



OF SIN



THOMAS BOSTON

Of Sin

by Thomas Boston

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Of Sin in General

"Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4

In these words we have an answer to that question, "What is sin?" It is a transgression of the law: for "where no law is, there is no transgression," (Rom. 4:16). But because the word transgression seems to import something positive and actual, therefore it is added in the Catechism, it is a "want of conformity unto the law," which is a more general definition: and this meaning the word in the original most properly bears. Hence both a want of conformity unto the law of God, and a transgression of it, are taken into the description; and in effect they are both one thing.

In the further illustration of this subject, it will be proper to show,

I. What that law is whereof sin is the transgression.

II. Wherein the nature of sin consists.

III. Wherein the evil thereof lies.

IV. Deduce a few inferences.

I. I am to show what is that law whereof sin is the transgression. It is the law of God, even any law of his whereby he lays any duty upon any of the children of men, whether it be the natural law which is written even in the hearts of all men, (Rom. 2:15) or the revealed law and will of God, written in the Bible, whether it be the law strictly so called, or the gospel, whose great command is to believe in Christ; the transgression of which command is the great sin of the hearers of the gospel. In a word, the law of which sin is the transgression, is any law or command of God which he obliges us to obey. More particularly,

1. There is a law engraven upon the hearts of men by nature, which was in force long before the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai. This is the light of reason, and the dictates of natural conscience concerning those moral principles of good and evil, which have an essential equity in them, and show man his duty to God, to his neighbor, and to himself. There is a law in all men by nature, which is a rule of good and evil. They have notions of right and wrong in their consciences; which is evident by those laws which are common in all nations for the preservation of human society, the encouraging of virtue, and discouraging of vice. These laws are to be found among men who have not the benefit of divine revelation for regulating their lives. Now, what standard else can they have for these but common reason, and the light of nature? Every son and daughter of Adam brings with them into the world a law in their

breast; and when reason clears up itself from the clouds of sense, they can distinguish between good and evil, between things which ought to be done, and things which they should avoid. Every man finds a law in his heart that checks and rebukes when he offends, and cherishes and encourages him when he does good. None are without a legal indictment and a legal execution within themselves, (Rom. 2:14, 15).

2. There is another law which was given to the Jewish nation by the ministry of Moses. This is spoken of by Christ; "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law?" (John 7:19). By this we are to understand the whole system of divine precepts concerning ceremonial rites, judicial processes, and moral duties. Accordingly there was a threefold law given by Moses.

(1.) The ceremonial law, which was a certain system of divine positive precepts, with relation to the external worship of God. It was wholly taken up in enjoining those observances of sacrifices and offerings, and various methods of purifications and cleansings which were typical of Christ, and of that sacrifice of his which alone was able to take away sin.

(2.) The judicial law consisted of those institutions which God prescribed the Jews for their civil government. For, whereas, in other commonwealths, the chief magistrates give laws unto the people; in this the laws for their religion and for their civil government were both divine, and both immediately from God. So that the judicial law was given them to be the standing law of their nation, according to which all actions and suits between party and party were to be tried and determined; as in all other nations there are particular laws and statutes for the decision of controversies that may arise among men.

3. There is the moral law which is a system or body of those precepts which carry an universal and natural equity in them, being so conformable to the light of reason, and the dictates of every man's conscience, that as soon as ever they are declared and understood, we must needs subscribe to the justice and righteousness of them. We have the sum of this law in the ten commandments. This law continues in its full force and power, obliging the conscience as a standing rule for our obedience. Our Lord tells us that, "he came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them," (Matt. 5:17). The ceremonial law was abolished by the death of Christ, and the judicial law, so far as it concerned the nation of the Jews as a commonwealth and body politic, particularly touching their not marrying out of their own tribes, their not alienating the inheritance of their fathers, the raising up of seed to their deceased brother, &c., but such of these political laws as are common to men in general, and founded upon the law of nature, are still binding and in force, such as the laws for punishing criminals and other offenders, the laws against oppressing of widows, orphans, strangers, the fatherless, &c. These are a standing rule of equity and justice; they are of a moral nature, and therefore of perpetual obligation. So that the law of which sin is the transgression, is to us the law of nature in our hearts, and the moral law contained in the scriptures, and summed up in the Decalogue, as well as the positive laws of the gospel of Christ.

II. I proceed to show wherein the nature of sin consists. It consists in a want of conformity to the law of God, or a disconformity thereto. The law of God is the rule; whatsoever is over this rule, is sin. The law of God is set as a mark to us; and so the word sin, in the first language properly signifies a not hitting the mark; and transgression is a swerving from the right line, or a going off the way. So it is called "a going aside," (Ps. 14:3). Now, nothing is conformable to the law which is not perfectly so; for if it be in the least disagreeable thereto,

it is not conformable to it, more than that which wants half an inch of an ell [approx. 45 inches; Ed.] is truly an ell of measure; and therefore any want of that conformity is sin. The law of God requires universal conformity to it. Now the law or command of God requires a twofold conformity.

1. A conformity of the heart to it. It reaches the inward man, seeing God is a spirit, and that omniscient One who knows the heart; and the whole heart must be subject to him. Therefore our Saviour says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," (Mark 12:30).

2. A conformity of the life both in words and deeds. Hence says David, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully," (Ps. 24:3,4). And forasmuch as the law requires some things, and forbids other things both in heart and life, the want of conformity to it in these respects, either in heart or life, is sin. Hence we may infer,

1. Sin is no positive being, but a want of due perfection, a defect, an imperfection in the creature; and therefore it is, (1.) Not from God, but from the creature itself. (2.) It is not a thing to glory in, more than the want of all things. (3.) It is a thing we have reason to be humbled for, and have great need to have removed. (4.) It is not a thing to be desired, but fled from and abhorred, as the abominable thing which God hateth.

2. Original sin is truly and properly sin. Look to yourselves as you came into the world, and ye must smite on your breast, before ye have sucked the breasts, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." For we come into it with Adam's sin imputed, (Rom. 5:12) striped of original righteousness, and the whole nature corrupted. This is the

sin of our nature, being a want of conformity in our souls to the law of God, which requires all moral perfection of us; "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," (Matt. 5: ult). Instead of which we have a bent of soul quite contrary to the law; "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," (Rom. 8:7).

3. The first motions of sin, and the risings of that natural corruption in us, before it be completed with the consent of the will to the evil motion, are truly and properly sin. The apostle calls this lust, and distinguishes it from sin, i.e. the sin of our nature, and from the consent to it and execution of it, which he calls "obeying these lusts," (Rom. 6:12) and tells us that it is condemned by the law, (Rom. 7:7). Therefore a thing may be our sin, though we know it not to be so, (1 Tim. 1:13). And though it be not our will, yea though against our will, (Rom. 7:16). For it is neither our knowledge, or opinion, nor our will, but the law of God, that is the rule.

4. All consent of the heart to and delight in motions towards things forbidden by the law of God are sins, though these never break forth into action, but die where they were born in the inmost corners of our hearts; "Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart," (Matt. 5:28). Speculative filthiness is a disconformity to the law. There is heart murder as well as actual murder, (v. 22).

5. All omissions of the internal duties we owe to God and our neighbors are sins, as want of love to God or our neighbors. Want of due fear of God, trust and hope in him, &c. are internal sins of omission.

6. Hence a man sins by undue silence and undue speaking, when the cause of God and truth require it; seeing the law bids us speak in

some cases, but never speak what is not good.

7. Hence also a man's sins, when he omits outward duties that are incumbent on him to perform, as well as when he commits sin of whatever kind in his life.

8. Lastly, The least failure in any duty is sin; and whatever comes not up in perfection to the law is sinful. And therefore we sin in everything we do, and our best duties deserve damnation, and cannot be accepted according to the law. Wherefore the duties of wicked men are absolutely rejected, seeing they are under the law; and the duties of the godly are no otherwise accepted, but as washed in the blood of Christ, which takes away the sin cleaving to them.

Further, nothing can be a sin but what is a transgressing of the law of God, who only is Lord over the conscience. Therefore, if there be no law of God in the case, there is no transgression affecting the conscience. But it must be considered, that the law of God commands some things expressly, and others things by good consequence. No law of God commands a servant expressly to do such and such a particular piece of work that is lawful, which he is bidden do by his master; but the law of God says, "Servants, obey your masters;" and therefore it is sin if he do not that work. The case is the same as to men's laws. Therefore the apostle says, "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." (Rom. 13:5). Now, men's laws are either contrary to God's laws, or agreeable and subservient thereto, as being for the glory of God, or the good of the nation in general. As to the first of these, ye cannot obey without sin, as if the queen and Parliament should command you to receive human ceremonies in the worship of God. As to other things that are good and just, we are obliged to obey, as is clear from Romans 13; and therefore the conscience is not altogether

unconcerned in the laws of men. And therefore, if ye would be tender Christians, before ye go against the laws of the land, consider well whether their commands be unlawful, or whether they be such as are good and just; for doubtless magistrates have a power to make laws for the good of the land in general; and what they so make we are obliged to respect, otherwise we condemn the ordinance of God, and regard not the good of our neighbor, and thereby sin against God; as is acknowledged in the case of those that now export grain, to the general distress of the country. And I apprehend, that if we would lay the case home to ourselves, we would have less liberty than we have in some things that are not scrupled at.

III. I come now to show wherein the evil of sin lies. It lies, 1. And principally, in the wrong done to God, and its contrariety, (1.) To his nature, which is altogether holy. hence the Psalmist says, "Against thee, thee only have, sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," (Ps. 51:4). David had exceedingly wronged Uriah in defiling his wife, and procuring the death of himself; yet he considers his great sin in that matter as chiefly against God, and contrary to his holy nature. (2.) In its contrariety to God's will and law, which is a sort of a copy of his nature. And God being all good, and the chief good, sin must needs be a sort of infinite evil.

2. In the wrong it doth to ourselves "He that sinneth against me," says the personal Wisdom of God, "wrongeth his own soul," (Prov. 8:36). For, (1.) It leaves a stain and spiritual pollution on the soul, whereby it becomes filthy and vile; and therefore sin is called filthiness, and is said to defile the soul, whereupon follows God's loathing the sinner, (Isa. 1:15) and shame and confusion on the sinner himself, (Gen. 3:7). (2.) It brings on guilt, whereby the sinner is bound over to punishment, according to the state in which he is,

until his sin be pardoned. This ariseth from the justice of God and the threatening of his law; which brings on all miseries whatsoever.

But more particularly upon this head, when men pass the bounds and limits which God hath set them in his law, then they transgress it. All the violations of negative precepts are transgressions of God's law. The design of the moral law is to keep men within the bounds of their duty; and when they sin they go beyond them. Sin is indeed the greatest of evils; it is directly opposite to God the supreme good. The definition that is given of sin expresses its essential evil. It is the transgression of the divine law, and consequently it opposes the rights of God's throne, and obscures the glory of his attributes, which are exercised in the moral government of the world. God is our king, our Lawgiver, and our Judge. From his right and propriety in us as his creatures, his title to and sovereign power and dominion over us doth arise and flow. Man is endued with the powers of understanding and election, to conceive and choose what is good, and to reject what is evil; is governed by a law, even the declared will of his Maker. Now, sin, being a transgression of this law, contains many evils in it. As,

1. It is high rebellion against the sovereign Majesty of God, that gives the life of authority to the law. Therefore divine precepts are enforced with the most proper and binding motive to obedience. I am the Lord. He that commits sin, especially with pleasure and design, implicitly denies his dependence upon God as his Maker and Governor, and arrogates to himself an irresponsible liberty to do his own will. This is clearly expressed by those atheistical designers, who said, "Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us? (Ps. 12:4). The language of men's actions, which is more convincing than their words, plainly declares, that they despise his commandments, and contemn his authority, as if they were not his creatures and subjects.

2. It is an extreme aggravation of this evil, that sin, as it is a disclaiming our homage to God, so it is in true account a yielding subjection to the devil; for sin is in the strictest propriety his work. The original rebellion in paradise was by his temptation, and all the actual and habitual sins of men, since the fall, are by his efficacious influence. He darkens the carnal mind, he sways and rules the stubborn will; he excites and inflames the vitious [vicious; Ed.] affections, and imperiously rules in the children of disobedience. He is therefore styled the prince and god of this world. And what more contumelious [contemptuous attitude; Ed.] indignity can there be, than to prefer to the glorious Creator of heaven and earth, a damned spirit the most cursed part of the whole creation? more particularly, sin strikes at the root of all the divine attributes.

(1.) It is contrary to the unspotted holiness of God, which is the peculiar glory of the Deity. Of all the glorious and benign constellations of the divine attributes which shine in the law of God, his holiness hath the brightest lustre. God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works: but the most precious and venerable monument of his holiness is the law. This is a true draught of his image, and a clear copy of his nature and will. It is the perspicuous rule of our duty, without any blemish or imperfection. See what a high encomium [a formal text that expresses high praise for somebody; Ed.] the apostle gives it, "the commandment is holy, just, and good," (Rom. 7:12). It enjoins nothing but what is absolutely good, without the least mixture and tincture of evil. It is a full and complete rule, in nothing defective, and in nothing superfluous, but comprehends the whole duty of man. The sum of it is set down by the apostle, (Titus 2:11). We are to live soberly, i.e. we are to abstain from everything that may blemish and stain the excellency of our reasonable nature. We are to live righteously. This respects the state and situation wherein God hath placed us in the world for the

advancing of his glory. It includes and comprehends in it all the respective duties we owe to others, to whom we are united by the bands of nature, of civil society, or of spiritual communion. And we are to live godly, which takes in all the internal and outward duties which we owe to God, who is the Sovereign of our spirits, whose will must be the rule, and his glory the end of all our actions. In short the law is so contrived and framed, that abstracting from the authority of the Lawgiver, its holiness and goodness lays an eternal obligation upon us to obey its dictates. Now, sin is directly and formally a contrariety to the infinite sanctity and purity of God; consisting in a not doing what the law commands, or in doing that which it expressly forbids; and God cannot look upon it, but with infinite detestation, (Hab. 1:13). He cannot but hate that which is opposite to the glory of his nature, and to the lustre of all his perfections.

(2.) Sin vilifies the wisdom of God, which prescribed the law to men as the rule of their duty. The divine wisdom shines resplendently in his laws. They are all framed with an exact congruity to the nature of God, and his relation to us, and to the faculties of man before he was corrupted. And thus the divine law being a bright transcript both of God's will and his wisdom, binds the understanding and will, which are the leading faculties in man, to esteem and approve, to consent to and choose, all his precepts as best. Now, sin vilifies, the infinite wisdom of God, both as to the precepts of the law, the rule of our duty, and the sanction annexed to it for confirming its obligation. It taxes the precepts as an unequal yoke, and as too severe and rigid a confinement to our wills and actions. Thus the impious rebels complained of old, "The ways of the Lord are not equal." They are injurious to our liberties, they restrain and infringe them, and are not worthy of our study and observation. And it accounts the rewards and punishments which God has annexed as the sanction of the law to secure our obedience to its precepts, weak and ineffectual motives

to serve that purpose. And thus it reflects upon the wisdom of the Lawgiver as lame and defective, in not binding his subjects more firmly to their duty.

(3.) Sin is a high contempt and horrid abuse of the divine goodness, which should have a powerful influence in binding man to his duty. His creating goodness is hereby contemned, which raised us out of the dust of the earth unto an excellent and glorious being. Our parents were indeed instrumental in the production of our bodies; but the variety and union, the beauty and usefulness, of the several parts, was the high design of his wisdom, and the excellent work of his hands. Man's body is composed of as many miracles as members, and is full of wonders. The lively idea and perfect exemplar of that regular fabric was modeled in the divine mind. This affected David with holy admiration, (Ps. 139:14,15,16). The soul, or principal part, is of a celestial original, inspired by the Father of Lights. The faculties of understanding and election are the indelible characters of our honor and dignity above the brutes, and make us capable to please God and enjoy our Maker. Now, God's design in giving us our being was to communicate of his own fullness to, and to be actively glorified by intelligent creatures, (Rev. 4:11). None are so void of rational sentiments, as not to own, that it is our indispensable duty and reasonable service to offer up ourselves an entire living sacrifice to the glory of God. What is more natural, according to the laws of uncorrupted reason, than that love should correspond with love? As the one descends in benefits, the other should ascend in praise and thankfulness. Now, sin breaks all these sacred bonds of grace and gratitude, which engage us to love and obey our Maker. He is the just Lord of all our faculties, intellectual and sensitive; and the sinner employs them all as weapons of unrighteousness to fight against God. Again, it is he that upholds and preserves us by the powerful influence of his providence, which is a renewed creation every

moment, daily surrounding us with many mercies. All the goodness which God thus bestows upon men, the sinner abuses against him. This is the most unworthy, shameful, and monstrous ingratitude imaginable. This makes forgetful and unthankful men more brutish than the dull ox or stupid ass, who serve and obey those that feed and keep them. Yea it sinks them below the insensible part of the creation, which invariably observes the law and order prescribed by the Creator. This is astonishing degeneracy. It was the complaint of God himself; "Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," (Isa. 1:2).

(4.) The sinner disparages the divine justice, in promising himself peace and safety, notwithstanding the wrath and vengeance that is denounced against him by the Lord. He labors to dissolve the inseparable connection that God hath placed between sin and punishment, which is not a mere arbitrary constitution, but founded upon the desert of sin, and the infinite rectitude of the divine nature, which unchangeably hates it. The sinner sets the divine attributes a contending as it were with one another, presuming that mercy will disarm justice, and suspend its power by restraining it from taking vengeance upon impenitent sinners. And thus sinners become bold and resolute in their impious courses, like him mentioned, who said, "I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst," (Deut. 29:19). This casts such an aspersion on the justice of God, that he solemnly threatens the severest vengeance for it; as you may see in verse 20; "The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven."

(5.) Sin strikes against the omniscience of God, and at least denies it implicitly. There is such a turpitude adhering to sin, that it cannot endure the light of the sun, nor the light of conscience, but seeks to be concealed under a mask of virtue or a veil of darkness. What is said of the adulterer and the thief, is true in proportion of every sinner, "If a man sees them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death." And hence it is, that many who would blush and tremble if they were surprised in their sinful actings by a child or a stranger, are not at all afraid of the eye of God, though he narrowly notices all their sins in order to judge them, and will judge them in order to punish them.

(6.) Lastly, Sin bids a defiance to the divine power. This is one of the essential attributes of God that makes him so terrible to devils and wicked men. He hath both a right to punish and power enough to revenge every transgression of his law that sinners are guilty of. Now, his judicial power is supreme and his executive power is irresistible. He can with one stroke dispatch the body to the grave, and the soul to the pit of hell, and make men as miserable as they are sinful: and yet sinners as boldly provoke him as if there were no danger. We read of the infatuated Syrians, how they foolishly thought that God the protector of Israel had only power on the hills but not in the valleys, and therefore renewed the war to their own destruction. Thus proud sinners enter the lists with God and range an army of lusts against the armies of heaven, and, being blindly bold, run on headlong upon their own ruin. They neither believe God's all-seeing eye, nor fear his almighty hand. You see then what an evil sin is in its nature. It is high rebellion against God, and strikes at the root of all his attributes.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. If ye would see your sins, look to the law of God. That is the glass wherein we may see our ugly face. Hence the apostle says, "I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet," (Rom. 7:7). Look to it for what is past and present, in order to your being humbled in the sight of a holy God. Look to it for your direction, if you would shun the fatal rocks of sin for the time to come. It is not what this man says, but what the word of God says, that is to be the rule of your duty.

2. See here what presumption it is in men to make that duty which God has not made so, and that sin which God has not made so in religion. This is for men to set themselves in God's room, and their will for the divine will. This is true superstition, however far the guilty seem to themselves and others to be from it. And in this too many of different denominations agree, making that duty and sin which God never made so. In this general they agree, however they differ in particulars. This is expressly forbidden; "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it," (Deut. 4:2). Remarkable is the reason of this prohibition, "that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." For to both agrees what our Lord said, "Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your traditions?" (Matt. 15:3). Witness the deep ignorance of matters of salvation and the power of godliness, wherein many are kept by reason of these principles, which have no footing in the word of God.

3. Flee to Jesus Christ for the pardon of sin, for his blood and Spirit to remove the same. All the waters of the sea will not wash it out, but that blood alone. And repent and forsake your sin, or it will be your ruin.

Consider it is the greatest evil.

For,

(1.) It is most contrary to the nature of God, who is the greatest good; and that which is most contrary to the greatest good, must needs be the greatest evil. It may be looked on as the nadir [lowest point; Ed.] to zenith. The devil is not so contrary to God: for God gave the devil a being, but not sin. It is sin that makes the devil opposite to God; it is the master, he the scholar. The fire is hotter than the water which it heats. Sin fights against God; it is a deicide; and, as one says, the sinner so far as in him lies, destroys the nature of God. Sin is a dethroning of God, yea it strikes at his being. It musters up its forces in the open field against God, and when it is beaten from thence, it has its strong holds to go to; yea, like the thief on the cross, when it is crucified, it spits its venom against him. It, is a walking contrary to him; and it rises against him even to the last gasp.

(2.) Sin is the mother of all evils that ever were or shall be. It is the big-bellied monster that is delivered daily of all other evils as its births. It is that which has brought forth all the fire-brands that ever were. What cast the angels out of heaven, or Adam out of paradise? Sin draws the sword against nations, makes women husbandless, mothers childless, and brings on wars, famine and pestilence. Personal evils, whether on soul or body, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, are all from sin. It must needs then be the greatest evil.

(3.) Sin is the concluding stroke of wrath on the soul. It is that to which people are entirely given up. And what is it that makes hell in the world, that God gives as the last stroke after all the rest? Why, it is to give up the soul to sin; "Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee," (Ezek. 24:13). That is the doom, "Let him that is filthy be filthy still." He that was

delivered up to Satan, was restored again: but we never hear of any being restored who were given up to themselves. Better be given up to the devil than to sin.

Of Our Fall in Adam

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Romans 5:19

This text consists of two propositions. The first is, By one man's disobedience many were made sinners. Where consider,

1. Who that one man was. It was Adam. This is plain from Romans 5:14 and to no other can it agree.
2. What that disobedience of his was. It was his first sin, the eating of the forbidden fruit. This was that sin that first broke into the world, and opened the door to death, (v. 12). This was the transgression of Adam, that offence (v. 14) or fall, the offence of one (v. 15), or, as the Greek will bear, the one offence "tou henos paraptomati," here called disobedience, for thereby he hearkened to the devil, not to God.
3. Whom it concerned; many. This is in effect the same with the all mentioned, (v. 14). But the alteration of the phrase is not without reason: for there is an exception here of the man Christ, of whom he speaks in the next clause. It reached many men, but not all simply; he, and he only, was excepted.

4. How it touched them; they were made sinners by it. Now, there are only two ways how men might be made sinners by the disobedience of Adam, viz. either by imputation or imitation. The last is not meant. (1.) Because some of those many who are made sinners; are not capable of imitation or actual sin, viz. infants. (2.) Because we are made righteous, not by the imitation, but imputation, of Christ's righteousness; but as we are made righteous by the one, so we are made sinners by the other.

5. The foundation of this imputation, which is a relation betwixt the one and the many here implied; for unless there had been some bond of union betwixt the one and many, the sin of that one could not have been imputed to the many. There was indeed a natural bond betwixt him and us: but this was not the ground of the imputation; for we have such an union with our immediate parents, whose sin is not thus imputed. It behooved then to be a moral bond, by the way of a covenant, he being the representative of many in the covenant of works. From these words there arises this doctrine, viz.

Doctrine: "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression."

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall show,

I. What sin of Adam's it was that they who sinned and fell with him, sinned and fell in.

II. Who they were that sinned and fell in Adam.

III. How the first sin of Adam comes to be imputed to us.

IV. Conclude with some inferences.

I. I am to show what sin of Adam's it was that they who sinned and fell with him, sinned and fell in. It was his first sin, the eating of the forbidden fruit. That sin is also their sin. This was the sin that broke the covenant of works. Other sins of Adam are not imputed to them, more than those of any other private persons. For he was a head only of obedience, not of suffering. So then, Adam quickly betaking himself to the covenant of grace, and placing himself under another head as a private man, ceased to be the head in the covenant of works. Adam had all his children in one ship to carry them to Immanuel's land; by his negligence he dashed the ship on a rock, and broke it all in pieces; and so he and his lay foundering in a sea of guilt: Jesus Christ lets out the second covenant as a rope to draw them to the shore. Adam for himself lays hold onto, while others hold by the broken boards of the ship, till they be by the power of grace enabled to quit them too, as he was.

II. I proceed to show who they were that sinned and fell in Adam. They were all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation. So,

1. Christ is excepted. Adam's sin was not imputed to the man Christ. This is plain from Hebrews 7:26. He was separated from sinners, and was not infected with the plague whereof he was to be the cleanser. And so Christ comes not in under Adam as head, but, as in the text, is opposed to Adam as another head.

Christ was indeed a Son of Adam, as appears from his genealogy brought up to Adam, (Luke 3). And it was necessary he should be so, that he might be our near kinsman, and that the same nature that sinned might suffer. But he came not of him by ordinary generation: the extraordinariness of his descent lay in that he was born of a

virgin. And upon this account he came not in under Adam in the covenant of works; for Christ was not born by virtue of that blessing of marriage given before the fall, (Gen 1:28) but by virtue of a covenant-promise made after the fall, (Gen 3:15). So that Adam could represent none in that covenant, but such as were to spring from him by virtue of that blessing.

2. All mankind besides sinned and fell with Adam in that first transgression. His sin of eating the forbidden fruit is imputed to them; i.e. is reckoned theirs, as if they had committed it. Consider,

(1.) The scripture plainly testifies, that all sinned in him; "By one man's sin, death entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," (Rom. 5:12). Hence it is plain, that death has not come into the world but in pursuit of sin; all die, for all have sinned. Infants are not exempted more than others. We see graves of an infant's length; yea, sometimes the womb is made their grave, and they get a coffin instead of a cradle. It is long ere infants laugh, but they come into the world crying; a sure evidence of misery. What have they done? What could they do? Yet God is just, and is not pursuing innocents. What then can be the quarrel but this, that they are taken prisoners for the debt contracted by their father? (v. 14).

(2.) All fell with him into misery by that sin. Now, a just God will not involve the innocent with the guilty in the same punishment. Consider,

[1.] All fell under the guilt of eternal wrath for that sin; "The judgment was by one to condemnation....By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation," (Rom. 5:16,18). Now, where there is a communion of guilt there must needs be a communion of sin; for the law can bind none over to punishment but

for sin. "All die in Adam," (1 Cor. 15:22) says the apostle, but it is only the soul that sins that shall die, (Ezek. 18:4) therefore all sinned in Adam.

[2.] All fell under the loss of God's image, and the corruption of nature with him. How comes it that all men must say with David, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me?" (Ps. 2:5). Take away the imputation of Adam's sin, and there is no foundation for the corruption of nature. It must be some sin that God punishes with the deprivation of original righteousness, which can be no other than the first sin of Adam.

[3.] All the punishments inflicted on Adam and Eve, for that sin, as specified in Genesis 3 are common to mankind, their posterity; and therefore the sin must be so too.

III. I come now to show how the first sin of Adam comes to be imputed to us. The great reason of this is, because we are all included in Adam's covenant. The covenant was made with him, not only for himself, but for all his posterity. Consider here,

1. It was the covenant of works that was made with Adam, the condition whereof was perfect obedience. This was the first covenant. As for the covenant of grace, it was made with the second Adam.

2. It was made with him for himself. That was the way he himself was to attain perfect happiness; his own stock was in that ship.

3. It was made not only for himself, but for all his posterity descending from him by ordinary generation. So that he was not here as a mere private person, but as a public person, the moral head and representative of all mankind. Hence the scripture holds forth Adam and Christ, as if there had never been any but these two men in the

world; "The first man is of the earth, earthy, (says he): the second man is the Lord from heaven," (1 Cor. 15:47). And this he does, because they were two public persons, each of them having under them persons represented by them, (Rom. 5:14,18).

"Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." This is plain from the imputation of Adam's sin, which necessarily requires this as the foundation of it. We being thus included and represented in that covenant, what he did he did as our head, and therefore it is justly imputed to us.

But some may be ready to say, we made not choice of Adam for that purpose. Ans. (1.) God made the choice, who was as meet to make it for us as we for ourselves. And "who art then that repliest against God," (Rom. 9:20). (2.) Adam was our natural head, the common father of us all, (Acts 17:26) and who was so meet to be trusted with the concerns of all mankind as he? But to clear further the reasonableness of this imputation, and to still the murmuring of proud nature against the dispensation of God, consider,

1. Adam's sin is imputed to us, because it is ours. For God doth not reckon a thing ours, which is not so; "The judgment of God is according to truth," (Rom. 2:2). For God's justice doth not punish men for a sin which is in no way theirs. And it is our sin upon the account aforesaid. Even as Christ's righteousness is ours by virtue of our union with him. As if a person that has the plague infect others, and they die, they die, by their own plague, and not by that of another.

2. It was free for God, antecedently to the covenant made with man, either to have annihilated all mankind, or if he had preserved them, to have given them no promise of eternal life in heaven, notwithstanding by natural justice they would have been liable to his wrath in case of sin. Was it not then an act of grace in God to make such a rich covenant as this? and would not men have consented to this representation gladly in this case?

3. Adam had a power to stand if he would, being made after the image of God, (Gen 1:26). He was set down with a stock capable to be improved to the eternal upmaking of all his posterity. So that he was as capable to stand as any afterwards could be for themselves: and this was a trial that would soon have been over, while the other would have been continually a-doing, had men been created independent on him as their representative.

4. He had natural affection the strongest to engage him. He was our father, and all we the children that were in his loins, to whom we had as good ground to trust as to any other creature.

5. His own stock was in the ship; his all lay at stake as well as ours. Forgetting our interest, he behoved to disregard his own, for he had no separate interest from ours.

6. If he had stood, we could never have fallen; he had gained for us eternal happiness; the image of God, and the crown of glory, would have descended from him to us by a sure conveyance.

And is it not reasonable, on the other hand, that if he fell, we should fall and bear the loss? No man quarrels, that when a master sets his land in tack to a man and his heirs upon conditions, if the first possessor break the bargain, the heirs be denuded of it.

7. Lastly, All that quarrel this dispensation must renounce their part in Christ: for we are made righteous by him, as sinners are made guilty by Adam. If we fall in with the one, why not with the other? We chose Christ for our head in the second covenant, no more than we did Adam in the first covenant.

A few inferences shall conclude this subject.

1. Hence see the dreadful nature of sin; one sin could destroy a whole world. What a plague of plagues must this sin be, that has swept away not families, towns, and countries only, but the whole race of mankind! View it in this glass, if you would know it aright.

2. Let this be a lesson to parents. Adam's fall should be a watch-word to every parent, to endeavor by all means to do nothing that may bring ruin on their children. Many times children are destroyed by their parents through their bad example, and their omission of exercising proper discipline and correction on them. Ye that are parents, give your children a good and pious example, accompanied with wholesome precepts and instructions. And watch over and narrowly observe their behavior, and pray for and with them, that they may be delivered from wrath and condemnation.

3. This doctrine affords a lesson of humility to all. The rich have no cause to boast of their wealth and abundance; for they have a sad heritage left to them; and the poor and needy have the very same. If one man be better than another, no thanks to us; for we are all alike by nature.

4. Hence view and wonder at the redemption purchased for poor fallen sinners by the obedience and death of Christ. Behold here the necessity of it: What could they do for their help that came into the world under a sentence of condemnation? —the seasonableness of

this deliverance, when the sentence was passed on all: —the perfection of it; it takes away this first sin, and all others too. How strong must the power of the grace of Christ be, that could stop the torrent of Adam's sin, when increased with innumerable actual transgressions? (Rom. 5:16)

5. Lastly, Quit your hold of the first Adam and his covenant, and come to and unite with Christ by faith, and lay hold on his covenant, (1 Cor. 15:22). Flee to and make use of his blood for the taking away of the first sin in particular, and mourn for it before the Lord. If this be not removed, it will ruin you. And to stir you up to a concern about this sin, consider how we are naturally writing after this copy, by our unbelief of the word, our affecting mainly what is forbidden, &c. as I showed before. The offer of Christ as a Saviour from sin is made to you; and ye are called to embrace him as a Saviour to you in particular. Accept the offer, as ye regard the salvation of your souls; otherwise you will be ruined, not only by the breach of the first covenant, but by despising the second, which is the only means devised by infinite wisdom for the recovery of fallen sinners.

Of the First Sin in Particular

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and

they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons."
Genesis 3:6-7

In these words we are distinctly informed how the covenant of works was broken, and our first parents stripped of their primitive innocence and integrity. Eve seduced by the devil, first ate of the forbidden fruit, and Adam followed her example. The act being completed by both, they immediately discovered, to their shame and dishonor, the miserable state they were reduced to.

The words sufficiently found the following doctrine.

Doctrine: "Our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, by eating the forbidden fruit."

I have already shown why the forbidden tree was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as also of what use it was in the covenant of works. It remains that we shew,

I. How the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of our first parents, by which they fell.

II. Why this fruit was forbidden.

III. The aggravations of it.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to show how the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of our first parents, by which they fell. It is not to be thought, that they were wholly innocent till they had the forbidden fruit in their mouths; for their coveting it in their hearts behooved of necessity to go before that; but the eating of it was that whereby their sin and apostasy from their Creator was completed. The first step of their sin

seems then to be doubting and unbelief of the threatening, (Gen. 3:4,6). Their faith as to the truth of the threatening being first foundered, their heart plied to the temptation; and then succeeded a lust after the forbidden fruit; and then the sin was completed by their actually eating it, as in the words of the text.

Satan, the old serpent, very artfully laid his train for enticing our first parents to eat this forbidden fruit. For he attacked the woman when alone, at a distance from her husband; he endeavored to make her doubt of the truth of the divine threatening; he presented the fatal object, as fruit pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise: he pretended a higher regard for them than their sovereign Creator, who, he tacitly insinuated, grudged their happiness: and he used means to persuade them, that they should be like God, in the vast extent of their knowledge, upon their eating the delectable morsel. Thus the eyes of their mind were first blemished by a mist from hell; which being admitted, gradually darkened their understanding, so that first doubting, and then disbelief of the threatening, ensued. Their will was easily conquered to a compliance with the temptation; then a corrupt affection to the tree seized them, discovering itself in a lustful looking at it: then the hand took it, and the mouth ate it, and the fatal morsel was swallowed.

II. I am next to show why this fruit was forbidden.

1. It was not because God grudged the happiness of our first parents, as the devil blasphemously alleged, whom the event proved a liar, (John 8:44). Nor yet,

2. Because there was any evil in the fruit itself; for that could not be; for we are told, (Gen. 1. ult.) that, at the close of the creation everything was very good. This fruit was not forbidden because it was evil, but it was evil because it was forbidden. It was forbidden for the

trial of man's obedience. Not that God knew not what was in man, and what he would be, but to discover the creature's weakness to himself without God, and that he might thence take occasion of advancing his own glory impaired by the sin of man, in a more illustrious manner than if innocent Adam had continued in his primitive state. But it may be asked, Why did God make choice of this for the trial of man? I answer, God did so most reasonably. For,

(1.) This being a thing in itself indifferent, was most meet for the trial of his obedience. For hereby his obedience was to turn upon the precise point of the will of God, which would have been the plainest evidence of obedience. Had it been to love God or his neighbor, nature itself taught him to do so, and by the natural make of his soul he was inclined to this. What trial would that have been to a man newly created, and loaded with benefits from God, not to take another god, worship images, or take his name in vain, when he saw all to be God's creatures or servants; to keep the sabbath, which was to return once a-week only? He had no father or mother to honor, none to kill but her that was his own flesh, none to commit adultery with, none to steal from, none to bear false witness against, none to covet their goods. Thus the prohibition of a thing in itself indifferent was a proper test, and the only proper test for the trial of man.

(2.) Thus man's obedience or disobedience would be most clear and conspicuous, being in an external thing whereof his very senses might he judge; which could not be in the internal acts of obedience.

(3.) This was most proper for asserting the sovereign dominion of God, who had set him down in a beautiful paradise, and made him lord of the world. Was it not very reasonable that God should keep one single tree from him, as a testimony of his holding God as his great Landlord?

(4.) This was most useful and necessary to man, as a memorandum of the state wherein he was created. For man was created with a free will to good, whereof the tree of life was an evidence but also to evil, whereof the tree of knowledge of good and evil was an evidence. So that in effect it was a continual watchword to him, and a beacon set up before him to beware of dashing on the rock of sin.

(5.) It was a great mercy to man, in that, beside the natural make of his soul, which was turned towards God as his chief happiness and end, he had this prohibition set to keep it in that posture. For as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hand, (Ex. 17:12) so man had the fabric of his body looking upward, and this fair tree forbidden him, to teach him that his happiness lay not in the creatures, but in God. So that this tree being forbidden was a sign of emptiness hung before the creature's door, with that inscription, Here is not your rest; the creature's hand pointing man away from themselves to God, as the alone fountain of happiness.

(6.) Lastly, This was a compend of the whole law of God, wherein all was summarily comprehended, viz. love to God, and his neighbor, as will afterwards be made appear.

III. I come now to consider the evil of this first sin. Some may be ready to say, Was not the eating of the forbidden fruit a little sin? So it appears indeed in the sight of blind man, whose eye being put out with it, sees not the great majesty of God, and the horrid evil of the action. But indeed it was more horrible if ye consider,

1. The aggravations of it.
2. The nature of it.
3. The effects of it.

First, Let us view the aggravations of this first sin. Consider,

1. The person who did it. I may say it was not a sinner that sinned, but an innocent person, free from all inclination to evil; one whom God made able to stand if he would, and endued with the image of God, without any mixture of sinful ignorance, perverseness of will, or irregularity of affections. No wonder to see a man with a poor stock soon broken: but that a man who had such a large stock should play the bankrupt, was horrid indeed.

2. What was the thing for which he broke the command. Achan had a wedge of gold to tempt him, and Judas thirty pieces of silver to entice his covetous disposition. But what was the enticing object in Adam's case? The fruit of a tree: a small thing indeed: but the smaller the thing was, the more inexcusable the sinner, whom Satan could draw after him by so slender a thread. What need had he of that, when God had given him abundance of other fruit? But, with David, Adam spares his own flock, and takes his neighbor's one lamb.

3. The persons wronged by this sin. He sinned against God himself, to whom he owed the strictest obedience; against his soul and body, upon which he brought wrath and a curse; against all his posterity, who were then in his loins, upon whom his sin has entailed a scene of evils, under which the human race will groan to the end of time. Never did one sin strike against so many at once.

4. The time of this transgression. Man was scarcely well come out of the hand of his Creator, till he lifted up his heel against him. He stood very short while, till he turned giddy with ambition, and fell into disgrace. It is thought probable, he fell the same day he was created; and such an early revolt from his allegiance was a very high aggravation of his sin.

5. The place where the crime was committed. In paradise, where every plant and flower were proclaiming the glory of God, and where he wanted nothing that was necessary for him. In the presence-chamber, as it were, he struck at his Sovereign Lord and King. So his offence was aggravated like the murder of Zacharias, whom the Jews slew between the temple and the altar, (Matt. 23:35).

Secondly, The nature of this sin. It was not one single sin, but a complication of all evils, a violation of the whole law of God, and a total apostasy from him in heart, lip, and life. This was a sin whereby at one touch both the natural and positive law was trampled under foot; yea, by which all the ten commandments were struck at, at once.

1. Did they not chose new gods: when, by eating this fruit, they made their belly their god; self their god; nay the devil their god, when they conspired with him against God, being filled with pride and ambition as he to be like God; when they believed the devil and mistrusted God, and shook off the yoke of his dominion, turning rebels to him, and being most unthankful for the divine goodness expressed towards them? Rebel-man set up a trinity, (1.) Of his belly, for sensuality. (2.) Of himself, by ambition; and, (3.) Of the devil, by believing him, and disbelieving his Creator.

2. Though man at first received, yet he did not observe that great ordinance of God about the forbidden fruit. He contemned that ordinance which God had most plainly appointed, and would needs carve out to himself how he would serve the Lord.

He took the name of the Lord his God in vain, despising his attributes, whereby he makes himself known, his justice, truth, power, &c. Profaning God's ordinance, that sacramental tree; abusing his word, by not giving credit to it; and abusing his works,

that creature which he should not have touched; and violently misconstruing the work of providence, as if God, by that act of forbidding them that tree, had minded to keep them from happiness. And therefore though there was no man to punish them, God suffered them not to escape his righteous judgment.

4. He was so far from remembering the Sabbath to keep it holy, that he put himself out of all case for serving God ere it came, by this means. He kept not that state of rest wherein God had placed him.

5. Adam honored not his Father in heaven. Both our first parents minded not their relative duties. Eve forgets herself, and acts without advice of her husband, to the ruin of both; and Adam, instead of admonishing her to repent, yields to the temptation too, and so confirms her in her wickedness. They forgot all duty to their posterity. Therefore their days were not long in the land which the Lord their God gave them.

6. He was the greatest murderer that ever lived. By this act he was a child-murderer, cutting the throats of all his posterity; and he was a self-murderer too.

7. Our first parents were fain to cover their nakedness with fig-leaves, which their luxury and sensuality had brought them too.

8. Adam committed theft; and was but a thief and a robber in taking that which was not his own, against the will of the great Owner. He was the Achan in the camp.

9. He bare false witness against the Lord, when he ate of the forbidden fruit. It was an avouching, that God's word was not to be believed, that the Lord dealt hardly and scantily with him, and grudged his happiness.

10. He was discontented with that happy state wherein God had placed him, he was not content with his lot, and therefore, like another king of Babylon, he coveted an evil covetousness to his house; which ruined both himself and them.

Thirdly, Consider the effects of this first sin.

1. God was robbed of his glory, that he should have had from the creature's active obedience. He was made and well qualified for glorifying his Creator; but breaking covenant with God, and falling under the curse of the law, he was quite indisposed for that work. He could aim no more at this mark which God set before him.

2. God's image was defaced; the King of Heaven's picture was rent in pieces. What a huge offence would it be to come into a workman's shop, and with one touch dash in pieces a curious piece of work that he had made? Yet thus offensively did Adam behave, spurning at the image of God, and quite defacing it from his soul.

3. Adam and all his posterity were ruined by this fatal transgression. It opened the sluice to all that flood of miseries that has overspread the face of the earth. At this gate sin and death entered into the world, where they will reign till time shall be no more. God is just and holy; and if the first sin had not deserved this punishment, it would not have been inflicted with such a mark of indignation.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. Say not when ye are tempted, it is but a little sin and therefore ye may act it. Consider, that which in the commission is but as the little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, when God comes to judgment, or conscience gets up, will cover the face of the heavens. Little do ye

know what a small temptation may be big with. A man may drown in a little rivulet as well as in the deep sea.

2. Then God's will is a sufficient bar to hold us back from anything if we would be safe. And therefore let us know, that where there is no more to be a hedge to us but the bare command of God, if we leap over it, a serpent will bite us. Ah! how few know what it is to be restrained by a bare command of God! Ah! the generality leap over the hedge of God's will and law, and live as if fear were no restraint upon them from the God of heaven, who will severely punish all transgressions of his law.

3. Beware of the pleasure of your senses, and the pride of life. The lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh ruined the world at first, and do so still. The devil shoots his darts by the eye into the soul, which is weaker now than it was in the primitive state, and more liable to deception. Therefore watch your eyes and ears. Have a care of sensuality. Eating ruined Adam and Eve; and still ruins many, who eat not for God or his glory, but to satisfy their sensual appetite, as they did.

4. Lastly, O prize Christ, who to redeem lost man, did hang upon a tree, and drink the cup of wrath as the bitter fruits of sin, and was buried in a garden. The first Adam ate of the forbidden tree, and Christ hung on the cursed tree. Adam's preposterous love to his wife made him sin, and Christ's love to his spouse made him suffer. Our first parents pleased their sensual appetite with the taste of the pleasant fruit of the forbidden tree, and therefore Christ got vinegar mixed with gall to drink upon the cross-tree. Adam sinned in a garden, and in a garden was Christ buried. By eating the forbidden fruit, death came upon all men to condemnation; and by eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ, life is brought to the soul. O

then, sinners, flee unto the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath restored that which the first Adam took away; and ye shall be reinstated in all that happiness and favor with God which he forfeited by eating the forbidden fruit.