - contrition, confession, and a lifelong reparation - through which Hester must pass, one appreciates the awfulness of Hawthorne's conception of sin. To demand such a price sin must be a stark reality. Nowhere in literature can you find a more vivid presentation of the power of sin to disrupt man's relationship with God and his fellow men than in the workings of conscience in the soul of Dimmesdale. Like a blood-hound that pursues him into every phase of his life, sin infuses itself into every faculty of his being, even transforming his outlook on the natural

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1. Hawthorne: op.cit., p. 310

world. Sin is an objective reality which must be faced, placing upon the guilty one the rigid demands of repentance, confession and reparation before he can be reconciled to God and his fellow man.

B. The Marble Faun

In "The Scarlet Letter" Hawthorne's great emphasis on confession as essential to the forgiveness of sin was set forth. The rugged pathway of reconciliation established the objective reality of sin as a power disrupting the divine-human fellowship. Having made this general approach, let us now proceed to an examination of "The Marble Faun," a second of Hawthorne's masterpieces, for still another insight into the nature of sin, this time demonstrating that the novelist in his portrayal of guilt is reproducing dramatically the identical sin experience for which the psychological foundation was laid in the first chapter.

a. Synopsis

The plot of this novel is quite simple. Once again there is a young girl, Miriam, an artist, enslaved to a man who is morally corrupt. Her one hope of escaping from this monster lies in flight to Rome, where she can bury the past. There she meets Hilda, a fellow artist, the embodiment of angelic innocence, and Donatello, a simple, joyous creature, hardly human. Miriam, captivated by Donatello, is

sure she has found release. But it is not easy for her to escape her former lover, who dogs her steps to Rome and threatens to expose her, if she will not submit to him. The stage is thus set for a tragedy. Donatello, disturbed by the power which this monster exerts over Miriam, in a fit of rage and with a glance of approval from the girl, hurls him over a precipice. Hilda is an innocent witness to the crime. The remainder of the novel traces the outworkings of this foul deed in the souls of these three friends. Let us examine into the experiences here recorded to determine more specifically the subtle nature of sin.

b. Human Depravity

Sin produces a complete transformation in Donatello. The Faun, that simple and joyous creature, with "no conscience, no remorse, no burden on the heart, no dark future,"[1] no longer exists. As the two murderers descend from the old Tarpeian Rock, Miriam perceives that Donatello's form has dilated, his eyes blazing with the fierce energy which has suddenly inspired him. The Faun is now a man; sin has robbed him of his native innocence.

And what of Miriam's part in the crime? She had merely given Donatello a glance of the eye; yes, but that glance revealed a perverted nature which approved so foul

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1. Hawthorne: The Marble Faun, p. 28

a deed. Donatello forces her into a recognition of this fact: "I did what your eyes bade me do when I asked them with mine, as I held him over the precipice."[1] Yes, a wild joy had flamed up in her heart when she beheld her persecutor in peril; that for which she craved, and to which her being gave consent, was taking place.

> "Say that I have slain him against your will, . . . say that he died without your whole consent, and in another breath you shall see me lying beside him"[2]

pleads her lover. "Yes, you speak the truth," confesses Miriam, recognizing the depravity of her nature which for personal gratification has assented to so vile a deed. "My heart consented to what you did. . . We two slew yonder wretch."[3] It was Miriam's foul heart which executed the crime and cost Donatello his innocence. Immediately his fallen nature is bound to that of Miriam's. "The deed," sobs the woman, "knots us together for time and eternity, like the coil of a serpent. . . We draw one breath, we live one life."[4] A union has been cemented by blood. This is Hawthorne's vivid testimony to the reality of the Biblical doctrine of human depravity.

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1. Hawthorne: The Marble Faun, p. 203
2. Ibid.: p. 204
3. Ibid.: p. 205
4. Ibid.: p. 206

c. A Disruption of the Divine-Human Fellowship

What happens to the relationship between Hilda and Miriam as a result of the crime. Whereas sin bound Donatello and Miriam together, it establishes an impassable barrier between her and innocent Hilda. Sin far transcends the bounds of one's own personality and vitally influences one's relationship to God and society. Hilda affords the best example of the inroads which guilt makes into the soul's fellowship with God. She had had no hand whatsoever in the murder, but she had been a witness, though innocent, to the horrible affair. Her pure spirit shrank from revealing the guilty secret even to her dear friend, Kenyon, but the result was that it festered within her breast, robbing her of peace. Relief came only when she unburdened her spirit in a confessional; there she "poured out the dark story which had infused its poison into her innocent life,"[1] and her conscience ceased to torture her.

If such were the effects of sin in the God-consciousness of Hilda, what of Miriam and Donatello? This question is answered by an examination into the disruption which sin produced in the human fellowship between the two girls, for if one is at odds with his fellows, he cannot be at peace with God. The scene where the two meet for the

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1. Hawthorne: The Marble Faun, p. 408

first time after the murder is most revealing. Miriam, hoping against hope that she is still innocent in the eyes of Hilda, recognizes, nevertheless, that there is an essential cleavage between the two. Can she, in her guilt, still embrace her friend? No, for then she would stain Hilda. "I will never permit her sweet touch again. My lips, my hands, will never meet Hilda's more,"[1] she sadly complains. At the approach of Miriam, Hilda puts forth her hands forbidding any further advance, and

> ". . .Miriam at once felt a great chasm opening itself between the two. They might gaze at one another from the opposite side, but without the possibility of ever meeting more. There was even a terror in the thought of their meeting again. It was as if Hilda or Miriam were dead, and could no longer hold intercourse without violating a spiritual law."[2]

Despite Miriam's plea that Hilda befriend her in her needy condition, the maiden, pleading her own possibility of falling, exclaims:

> "I am a poor, lonely girl whom God has set here in an evil world, and given her only a white robe and bid her wear it back to him as pure as when she put it on. Your powerful magnetism would be too much for me. The pure, white atmosphere in which I tried to discern what things are good and true would be discolored. And therefore, Miriam, before it is too late, I mean to put faith in this awful heart-quake which warns me to avoid you."[3]

What a dramatic presentation of the fact of the power of sin to work havoc in the world of human relations, pitting

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1. Hawthorne: The Marble Faun, p. 238
2. Ibid.: p. 241
3. Ibid.: p. 243

friend against friend because it disrupts their fellowship as sons of God.

Yet one more intimate glimpse into the experience of Donatello to see the terrific power which sin wields in the individual life, infusing itself into every faculty of one's being. There seems to be never a moment of release from its fearful control. Every experience in life throws up to the Faun his guilt. Years after the crime, Kenyon and Donatello, on their leisurely journey to Rome to meet Miriam, spend much of their time visiting in the cathedrals. Kenyon, an art student, is attracted by the beauty of these edifices, while Donatello spends his time kneeling before the altar. The two men are gazing up at one of the stained glass windows. Kenyon is so inspired that he is led to criticize Milton, who speaks of the "dim" religious light transmitted through painted glass. If he had seen these Italian cathedrals, thought the sculptor, he would surely have altered that word, using a descriptive term which would make the dimness glow "like a million of rubies, sapphires, emeralds and topazes."[1] "Is it not so with yonder window?" he inquires of Donatello. "The pictures are most brilliant in themselves yet dim with tenderness and reverence, because God himself is shining through them."[2] But Donatello's reaction is quite the reverse of Kenyon's:

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1. Hawthorne: The Marble Faun, p. 351
2. Ibid.: p. 351

> "The pictures fill me with emotion, not such as you seem to experience. I tremble at those awful saints, and most of all, at the figure above them. He glows with divine wrath."[1]

The sculptor remonstrates with his friend for having transmuted the expression of the figure which is clearly an emotion of love. "To my eyes," answers Donatello, "it is wrath, not love; each must interpret for himself."[2] Sin has completely warped Donatello's outlook on life, shaping every experience into its mould.

d. Summary

In "The Scarlet Letter" and "The Marble Faun" Hawthorne has traced the disruptive power of sin in the human soul, whereby man is set at war with himself, his fellows and God. No aspect of life escapes its subtle influence. The ruggedness of the pathway upward, leading as it does through contrition, confession and reparation, is abundant evidence to the awful reality of sin.

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1. Hawthorne: The Marble Faun, p. 351
2. Ibid.

PART THREE: CONCLUSION

A. Summary

Shakespeare and Hawthorne have afforded us an insight into the nature of sin as it reveals itself to the literary genius who is a recognized interpreter of the experiences of the human soul. Aiming only to portray life asthey see it, these great students of human nature find that, if they are to be true to the facts of life, they must present the awful reality of sin. And the picture which they have thrown upon the canvas for us in their dramatic tragedies is a vivid replica of the Biblical doctrine of sin, the psychological adequacy of which has already been demonstrated.

Shakespeare paints in large letters, developing great tragic settings, whereas Hawthorne traces the subtle windings of sin whereby it permeates into every aspect of life. But the analysis of the two is identical. Sin is not mental sickness, but it is the activity of a free moral agent, deliberately choosing the wrong because of a corrupted nature. Far from being purely a subjective experience of personality maladjustment, the effects of sin are far-reaching. Sin involves the separation of man from God, a cleavage so strong that only the divine could make atonement. Sin cuts man off from his fellows and requires strict reparation for forgiveness, even in the sphere of human relations.

The final outcome of man's abuse of his freedom is a self-deification. Man rejects the God-given standard of conduct and becomes the judge of his own action. The essence of sin is self-sufficiency: a corrupted human nature, defying God and society, sets itself up as absolute.

B. Generalization

Shakespeare and Hawthorne are in no sense exceptions to the rule. One could compile a long list of literary notables who take their place with these two men in portraying the awful reality of sin: Dante, Browning, Tennyson, Dickens, Eliot. Literary genius, whether it be in the field of the drama, or of poetry, or of the novel, finds sin in its stark reality implanted deep in the experience of the human soul. True to the facts of life, the literary artist must face the problem of sin. Witness the fact that this great theme has at one time or other occupied the minds of all the world's great thinkers. Eugene O'Neil and Henrik Ibsen are modern witnesses to the truth of this generalization. Ibsen, one of Scandinavia's few truly great literary artists, demonstrates in his life as well as his works the power of sin.[1] There was a fall in his youth, an act of adultery with a servant girl, from which Ibsen's conscience never found release. His life is

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1. Norborg, Sv.: Varieties of Christian Experience, pp.106-08

one long record of the attempt to escape the consequences of guilt, and his literary productions[1] are abundant testimony to the utter futility of such a course of action. His characters, "Brand" and "Peer Gynt" represent the dramatization of his own experience of the bitterness of unforgiven sin. There can be no cleansing of a guilty conscience except through the grace of God. All attempts to flee from him are futile. Ibsen saw the path of reconciliation, but as far as we know, he never pursued it, and died never having accepted God's mercy. His tragic life presents an awful verification of the basic fact illustrated in his works, that all great literature, being true to human experience, cannot escape the power of sin to separate man from God.

C. Challenge

Modern psychology, then, with its interpretation of sin as psychic evil - a problem of the adjustment of the personality to its environment - must be prepared to say that literary genius is mistaken in its interpretation of human nature. This is a serious dilemma with which to be faced. The wiser course is to accept the Biblical doctrine of sin, which has been psychologically grounded, and to the truth of which literature has clearly testified.

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1. Ibsen: Brand and Peer Gynt

CHAPTER III

A VERIFICATION OF THE NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE NATURE OF SIN THROUGH A STUDY INTO CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

There is yet another pragmatic test which can be applied to our psychological interpretation of the nature of sin: the evidence provided by an examination into the sin experience of the Christian believer. What is the testimony of the Christian as he recounts his experience with sin? Is he at odds with another personality, God, or is he suffering purely from personality disintegration which is preventing him from complete self-realization? Does he feel that the general direction of his life is tending toward evil? That his sinful acts are but the evidence of a perverted nature? Does sin finally resolve itself in the Christian's experience into self-sufficiency: a rejection of the God-given standard of life in Christ for self-deification? The answer to these questions will give us a second positive test of the validity of our analysis of the nature of sin.

The procedure in this chapter will be, first, to make a general approach to the subject through an examination into E. D. Starbuck's study of the nature of the conversion experience in his "The Psychology of Religion."

H. E. Warner in his "Psychology of the Christian Life" will provide still another survey of the whole field, but as the title of his book suggests, he is not attempting to cover the whole field of the psychology of religion, but rather limits himself to the phenomena of the Christian life. These men will give us the results of scientific investigations into a wide range of conversion data which they have carefully selected. As to Starbuck's interpretation of the facts, more will be said in the course of the discussion. Then, turning from the general to the specific, the next task will be a consideration of the sin experience of two of the great saints of the Christian church: Augustine and Wesley, the former of whom has unburdened his soul in his "Confessions," the latter in his "Journal." With this work completed we shall then be ready to judge our psychological interpretation of the nature of sin in the light of Christian experience.

PART ONE: TWO PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES OF THE CONVERSION EXPERIENCE

A. Starbuck's Survey

Toward the close of the last century, Professor Starbuck of Leland Stanford Junior University, made a comparative study of the conversion experience, which, to all appearances, bears the earmarks of a truly scientific study.

His method was to send out a list of questions to all available persons, without reference to their profession, education, etc., the only requirement being that they believed themselves to be describing an event which was a real turning point in life. He thus obtained data from people of all walks of life, with most varying religious experiences, from the quiet to the violently emotional. Information full enough to be included in the survey was received from 192 of those solicited. The picture of conversion which results can thus be considered fairly representative, as far as this is possible of achievement. The criticism which must be made of Starbuck is that, after his careful investigation, he abandons the scientific approach, and proceeds to give a dogmatic interpretation of the facts.

a. A Disruption of the Divine-Human Fellowship

The fourth chapter of his book is a summary of the motives and forces leading to conversion. He finds eight groupingsof motives:[1] fear, self-regard, altruism, the following out of a moral ideal, remorse and conviction of sin, response to teaching, example and imitation, social pressure. Response to teaching and altruistic motives are the least prominent, while fear and conviction of sin are very frequent. What can be drawn from this generalization

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1. Starbuck: The Psychology of Religion, pp. 49-51

as to motive? If fear and remorse are the dominant motives leading to conversion, then a personality is implied as the object on which the sense of sin fastens itself. The sinner fears a higher power whom he has offended. Afraid to face God, he is filled with remorse at the thought of unforgiven sin. "Had I died, I had no hope, only eternal loss"; "I feared God's punishment"; "My sins were very plain to me; I thought myself the greatest sinner in the world.":[1] these are typical testimonies. One's true self or his fellow man may serve as objects, but if so, only provisionally, for ultimately the sense of sin attaches itself to God. One's idea of God, which varies all the way from a vague conception of a higher power to a clear idea of God as revealed in Christ, will determine the intensity of one's fear and remorse. But, nevertheless, God is always the final object, and every man, in varying degrees of intensity, proportionate to the extent to which he has grasped the truth of God, is conscious of having violated the law of life of the supreme being. The sin problem involves a personal relationship between man and God.

b. Human Depravity

Starbuck is careful to state that the pre-conversion experience of conviction which immediately

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1. Starbuck: The Psychology of Religion, pp. 49-51

precedes the new life, varies with each individual according to his native temperament and his environmental background, and includes as wide a variety of experiences as

> "conviction for sin proper; a struggle after the new life; prayer and calling on God; a sense of estrangement from God; doubts and questionings; the tendency to resist conviction; depression and sadness; restlessness; anxiety and uncertainty; helplessness and humility; earnestness and seriousness; and the various bodily affections."[1]

This wide variety in the shades of experience is due to two factors:[2] the temperament of the individual and the change of life which dominates his consciousness, whether it be the old or the new. In the first case there is a scale ranging from the experience of estrangement from God on the part of the passive temperament to that of an earnest desire for a better life which characterizes the active personality. Where the ideal life is primary in consciousness the experience is that of resistance to conviction; but, if the sinful life is dominant, then sadness and depression result. But despite such a variety, the predominating experiences are depression, sadness, restlessness and resistance of conviction; in other words, the sinful life, rather than the ideal life, is the prime factor. This evidence throws weight on the reality of the life of sin from which man is struggling to release himself. As Starbuck generalizes, the distinctive experience is the

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1. Starbuck: op.cit., p. 58
2. Ibid.: p. 59

sense of sin:

> "The result of an analysis of these different shades of experience coincides with the common designation of this pre-conversion state in making the central fact in it all the sense of sin, while the other conditions are various manifestations of this, as determined, first, by differences in temperament, and second, by whether the ideal life or the sinful life is vivid in consciousness."[1]

This is weighty evidence in support of the doctrine of the perversion of human nature, especially when Starbuck further states that not only is this sense of sin the result of bad training and immoral living, but shows itself very prominently in those who have lived decently. Therefore, it cannot be said that this sense of sin is developed in the individual by conscious evil doing. Can it be that there is within the human consciousness the realization of an essential cleavage between the divine and the human? Of course, Starbuck is not the one to give a spiritual interpretation of this phenomenon, but rather looks for organic disturbances as underlying the sense of sin in the lives of "good" folk. He is free to make his own assumption on the given data, but must admit that his survey has led right to the threshold of the Christian doctrine of sin as a disease which has sidetracked the human race.

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1. Starbuck: op.cit., p. 58

c. The Essence of Sin

There is yet another point of essential agreement between the conclusions of Starbuck and our theory of sin. He lays great stress on the surrendering of the will in the conversion experience. The transitional process whereby the new life is attained was described in seven different ways:[1] self-surrender, determination, forgiveness, the help of a divine power, public confession, spontaneous awakening, and the feeling of oneness with God. Dividing his subjects into those of active and passive temperament, he proceeds to ascertain the relative frequency of these various types in each of the two cases. Determination had by far the lowest rating, proving that the expenditure of effort plays little part in the transition; on the other hand, self-surrender and forgiveness, both involving a definite yielding of the personal will, were most prominent. Nor was this the case with those of passive temperaments only, but also with those of active dispositions. With this latter group, one would expect determination to play a real part in the crisis, but, strange to say, the element of self-surrender was even more frequent here than among the passive types. Whether the sinful or the ideal life is dominant in consciousness, self-surrender is the vital factor:

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1. Starbuck: op.cit., pp. 90-93

> "At the crisis in conversion, no matter whether or not the will has been definitely exercised [and he does not say that the will is valueless in the process of conversion, for, in the method of spontaneous awakening, an essential striving after the new life precedes its dawning on the soul] , and regardless of the direction in which it has been exercised, it is an important step toward spiritual regeneration that the personal will be given up."[1]

Sin, then, must be something positive, that is, the false assertion of the will. It is man positing his self-sufficiency in defiance of God. Abusing his moral freedom, man sets up his own standard for life. If he is to find peace, he must again submit his will to the higher will of his creator.

d. Criticism

This study of Starbuck's has produced valuable objective evidence in support of the Christian doctrine of sin. Starbuck is far from agreeing with us in this interpretation of the facts of his survey. His conclusion is that conversion is a normal experience of adolescence involving no supernatural element whatsoever. Conversion is nothing but theology's

> "crystallizing the central facts of adolescent life, namely, spontaneous awakening and storm and stress, into a dogma whereby the period of stress is shortened and intensified as the person is brought to a definite crisis."[2]

This is a purely naturalistic interpretation of the facts,

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1. Starbuck: op.cit., p. 99
2. Ibid.: p. 224

which identifies God with the nervous system; but, as Norborg[1] points out, Starbuck is guilty of dogmatic falsification of the facts. In seeking to answer the question of the origin of the conversion experience, he is forsaking the scientific attitude which he maintained during the survey, and is now dogmatically asserting that "psychology holds the key to reality,"[2] whereas the proper attitude would be "agnostic, . . the confession that psychology cannot answer the question as to the origin of Christian experience, whether it be natural or supernatural."[3] As far as the scientifically conducted survey is concerned, it is evident that Starbuck's results fit in perfectly with the Christian interpretation of the origin of sin. Starbuck is free to give his own interpretation of the data, but ought not to set it forth as scientific fact.

B. Warner's Survey

The field of study now limits itself from Starbuck's general psychological approach to Dr. Warner's study of Christian experience and character. The writer makes no attempt to go beyond the phenomena of the Christian life, but within this special field of inquiry is well qualified to speak. Dr. John R. Mott, in introducing this book to the public, is high in

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1. Norborg: Varieties of Christian Experience
2. Ibid.: p. 178
3. Ibid.

his praise of Warner, who, he says, is "at once thoroughly evangelical and modern,"[1] and gives us a treatment of the psychology of the Christian life which is "genuinely scientific in method and spirit."[2] Having devoted his life to the work of the Christian ministry, Warner has had the fullest opportunities for observing the varying phenomena of Christian life and experience, and is prepared in a way that the secular psychologist can never hope to be, to give us first-hand information in the field of Christian experience. What is his diagnosis of the nature of sin? He is in full agreement with the psycho-analysts in their claim that the great task of psychology is to study into the relationship between the two great regions of psychical life: the conscious and the unconscious. Adopting the methods of psycho-analysis, he seeks to place the various states of Christian experience in this psychological framework of the interchange between the conscious and unconscious, and thus vindicate psychologically the claims of Christianity. Our interest is in his treatment of the phenomenon of conversion, but a review of the states antecedent thereunto is essential for a complete picture.

a. The Essence of Sin

Warner traces the development of a child reared

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1. Warner: The Psychology of the Christian Life, p. 13
2. Ibid.: p. 14

in a typical Christian environment.[1] The Holy Spirit, working in the unconscious mind, produces in the child's consciousness a predisposition toward the Gospel. The result is an intellectual assent to its truth as the divine revelation of the plan of salvation for mankind. This natural inclination on the part of the child toward the facts of the Christian message is recognized by every thoughtful student of child life. The point to notice, however, is that until the practical test comes as to whether or not the child will consent to the authority which, his conscience tells him, this divine truth rightfully claims on his life, there is really no significance in his native predisposition. Here is where sin enters, that is, when the child, faced with a duty which he knows his assent to the Gospel requires of him, refuses to go through with the act of obedience. But what is this but the human will defying God, even in the child, a self-apotheosis?[2] Human nature, displaying its natural bent away from God, consciously rejects his known will. The process whereby this state of sin emerges in the consciousness of the child can be traced through temptation, which arises when the child's desires conflict with his Christian training, to the actual decision of the will to reject the divine command, despite the pleading of the

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1. Warner: op.cit., p. 66 ff.
2. Ibid.: p. 78

Spirit of God which the child stubbornly resists. The emphasis throughout is that there is a positive act of the will whereby the soul deliberately chooses to follow a course which is contrary to the divine leading in the given situation.

b. A Disruption of the Divine-Human Fellowship

The outcome of such a course of action, with its inevitable repetition, is the development in the consciousness of a sense of sin, that is, the knowledge that the act of disobedience has disturbed the relationship of the child with God whose law has been broken. This guilt involves the severing of a personal fellowship formerly enjoyed. By exerting his own will in defiance of what he knew by his previous training was the will of God, the child has cut himself off from divine favor, and he knows it. The reality of his disapproval before God is clearly evidenced in the strong feeling of self-condemnation which beclouds his life.[1] He knows he is failing to conform his life to the principles of the Christ whose divine claims he acknowledges, and he stands condemned for the rejection of duty. Such is the real sin experience through which the youth passes, who brought up under the influence of the Christian Gospel, consciously rejects its divine claims. Perhaps all of our Christian youth can testify more or less

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1. Warner: op.cit., p. 82

clearly to an experience similar to that described here, depending on the extent to which each has drifted into the path of disobedience. The writer can witness to the validity of this analysis of the positive nature of the sin experience in Christian youth, for his background and training place him within the class here described.

And now for a consideration of the actual conversion experience of this typical Christian youth whose spiritual development we are tracing. Reared in a Christian atmosphere, he has, by repeated acts of disobedience, become fairly well entrenched in the sinful life. How is he to find release from the condemnation which hangs over him because of his deliberate transgression of God's will? Warner's main thesis is that "the sense of sin, when once it has become clearly defined in consciousness, if ever removed, entails psychic cataclysm,"[1] the intensity of the cataclysm being directly proportional to the vividness of the consciousness of guilt. Warner is quick to point out the infinite variety in the crisis experience, its exact nature depending upon many factors which vary with each individual. Nevertheless, his wide study in this field has led him to the conclusion that in every case there is a definite series of states comprising this experience. Let us follow in survey fashion his description of the

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1. Warner: op.cit., p. 85

psychical activity which takes place in the typical Christian experience of release from the power of guilt, noting carefully any further light which may be thrown on the analysis of the nature of sin.

The consciousness of the individual who has persistently rejected the activity of the Spirit of God soon reaches the stage where it is deaf to any appeal for a reformation. Therefore it is evident that the initiative producing the needed cataclysm can only come from beyond the limits of consciousness. Consequently, the realm of the unconscious now comes into prominence,[1] for out of the unconscious there arises in a new and powerful way the dormant sense of sin which had apparently been thrust out of the conscious life. It comes back with a new dynamic which upsets the entire field of conscious activity. How this takes place cannot be humanly explained. What can it be but the Holy Spirit, performing his great work of conviction, through the instrumentality of the unconscious life? The point to notice is that sin is revealed in all its vileness as a cancer eating out the very heart of the spiritual life, and robbing man of fellowship both with God and his fellows. The maladjustment of personality is rooted in the deeper fact that there has been a deliberate defiance of the law of God. At last the youth realizes that all he has accomplished by his disobedience is the

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1. Warner: op.cit., p. 88

destruction of his own inner peace. He has brought on himself the just condemnation of God, and is helpless to atone for his sin. The Holy Spirit has taken the sense of guilt, which he thought he had gotten clear of, and has lifted it out of the unconscious into the conscious mind, where it tortures the victim as never before. The personal aspect of the guilt now comes into the foreground of consciousness as never before. "Against Thee, and Thee only, have I sinned,"[1] is the agonizing cry of a soul out of proper relationship with its creator, and consequently, with all his creation.

This unconscious working of the Holy Spirit within the sinner produces a conscious state of deep conviction, which again varies greatly with individuals, depending on the particular aspect of sin which is made focal, which may be, for example, the vileness of the guilt, which leads one to loathe himself; or again, the remorse of sin, which Hawthorne so vividly portrayed in Dimmesdale; or the emphasis may be on the awful effects of sin, resulting finally in a demoralization of personality. Be the emphasis where it may, you have in this state of conviction the central point in the whole process of conversion,[2] from which issues the act of repentance in which the soul, in true contrition, seeing the accursed nature of

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1. Psalm 51:4
2. Warner: op.cit., p. 96

sin, definitely determines to renounce it, and humbly fleeing to God, finds pardon for the past and strength to dedicate his life to the new task of building the kingdom of God. And the heart of this intense conviction is a personal experience of maladjustment with God, through the deliberate abuse of free will, whereby man establishes his self-sufficiency. Sin is self-deification, and is only resolved through a surrendering of the will.

c. Summary

This survey of Warner's into the phenomena of Christian experience allies itself with the findings of Starbuck in demonstrating from yet another angle, but with a note of no uncertain sound, the psychological validity of the Christian doctrine of sin. The psycho-analysts have been met upon their own ground: their work has been to label the various phases of the process whereby the Spirit of God works in the soul of man. The various mental states which psycho-analysis describes have been shown to have their spiritual counterparts in Christian experience.

PART TWO: THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF TWO GREAT CHRISTIANS

Changing the method of approach in this study into the Christian's experience of sin from the general to the specific, let us examine into the personal testimony of two of the outstanding figures in the history of the church of Christ: Augustine, the great Catholic saint, and Wesley, the founder of Methodism. These two men, standing as they do poles apart from each other in temperament and background, nevertheless, in their introspections, give us identical descriptions of the nature of sin.

A. Augustine

Aurelius Augustinus was born in the year 354 A.D. near Carthage, the capital of the African province of the Roman Empire. After his early training in the University of Carthage, he removed to Italy where he assumed the professorship of rhetoric in Milan University, and made the acquaintance of Bishop Ambrose, a great Christian scholar. In the year 387, Augustine, after an intense and extended struggle, forsook the life of vice which had bound him from youth, and became a devoted servant of the Lord. The remainder of his days were spent in Africa where he served the church as priest, and later as bishop, in the see of

Hippo. In his "Confessions" he presents us with a careful exposition of the workings of his own heart, as he traces the course of his early life and conversion. In these pages is revealed "the life-blood of a master spirit,"[1] whose testimony cannot be neglected.

a. The Psychological Validity of His Testimony

The first thing which strikes one when he opens this book is that here are words addressed directly to God. There is no question in Augustine's mind as to the reality of God in this sin problem: "What, then, have I to do with men, that they should hear my confessions, as if they could heal all my infirmities?"[2] This man is holding an intimate conversation with the Infinite. Moreover, the sense of divine forgiveness from the awful bondage in which sin held him is so real in his consciousness that he is bold to tell it openly, in the hope of aiding others, but more particularly that the grace of God may be made more sweet to his own soul:

> "Let the arrogant mock me, and such as have not been, to their soul's health, stricken and cast down by Thee, O my God; but I will still confess to Thee mine own shame in Thy praise. Suffer me, I beseech Thee, and give me grace to go over in my present remembrance the wanderings of my forepassed time, and to offer unto Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving."[3]

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1. McDougall, Eleanor: St. Augustine, a Study in His Personal Religion, p. 6
2. Augustine: Confessions, Book X:3
3. Ibid.: IV:1

This obviously complete release from the fear, both of his past life and the taunts of unbelievers, is strong psychological evidence for the validity of the experience which he proceeds to describe for us.

b. Human Depravity

A study into the early books of the "Confessions" reveals Augustine's deep insight into human nature. Beginning with his early childhood, he traces the gradual outworking in his life of a corrupted nature. In infancy there appears the inclination to evil:

> "Little by little I became conscious where I was, and to have a wish to express my desires to those who would gratify them, and I could not; for the desires were within me, but they were without; nor could they by any sense of theirs enter within my mind. So I used to fling about my limbs and voice, making the few signs I could, to express my desires, though they expressed them poorly enough. And when they were not complied with, whether because they were not understood or were injurious, then I grew indignant with my elders for not submitting to me and took my vengeance on them with tears."[1]

Augustine then proceeds, and correctly, to the generalization that this ego-centricity is truly descriptive of all infants. Self-sufficiency raises its proud head even in the little child, whose world revolves around himself as center.

As the child advances into boyhood, this perverted nature expresses itself in an ever-increasing stream of positive acts of transgression:

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1. Augustine: Op.cit., Book I:6

> "Such were the moral surroundings among which I lay, unhappy, in boyhood. . .These things I speak and confess to Thee, my God, for which I had praise from them in whose pleasure I then thought honorable life to consist. For I saw not the abyss of vileness wherein I was cast away from Thine eyes. For in them what could be more foul than I already was, since I was offensive even to such as myself? With innumerable lies deceiving my tutors and masters, my parents, from love of play, eagerness to see vain shows and restlessness to imitate stage plays? Thefts also I committed from my parents' cellar and table that I might have to give to boys who sold me their play. In play I often sought to win by cheating, and what could I so ill put up with, or, when I found out, did I denounce so fiercely as that very thing which I was doing to others, and for which, found out, I was denounced."[1]

How genuine a picture of boyhood life! As one reads he feels that he is participating in the life story which Augustine is here laying bare.

But, says the humanist, such action by the boy is but the display of childish innocence, and does not entail moral evil. Leave the child alone and he will soon outgrow it. But not so for Augustine, who saw in this childish obstinacy a germ out of which spring all the gross crimes of which men are guilty:

> "And is this the innocence of youth? Not so, Lord; I cry Thy mercy, O my God. For these very sins, as riper years succeed, these very sins are transferred from tutors and masters, from nuts and balls and sparrows, to magistrates and kings, to gold and manors and slaves, just as severer punishments displace the cane. It was the stature, then, of childhood which Thou, our King, didst command as an emblem of humility, when Thou said'st: 'Of such is the kingdom of God.'"[2]

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1. Augustine: op.cit., Book I:19
2. Ibid.: Book I:19

c. A Disruption of the Divine-Human Fellowship

In the second book Augustine demonstrates the truth of the above thesis in his own experience, that is, that as the mind matures, sin increases in intensity. Human nature, unrestrained, is proceeding to its natural issue. The lusts to which he succumbs are those of the flesh:

> "I desire to call to mind my past foulness and the carnal corruptions of my soul, recalling my most wicked ways in the bitterness of my remembrance, that Thou mayest grow sweet unto me. What was it that I delighted in but to love and be beloved; but out of the muddy desire of the flesh and the overflow of youth, mists were given off which clouded and overcast my heart, so that the clear brightness of love could not be distinguished from the fog of lust. . . I boiled over in my fornications and sank in an abyss of shame."[1]

The final outcome is a complete alienation from the good, a hating of the good and a loving of the evil, even for its own sake. Augustine had consciously surrendered himself to the power of evil, even as had Macbeth and Richard III. This is the climax of the process of estrangement from God, and release from this awful dominance of sin can come only by a divine act. The grace of God in Christ is the only remedy; the initiative must come from the divine side, for man by his own choosing has made himself a slave:

> "I will love Thee, O Lord, and give thanks unto Thee, and confess Thy Name, because Thou hast forgiven me these so great and wicked deeds of mine. To Thy Grace I impute it, and to Thy mercy that Thou hast

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1. Augustine: op.cit., Book II:1,2

> melted away my sins, as it were ice. To Thy grace also I impute that some evil which I have left undone; for what might I not have done, who even loved a sin for its own sake? . . What man is there who conscious of his own infirmity, dares to ascribe his chastity and innocency to his own strength, as though Thy mercy had been the less necessary for him, through whose aid it was that he was not sick or rather less sick."[1]

The power of sin to cut man off from God is so acute that a divine activity must destroy it before a reconciliation can be consummated. This work was done by Christ, "that Mediator between God and Man who appeared betwixt mortal sinners and the immortal Just One."[2] Sin had so thoroughly disrupted God's creation that even he could not remove it except at the supreme cost.

d. The Essence of Sin

In examining into the conversion of Augustine, especially the period of intense stress which immediately preceded his great release, one finds abundant evidence for describing it psychologically as a conflict of wills. The heart of the matter lies in his refusal to renounce ambition and unchastity and yield his own will to the will of God. Defying God he persists in asserting his self-sufficiency, and, only after a long and painful battle against God, does he finally submit himself.

The incident which finally precipitated his con-

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1. Augustine: op.cit., Book II:7
2. Ibid.: Book X:43

version was the visit from a certain Pontitianus who related to Augustine and his friend, Alypius, the complete self-renunciation practiced by certain monks, especially St. Anthony, who had literally forsaken all for Christ. While Pontitianus was yet speaking, Augustine was deeply challenged by the Holy Spirit who

> ". . .did'st turn me around toward myself, taking me from behind my back where I had placed myself, unwilling to observe myself; and setting me before my face, that I might see how foul I was, how crooked and defiled, bespotted and adulterous."[1]

He must now face his past life from the reality of which he had been fleeing. Contrasting himself with those who had resigned themselves wholly to the Lord, he comes to abhor himself. Thinking back over the past, he recalls that he too had cherished the Christ-like life, but self-will prevented his seeking after it. "Give me chastity and continency," he had prayed, "only not yet."[2] He was not willing to surrender the lusts of the flesh which such a life demanded. "For I feared that Thou should'st hear me soon, and soon cure me of the disease of concupiscence which I wished to have satisfied, rather than extinguished."[3] Self had held complete sway heretofore, but now self faced God and a terrific battle ensued. There no longer remained any excuse for not yielding, and yet, despite the scourges

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1. Augustine: op.cit., Book VIII:7
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

of condemnation with which he lashed his will, it resisted:

> "For not to go only, but to go in thither was nothing else but to will to go, but to will resolutely and thoroughly, not to turn and toss, this way and that, a maimed and half-divided will, struggling, with one part sinking as another rose."[1]

This is very clearly a conflict of wills. The world is still too dear for him to give it up. Consequently, his allegience is divided, and he does not will entirely and, therefore, as he testifies:

> "I was at strife with myself and rent asunder by myself and this rent befell me against my will, and yet indicated, not the presence of another will, but the punishment of my own."[2]

The will which rightly should be subjected to the higher divine purpose is creating a conflict by asserting its self-sufficiency. The lusts of the flesh, which held him in such frightful bondage that he was unable to shake himself loose, prevented submission.

But finally the storm broke. In a shower of tears, he withdraws from Alypius that he might pour out his deep repentance before God. His will at last has conquered itself, and in humility he cries out: "Lord, how long? . . wilt Thou be angry forever?"[3] God quickly answers the penitent cry and grants through his Holy Word a sweet sense

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1. Augustine: op.cit., Book VIII:8
2. Ibid.: Book VIII:10
3. Ibid.: Book VIII:12

of forgiveness to Augustine's broken spirit: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh."[1] Thus was ended the long conflict. Augustine can now lay his will in its entirety at the foot of the cross of Christ, saying with Paul: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,"[2] and, with the power of the indwelling Christ, he begins the new life.

B. John Wesley

The sin experience of John Wesley, whose background stands in direct contrast to that of St. Augustine, bears very definitely the impress of his individuality. Nevertheless, despite individual variations, in every essential his experience conforms perfectly with the pattern of Augustine's. The years preceding his conversion at Aldersgate do not present the dark picture of immorality which so characterized the life of the Roman saint. Wesley was reared in an Anglican rectory, having been "strictly educated and carefully taught, that I could only be saved by universal obedience, by keeping all the commandments of God,"[3] and gladly received these instructions, diligently seeking to fulfill the whole law. This earnest zeal for righteous-

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1. Augustine: op.cit., Book VIII:12
2. Galatians: 2:20
3. Wesley: Journal, p. 96

ness was his chief characteristic during his university days at Oxford, where he was the leader of a group of students, who, calling themselves the Holy Club, followed after piety and charity. His years as Anglican missionary to the Georgian Indians gives further proof that this zealous legalism was the chief trait of his pre-conversion experience. It carried him to such extremes in his treatment of those in the church who had fallen victims to temptations, that he was practically driven out of the States, and returned to England a keenly disappointed man. Then came Aldersgate, and the transformation of this defeated priest into a flaming evangel.

a. The Essence of Sin

What, then, was the root of Wesley's sin? Once again, as with Augustine, it was self-sufficiency, demonstrating itself, however, in an entirely different mode: that of trusting in his own works of righteousness for salvation. The summary of his life, which he gives us in his "Journal," presents his own diagnosis. He traces the problem back to the false training which he received from his parents, who emphasized a salvation by works. During his early years at school, with outward restraints removed, he lost temporarily his zeal for holiness. But, at the time of entering into his Holy Orders, he chanced upon Kempis's "Christian Pattern," and catching a vision of the severity

of the law of God, he steeled his will to realize such a life:

> "Beginning to alter the whole form of my conversation and to set in earnest upon a new life, I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed; I began to aim and pray for inward holiness."[1]

In himself, by thus exercising his will power, he strove to please God. All his decisions were made on the basis of whether or not they would help or hinder this self-development. What does he give as his reason for embarking for Georgia, but "simply this, to save our own souls"?[2] His effort to win his way to the favor of God made him completely self-centered; everything must conform to his will.

A reading of Law's "Christian Perfection" and "Serious Call" further confirmed him in his life course:

> ". . .by continued endeavor to keep his whole law, inward and outward, to the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation."[3]

Thus Wesley continued, neglecting no form of self-denial by which he felt he could obtain inward holiness and ". .in this refined way trusting to my own righteousness, I dragged down heavily, finding no comfort or help therein. . ."[4]

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1. Wesley: op.cit., p. 97
2. Ibid.: p. 15
3. Ibid.: p. 98
4. Ibid.: p. 99

And in Georgia, the situation remained unchanged, despite his contact with the Moravians during the crossing of the Atlantic. He still sought to establish his own righteousness, feeling sufficient unto himself.

Aboard ship, with plenty of time for meditation, he lists a series of sins which, he is convinced, dominate his life, and chief among them is ". . .pride throughout my past life."[1] And, in expressing the benefits which he hopes may accrue from his experiences in America, he prays: "Hereby I trust he hath in some measure humbled me, and proved me, and shown me what was in my heart."[2] Surveying his experience, in an effort to bring to light the dominant motive, it becomes obvious to him that it is self-sufficiency which truly characterizes his sin. The center of gravity in his life was himself; self was striving to work out its own salvation, unwilling to recognize its inability so to do, and too proud to trust God.

b. Human Depravity

Wesley's conception of the depravity of human nature, and the consequent role which divinity must play in resolving the sin problem, will be made manifest by an examination into his relationship with Peter Böhler, which precipitated his conversion. He came back to England convinced that what he needed was a true, a living faith— not

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1. Wesley: op.cit., p. 72
2. Ibid.: p. 81

a general faith in God, but a vital fellowship with God through Christ. Böhler testified to Wesley that one of the necessary accompaniments of a true faith is a genuine sense of forgiveness which brought peace with God. The proof that Wesley was not a true Christian until his Aldersgate experience lies just here in his reaction to Böhler's statement, which he looked upon as a "new gospel."[1] Only after having it demonstrated to him from the scripture and from the testimony of living witnesses, did he see the relative parts which man and God play in the resolution of the sin conflict. Not until then did he see the utter futility of man's efforts to save himself. Not until then did he see that only God in Christ could give man victory over sin.

A letter[2] which Wesley wrote to William Law ten days before his conversion presents very clearly his final position. For two years and more he had been preaching Christ as the ideal standard of the type of life which God demanded of man, and had exhorted men to fight on until they realized fully this Christ-like life. And what was the result?

> "All that heard, have allowed that the law is great, wonderful and holy; but no sooner did they attempt to fulfill it, but they found that it was too hard for man."[3]

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1. Wesley: op.cit., p. 100
2. Moore, Henry: "The Life of John Wesley, vol. I, p. 295
3. Ibid.

The perverted nature of man rebels against this God-given standard, and man is conscious of falling far short of it. His charge to Law is that if he had continued to follow his advice he would have spent all his days a sinner vainly trying in his own strength to win over a corrupt nature. But through Böhler's influence, Wesley came to see sin in its true reality as a disease which has so eaten into the soul of man that even God can remove it only at the supreme cost. As Augustine saw Christ as the only Mediator, so Wesley sees that "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin."[1] He tells Law that if he had not contacted Böhler, he would never have known that release from the power of sin was God's free gift in Christ. When he wrote this letter, Wesley was indeed not far from the kingdom of God. But it took ten days for this new faith to burst forth into a living experience. May 24, 1738, was the great day when Wesley discovered God in Christ. Methodism the world round will celebrate this very year the two hundredth anniversary of that blessed event.

The few words of explanation which Wesley gives in his "Journal" reveal the vital forces working in his great transformation. The personal element dominates: "I felt that I did trust. . .my sins, even mine. . . save me."[2] Experience has now caught up with belief.

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1. Wesley: op.cit., p. 101
2. Ibid.: p. 102

God, working through Christ is the sole agent in destroying the power of guilt: "I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; He had taken away my sins, and saved me."[1] Only through divine grace can man be lifted out of his depraved nature; only then can he begin the eternal process of growth into Christ, the standard of absolute perfection. Wesley has made the complete discovery. Gazing upon the Lamb of God, he is lifted out of his self-centeredness, and surrenders his will completely to God, trusting Christ alone. At Aldersgate, and not before, Wesley joins Augustine as a full-fledged evangelical Christian.

PART THREE: CONCLUSION

This brings us to the close of the study into the nature of sin as revealed in Christian experience. The individual case studies were of necessity limited to Augustine and Wesley. In summary, it need only be pointed out that both the general and the specific approaches which have been made point in the one direction. Christian experience paints one tragic picture of sin. True, there are wide variations in the sin experience with every individual, depending upon his peculiar religious background. And yet,

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1. Wesley: op.cit., p. 102

amid this wide diversity of manifestation, there is one standard type to which all conform. Christian experience has flowed in one great channel. All the great saints of historic Christianity - Paul, Francis, Luther, Calvin - have shared with Augustine and Wesley this experiential belief in the perverted nature of man. All the great hymns and sermons of the church have been inspired by this lofty conception of God in Christ redeeming a lost world. In the experience of every Christian, sin is the self defying God; release comes only when self-sufficiency is abandoned.

G. C. Cell in his "The Rediscovery of John Wesley," has put in a concise statement the universal, historic testimony of the church of Christ to the experience of sin:

> "There is pronounced consciousness of sin, total renunciation of all self-salvation, absolute trust in the grace of God, the personal God, apprehended in the humility of Christ, as the Compassionate One. This God who is our creator has redeemed us through Jesus Christ and filled us with his spirit."[1]

All the weight of Christian experience stands solidly behind the Biblical doctrine of sin. Such evidence cannot be lightly dismissed.

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1. Cell: The Rediscovery of John Wesley, p. 276

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The task undertaken in this thesis has been the establishment of a firm psychological basis for the Christian doctrine of sin. Theory has been twice pragmatically tested, and has not been found wanting. Sin in its stark reality faces us in literature and in experience. The Biblical doctrine of human depravity is no dead issue, despite its repudiation by modern psychology. It is a living fact!

The interpretation of humanistic psychology has been met upon its own ground. Its answer to the problem of evil is that sin is unreal, a purely negative factor--the failure of complete personality adjustment. Sin is explained away as mental sickness. But this self-realization theory is psychologically unsound, for the balancing of man's impulses with his ideals, that is, self-realization, would mean the extinction of personality. The psychic constitution of man demands an unattainable ideal. Christ's perfectly integrated life alone provides that absolute objective standard. Psychology needs Christianity for its completion. Depravity and maladjustment present the theological and psychological aspects of the one great truth: the universal failure on man's part to integrate his life around Christ's ideal of perfect love. There is an essential defect in human nature. Psychology is unwittingly bearing testimony

to the eternal verity of the Christian doctrine of sin.

This is theory. But can it be verified concretely? Yes, the testimony of the great students of human nature and the personal experience of the Christian Church present a united confirmation of the Biblical analysis of sin. Shakespeare casts sin in great tragic settings, while Hawthorne traces its subtle windings, but both portray it in its stark reality. Living literature, true to the facts of life, cannot escape sin. Augustine and Wesley, with as contrasting backgrounds as one could expect to find, one grovelling in the lusts of the flesh, the other striving for self-righteousness, both describe sin as a positive defiance of God through a self-deification. The general surveys of Starbuck and Warner prove that this is the mould into which all the varieties of the sin experience are cast. Dr. Warner, demonstrating that the states of Christian experience fit perfectly into the psychological framework of the interaction between the conscious and the unconscious, has opened the way for a postulating of the divine operation within the mind of man. Psychology is labeling the outworkings of this process. The entire thesis, then, is seen to revolve around the attempt to justify psychologically the Christian doctrine of sin.

What, in brief, are the characteristics of sin as psychologically established?

1. Sin is conscious or unconscious deviation from the objective standard of absolute perfection as revealed in Jesus Christ.

2. Sin is the activity of a free moral agent who is failing to integrate his life perfectly about Christ's ideal of perfect love.

3. Sin is a state of the soul out of which issue the overt acts. The doctrine of human depravity has its parallel in the psychical realm in the law of repression.

4. The essence of sin is self-suffiency. Sin is self-deification--an outright defiance of God.

5. Sin involves a maladjustment of human personality. This is the aspect of the problem with which psychology deals so thoroughly.

6. Sin separates man from his fellows, and demands strict reparation, even in the world of human relations, if forgiveness is to be forthcoming.

7. Sin separates man from God. The disruptions within the personality, and in the sphere of human relations, issue from this more fundamental disharmony. In a real sense, one must be on the "inside" to appreciate fully this aspect of the sin problem. The Christian alone can recognize the awful cleavage which sin effects between the divine and the human fellowship. Until a man meets God in the cross of Christ, his eyes are not fully opened to the depth of his need. Sin is man's emancipation proclamation

from God--a self-exaltation directed against the very throne of God. The cross of Christ can alone regain for man his lost fellowship with God.

Such is the destructive power of sin. The burden of proof surely rests with those who propose a humanistic interpretation of the problem. It is the writer's conviction that psychology, analyzing the conflicts existing in the mind, is but describing the outworkings in the human soul of that objective reality which Christianity calls sin.

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