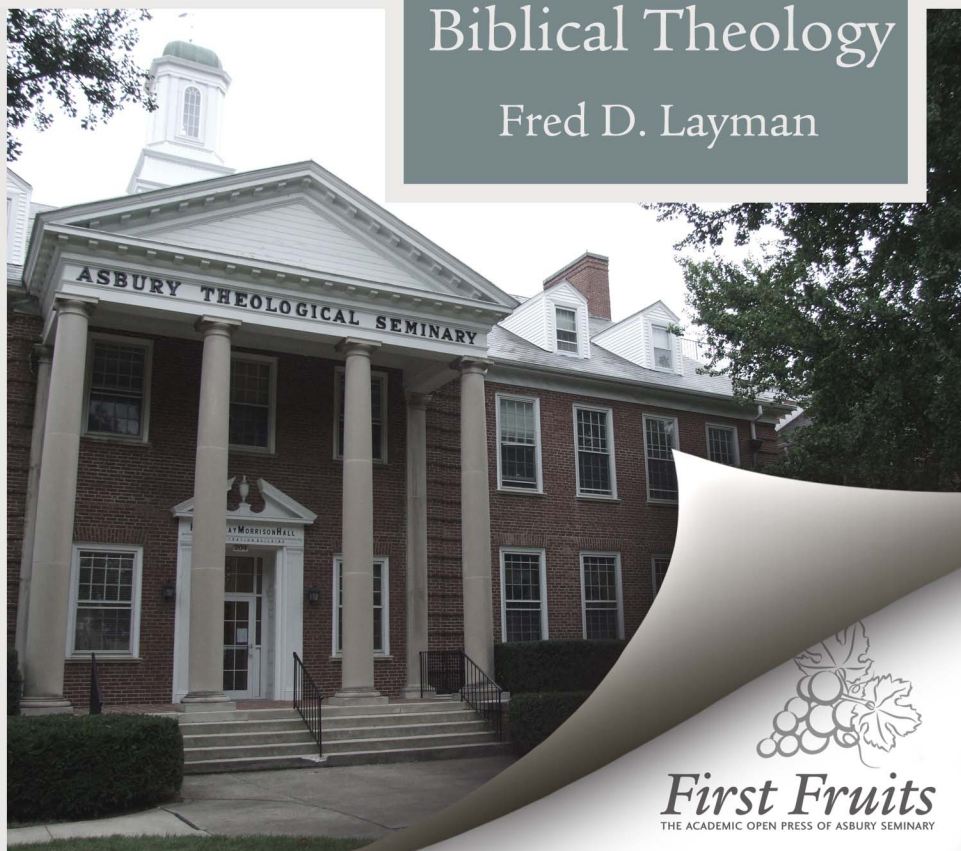


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Man and Sin in
the Perspective of
Biblical Theology

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Fred D. Layman

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The limits of this study are suggested by the title. Consideration will be given to the theme of “Man and Sin” from the perspective of contemporary Biblical Theology. The restrictions of space suggested for these essays, however, require further limitations in the number of matters, which can be treated profitably. The temptation to do an analysis of the various psychical and physical terms found in biblical anthropology—as important as that would be for the theme—had to be resisted.¹ A word study on the numerous designations for sin in the Old and New Testaments could deepen our understanding of that theme,² but the present study attempts only to approach the subject generally and then to consider in some depth the matter of original sin in the biblical perspective.

Within these limits then, the theme “Man and Sin” will be under three main headings: Man As the Image of God, The Holistic Man, and Original Sin in the Biblical Perspective.

One remaining preliminary observation: A common weakness of studies on the theme of man and sin is that they are highly individualistic and attempt to consider man in isolation from the community. The present essay does not escape that criticism. As originally planned, this study was to include an additional section titled Man in His Relatedness. Biblical man is viewed in the context of human history, and particularly within the communities of Israel and Church. He is involved in society and cannot be isolated from it. Even more significant is the fact that man is understood in relation to God in the Bible, apart from whom his existence disintegrates into absurdity and meaninglessness. This relatedness to God and to the community is a basic premise underlying all of the anthropological statements of Scripture.³

This line of thought has not been developed in the present study, however, because later essays in this series will treat various dimensions of Christian social ethics.

Man As The Image Of God

The Old Testament references to man as the image and likeness of God are few and brief. Genesis 1:26 reads in part, "Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." There is a further reference to the creation of man "...in the likeness of God" in Genesis 5:1, and a final statement in Genesis 9:6 that "...God made man in his own image." This is the extent of the image motif in the Old Testament. The scarcity and brevity of the Old Testament passages however, stand in contrast to the abundant and often lengthy interpretations of the theme in the history of theology. Karl Barth has surveyed the treatment of the doctrine and has shown that the general tendency has been to divorce the concept from its biblical framework and to fill in its meaning in terms of the view of man which has prevailed at given points in history.⁴

Speaking broadly, the various interpretations of the image of God in the history of theology may be classified as "substantive" or as "relational" interpretations.⁵ The substantive view regards the image of God to be some entity structured into man's being by the Creator; it then proceeds to attempt to identify that entity. Both physical and rational faculties have been designated as the *locus* of the image in man.⁶ In contrast to most other creatures, it has been noted by some interpreters that man was created to stand and to walk in an upright physical posture. This symbolized his place in the creation, both as having a special relationship to the Creator and as commissioned with a ruling vocation in relation to the other creatures.⁷

More often, however, the image of God has been identified with the rational side of man's nature. From at least the second century A.D. onward, a progressive synthesizing of biblical and Greek thought was carried out by Christian theologians, with the result, in this instance that the biblical view of man came to be interpreted in categories supplied by the Greek idealistic tradition.⁸ When this view of man was

carried over into Christian theology, the image of God was identified with the human soul, which, in turn, was then invested with the attributes of the Greek soul, that is, with spirituality, rationality, and immortality.

Since Karl Barth, Western theology has been engaged in restating Christian thought in interpersonal and relational language, rather than in abstract language, which is divorced from man's life situation. In this approach, the vertical I-Thou relation between God and man became determinative for explicating the various themes of theology. Under this influence, recent theologians have generally abandoned the attempt to identify the image of God as some element in man's nature, finding it rather in the unique relationship which man is given with God in his creation. For Barth, the image of God is not a quality or attribute of man which corresponds to a like entity in God (*analogia entis*), but is a relationship established by God into which man is called (*analogia relationis*).⁹ For Brunner, the image refers to a being-in-relation in which man has been called into existence by the Creator to answer God in believing and responsive love, and to exist in obedience and responsibility for all that that relationship involves.¹⁰

Twentieth century Old Testament Biblical Theology has not produced any more unanimity on the meaning of the image of God than has Dogmatic Theology. D. J. A. Clines has delineated the same tendencies toward spiritual and physical interpretations of the term among the Old Testament theologians, which have been found among the systematicians.¹¹ Until 1940, Biblical theologians generally understood the image of God to have spiritual, or vocational, or relational meanings.¹² After 1940, largely due to the influence of Herman Gunkel, the interpretation of the image as a correspondence between the external forms of God and man came to dominate Old Testament scholarship. From the History of Religions perspective it was pointed out that in Babylonian religion, man's outward form is a copy of God's form so that man bears a structural similarity to God.¹³ Thus H. Wheeler

Robinson concluded that the most obvious meaning of Genesis 1:26 was that “the bodily form of man was made after the pattern of the bodily form of God (the substance being different...)”¹⁴

The discussion to this point has attempted to set the boundaries and to suggest the major issues in the interpretation of the image of God concept. A more detailed analysis of the relevant passages is now in order.

The two Hebrew words for “image” and “likeness” are *šelem* and *demuth* respectively.¹⁵ In the Old Testament the word *šelem* most commonly refers to two or three dimensional representations of gods, of men, or of other creatures (2 Kings 11:18; 2 Chronicles 23:17; Numbers 33:52; Amos 5:26; Ezekiel 7:20; 16:17; 23:14f; 1 Samuel 6:5,11). Twice the word is used in a metaphorical sense and means “shadow” (Psalm 39:6), “dream” or “phantom” (Psalm 73:20). The word is used once to speak of the image conveyed from Adam to his son Seth (Genesis 5:3). Finally, the word is used three times to refer to man as the image of God (Genesis 1:26f., 9:6). Man is thereby understood to be created after the pattern of God. He is thus a representation, which corresponds to a model, a copy of an original.¹⁶ Though such language was understood literally and physically most everywhere else in the Ancient Near East, this is probably¹⁷ not the case in the Old Testament. The anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms, whereby human bodily parts and psychical functions are ascribed to God, function to depict God as a Person rather than to describe His physical form.¹⁸

The second word, “likeness,” is commonly understood to have a limiting effect on the word “image.” Since the Hebrew word *šelem* was more commonly applied to idols, the intent of the second word, *demuth*, is to define the first term more closely within the context of the Hebrew belief in the “otherness” and uniqueness of God. Von Rad points out that the Old Testament reservations in this connection are related to the larger view of the transcendence of God in Hebrew faith.

The central emphasis in Old Testament anthropology is on the dust-character and frailty of man who cannot stand before the presence of the divine holiness. The image idea, though highly significant, is nonetheless secondary to the thought of man's creatureliness.¹⁹

It is significant to note here that man himself, in his totality, is created in the image of God. The Hebrew view of man emphasizes the unity and wholeness of man, in contrast to later Greek dualistic views, which made qualitative distinctions between man's rational and physical natures.²⁰ Thus the image of God is limited neither to man's soul nor to his body, but is a statement about man as a whole.²¹

Further, it is to be noted that all men are created in the image of God. The significance of this fact becomes apparent when it is observed that in all the Ancient Near East the term "image of God" is limited almost exclusively to the king, only rarely is it ascribed to the priest, and is almost never a designation applying to common men.²² In Israel the image of God was characteristic of all mankind without distinction, including king and commoner, Israelite and non-Israelite, man and woman.²³ This understanding is reflected, among other things, in the relatively higher dignity given to women, in the democratic equality of all Hebrews, in the humane treatment of foreigners and slaves, and in the restraining laws imposed to limit inhumanity in warfare.²⁴

The designation "image of God" means in the first instance that man has a special relation to God unique to the rest of the creation. He is in some way like God to a degree not true of any other creature. He is understood fundamentally from above rather than from below. He is more than the most highly developed of animals. His significance goes beyond that of an infinitesimal speck of dust within the enormous expanse of the universe. As the image of God he has been made a "...little less than God" (Psalm 8:5), subject only to the lordship of his Creator. He has been called into communion with God and to responsibility before God.²⁵

Genesis does not go further to define explicitly the content of the image of God nor to state what was given to man to make him capable of such communion with God above all other creatures. There are no descriptions of the special qualities of the human soul nor definitions of the Subjective nature of original righteousness. The author is concerned only to state the special place and responsibility of man in the creation and he does not answer the metaphysical questions of a later time. His outlook is fundamentally existential rather than ontological.²⁶

However, the image of God would seem to involve more than a mere relationship because it continues in some manner even after the relationship between man and God is interrupted by sin (Genesis 9:2). For this reason, several recent writers have refused to regard the relational and substantial interpretations of the image of God as mutually exclusive, but rather as complementary to each other.²⁷ But definitions of the nature of man's superior endowment as a result of being created in God's image proceed more on the basis of logical implications from, rather than on the basis of, explicit pronouncements in the Genesis passage. Such attempts always run the risk of reading modern anthropological values into the biblical record. Precise definition seems to be eliminated due to the brevity of the image passages.

The term "image of God," in the second instance, involves a vocational dimension, that is, man is to rule over the creation as God's steward and vice-regent. Man is thus equipped by the Creator to carry out this function in the earth. In the Genesis passage, the vocation of rulership and development of the creation follows closely upon the statement of man's creation in God's image (Genesis 1:26-30). There is general agreement among Old Testament scholars that the eighth Psalm is closely related to the image motif, though the words *šelem* and *demuth* are not found in the passage. There mention is first made of man's creation whereby he was endowed with "glory" (*kābōd*) and "honor" (*hādār*). Horst

comments, “This crowning with glory and honor, that is to say, with outward ‘majesty’ and with inward ‘gravity’ and ‘power,’ authorizes and legitimizes him in the exercise of the *dominium terrae*.”²⁸ This is as close as the Old Testament comes to defining the content of the divine image. Further, it is to be noted that the image of God is never discussed in abstraction—as an entity in and of itself—in the Old Testament, but always in the context of its function in the divinely appointed vocation of rulership (Genesis 1:26-30; 9:1-7; Psalm 8:3-8). Clines thus concludes that “...though man’s rulership over the animals is not itself the image of God, no definition of the image is complete which does not refer to this function of rulership.”²⁹

Finally, the image of God in the Old Testament carries a representational meaning—man is to be the representative of God in the earth. In the ancient world an image functioned as the representative of a personage who was spiritually present but physically absent. Kings placed their statues in conquered lands to signify their real presence there, even though they were physically absent. When the king was referred to as the “image of God,” he was understood as the representative of the god to other men and the ruler of the creation at the appointment of the god. Idols were set up in the temples to signify the real presence of the god, even though it was known that the god was physically present in the heavens or at some other location. The image was thought to be united with the god by the presence of the divine fluid or spirit, which gave life to the dead matter making up the idol. The idol was very often fashioned in the supposed likeness of the deity, which it represented.³⁰

This is the background out of which the biblical idea of man as the image of God developed. Clines has made a convincing case that the preposition in the Hebrew of Genesis 1:26f and 9:6 should properly be translated “*as* the image of God,” rather than “*in* the image of God.”³¹ Man is placed in the earth as the representative of the transcendent God. Until verse 26 of the first chapter of Genesis, the only connection

between God and His creation was His word. After verse 26 the connection is established in man. Thus the context of the doctrine of man as the image of God is the larger tension of the Old Testament view of the transcendence and immanence of God. God stands outside the world order as its Creator and Lord and is not identified with, nor subject to, the creation. But he is immanently present within the creation in the person of the man whom he has brought into existence, called into fellowship, and established as his representative in the earth. As such, man is to serve the Creator faithfully, worship Him supremely, and glorify Him in the creation by portraying the character of the God whose image he is.³²

The image and likeness motif is expressed in the New Testament by the words *eikōn*, *homoīōsis*, *morphēe*, and *charaktēr*. 1 Corinthians 11:7 and James 3:7 make it clear that the New Testament regards all en as yet being the image of God in some sense, in spite of sin. As in the Old Testament, the image theme is most usually stated in the context of the creation motif, particularly in the old creation—new creation dialectic. But the theme is especially connected with Christology and soteriology in the New Testament. The old creation, descended from the original man, is enslaved by sin and death. The image of God, though not effaced, has become enshrouded in darkness. Man has lost his way. As his worst, he suppresses the knowledge of God and his glory, substituting images of his own making (Romans 1:18-31). At his best, he gives only a partial and distorted answer to the call of God. He has lost the knowledge of what it means to be the image of God.³³ Christ was sent forth as God's image and representative to restore the knowledge of God and to manifest what man was meant to be. After declaring that Christ is the "image of God" in 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul goes on to enlarge on the meaning of that term by saying:

For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give

the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6)

The author of Hebrews declares concerning the Son:

He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp (*charaktēr*) of his nature, upholding the universe by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:3).

As such, Christ is creator and ruler in the new creation, as man was called to be in the old creation (Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 1:3-2:10; cf. Philippians 2:6-11). Just as Adam bequeathed his image to members of the old creation (cf. Genesis 5:3), so also Christ shares his image with members of the new creation (1 Corinthians 15:45-49). God has ordained that the new man will be conformed to the image of Christ who is the firstborn of the new order (Romans 8:29). The Christian, as new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), is to put off the corrupted image of the old creation and is to “put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:5-25, especially verse 10; cf. Ephesians 4:17-32). But the full implications of the image of God are realized in the Christian only progressively (2 Corinthians 3:18) and will be consummated only at the resurrection (1 John 3:2)³⁴ Clines’ summary is a fitting conclusion to this’ part of the discussion on the image of God in the New Testament. He writes,

In Christ man sees what manhood was meant to be. In the Old Testament, all men are the image of God; in the New, where Christ is the one true image, men are image of God in so far as they are like Christ. The image is fully realized only through obedience to Christ; this is how man, the image of God, who is already man, already the image of God, can become fully man, fully the image of God.³⁵

The Holistic View of Man

Much of recent study on biblical anthropology has sought to delineate the distinguishing features of the Greek and Judeo-Christian conceptions of man. Such distinctions are important because Western views of man generally have their roots in the Greek tradition. Christian theology has a long history since the early church fathers of appropriating biblical statements about man and filling them with Greek meanings.³⁶

The Greek view of man from the sixth century B.C. onward may be designated as dualistic in nature.³⁷ Following Orphism Greek religion and philosophy were generally characterized by a body-soul dualism in which the highest state of man is achieved when the soul is finally liberated from matter to take up a purely spiritual existence or be merged into the prime substance of the universe. In this life the two components of man's nature are in necessary tension and conflict with each other. According to the-Pythagoreans, the soul never established interdependent relations with the body, and lost nothing when it left the body. For Plato, the soul is immortal, indestructible and pre-existent I to the body. Its destiny, after many reincarnations, is re-absorption into the transcendental world of Ideas. In the Stoic view, the human soul is a spark of the divine soul with which it will merge again at death.

The Hebrew conception of man, by contrast, may be designated as an unitary view.³⁸ Man is a psychophysical unity who is less than man when this unity is dissolved by death. The various parts of man are not antithetical to each other—as in dualism—but are regarded as aspects of one personality. It is characteristic of Hebrew thought that it conceptualizes things in their totality. It is thus synthetic and existential rather than analytical and speculative. The Hebrew mind was generally unable to imagine physical and metaphysical functions in isolation. The whole man was regarded as involved in each function and there were no sharp distinctions between the emotional, the spiritual, the rational and the physical.³⁹

Therefore, careful delineations and definitions of the components of human nature are lacking in the Old Testament because the Hebrews did not view man in this manner. For this reason, most discussions on the trichotomous versus the dichotomous natures of man are out of order because they are attempts to address questions arising out of a Greek conception of man to a view of man, which is essentially different.⁴⁰

The unitary view of man is seen particularly in the fact that both the physical and psychological components of man's nature are identified with psychical functions. As W. D. Stacey has indicated:

The Hebrew regarded the soul as almost physical and the physical parts as having psychical functions, so that, whatever activity a man was engaged in, the predominant aspect, be it soul, heart, face or hand, represented the whole person and included the other aspects.⁴¹

This interrelatedness can be illustrated by a study of the words "soul" and "spirit" in the Bible. The soul is designated as the vital principle of life in Genesis 2:7. This same function, however, is attributed to the spirit in Genesis 7:22, Job 27:3, Isaiah 42:5 and James 2:26. The emotions of anguish, distress, sorrow, anger and grief are ascribed both to the soul (Genesis 42:21, 1 Samuel 1:10, Psalm 6:3f., Jeremiah 18:25) and to the spirit (Genesis 26:35, 41:8, Judges 8:3, Job 7:11, Proverbs 16:32, Matthew 26:38, John 11:33). Rational functions are associated both with the soul (Psalm 139:14, Proverbs 19:2, 23:7, 24:14) and with the spirit (Exodus 28:3, Deuteronomy 34:9). The same is true of volitional functions in Deuteronomy 21:14, Exodus 35:21 and Matthew 26:41. Death can be described either as a departure of the soul (Genesis 35:18, Numbers 23:10, Luke 12:20, Acts 20:10) or of the spirit (Psalm 78:39, 104:29, Matthew 27:50, Luke 23:46, John 19:30, Acts 7:59, 1 Peter 3:19). The soul and spirit are paralleled in their experience of anguish and bitterness in Job 8:11 and yearning for God in Isaiah 26:9.

The integrative nature of biblical anthropology is seen even more clearly in instances when psychical functions are ascribed to the body. The bones may stand for the entire person (Isaiah 66:14) and may experience fear (Jeremiah 23:9), anguish (Psalm 6:2f.), impatience (Jeremiah 20:9), and envy (Proverbs 14:30). They are mentioned in parallelism with the soul in giving thanks to God (Psalm 35:9f.). The heart manifests joy (Judges 18:20), grief (1 Samuel 1:8), anger (Deuteronomy 19:6), hatred (Leviticus 19:17), envy (Proverbs 23:17), and courage (Psalm 27:3). The heart is connected with the will (1 Samuel 2:35, 2 Kings 12:5, Jeremiah 7:31), and with ethical judgments (Isaiah 6:10, Psalm 24:4). The bowels and inward parts are related to various emotional and rational activities (Isaiah 16:11, 63:15, Jeremiah 31:20, Proverbs 14:33, 22:18, Psalm 103:1, Job 20:20,23).⁴²

The New Testament view of man is deeply rooted in the Old Testament rather than in Hellenism, and reflects this same unitary view of man.⁴³ New Testament authors, and particularly Paul, elaborate and expand the Old Testament anthropological terms,⁴⁴ but their thought remains in essential continuity with Old Testament anthropology.

Any study of the nature of man in the Bible must therefore first recognize the fundamental unity of that nature and the holistic character of Hebrew anthropology. Descriptions of the qualities and characteristics of the various aspects of man are functional descriptions rather than analytical definitions. Even here there is a wide overlapping of functions so that we can observe only major tendencies to identify a given psychical function with a particular aspect of man's nature, knowing all the while that this same function is commonly elsewhere associated with another side of man's nature.

Original Sin In The Biblical Perspective

The Christian doctrine of original sin involves three elements: 1) the recognition that sin is more than an act but that it is also a matter of the heart and inner life of man; 2) an

apprehension of sin as a universal condition affecting all mankind; 3) the positing of a causal connection between the sin of Adam and the sinful condition of the race.

The Old Testament is already aware, of the distortion in human nature caused by sin. The connection between sinful acts and the condition of the heart is stated in the divine judgment pronounced on human nature in Genesis 6:5:

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Lest we conclude that this description fitted only Noah's generation, it is reiterated again in Genesis 8:21 as a general statement about mankind. According to Eichrodt, these verses point to an "...inner proclivity toward evil as deep-rooted condition of man...", to "...the evil character of human nature...", and to "...the sinful quality attaching to human nature in general as confirmed by the word of God himself."⁴⁵

Jeremiah concludes that, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). This condition of human nature is traced back to man's youth in Genesis 8:21, to his birth in Psalm 58:3, to the prenatal state and to the moment of conception in Psalm 51:5 where the Psalmist exclaims, "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Again, Eichrodt comments:

This sin is not a matter of occasional deviation from the right way, but of the consistent outcome of the natural tendency of his being, which is already planted in him by the inheritance passed on to him at his birth.⁴⁶

For the prophets, the hearts of the people were so corrupted and enslaved by sin the only remedy was the creation of a new heart in the eschatological age (Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26; cf. Jeremiah 24:7; cf. Psalm 51:10).

Another line of Old Testament thought speaks of the universality of sin in human experience. The Psalmist said,
 The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any that act wisely, that seek after God. They have all gone astray, they are all alike corrupt; there is none that does good, no, not one (Psalm 14:2-3).

This passage was later quoted by Paul (Romans 3:10-12) as the scriptural proof for the universal extent of sin. The author of I Kings 8:46 observed parenthetically, "...there is no man who does not sin..." According to Proverbs 20:9 and Ecclesiastes 7:20, no man can claim that he is without sin. The guilt of all men before God is further affirmed by Psalms 130:3 and 143:2. F. R. Tennant concluded that:

Such passages supply abundant evidence that, before the later Old Testament books were written, there was a deep sense among the Hebrews of sin as both absolutely universal in the race and all pervading in the individual's human nature.⁴⁷

The causal connection between the sin of Adam and the sinful condition of mankind is more difficult to establish on the basis of the Old Testament alone. Authorities who approach the Old Testament on a purely History of Religions basis are generally skeptical about such a connection. These scholars point out that though the narrative of Genesis 2-3 is alluded to at several later points,⁴⁸ the rest of the Old Testament makes no explicit attempt to connect the sinful situation of the race with the sin of Adam as the primal cause. Adam is mentioned only as a bad example in Job 31:33⁴⁹ but is not understood as the originating cause of human sin.⁵⁰ On the other hand, Old Testament scholars who, in addition to carrying out a History of Religions analysis, also contend for the revelational character of the Old Testament, often insist that the causal connection is the intent of the Genesis narrative and that this is implicit in much of the subsequent discussion of sin in the Old Testament. Thus

Eichrodt, for instance, is of the opinion that the narrative in Genesis 2-3 was intended by the author to be more than an account of the historical beginnings of sin in human history, but that Adam is there primarily understood as the cause of sin in his descendants. This is borne out by the close connection between Genesis 2-3, 6:5 and 8:21. Furthermore, later discussions of sin are said to “echo” and “have spiritual affinity” with Genesis 3 “...whether the worshipper himself was conscious of this at the time or not.”⁵¹ It is probably best, however, with Th. C. Vriezen, to regard the Old Testament doctrine of original sin as developing gradually across Old Testament religious history, a development brought to full expression in the New Testament, particularly in Paul.⁵² A proper understanding of progressive revelation does not demand that the full form of a New Testament doctrine be completely expressed in each part of the Old Testament. The understanding of original sin in the Jewish inter-testamental writings represents reflection based on the Old Testament scriptures.⁵³ A causal connection between the sinful predicament of the race and the primal sin of the first parents developed gradually from the book of Ecclesiasticus (ca. 180 B.C.) and attained its fullest statement in the last quarter of the first century A.D. in the books of 4 Ezra and Syriac Baruch. In Ecclesiasticus 25:34, it is said, “From a woman was the beginning of sin, and because of her we all die.” The causal connection becomes more obvious in Slavonic Enoch, Chapter 40 (ca. first quarter of the first century A.D.), the apocalypticist had a vision of hell and remarked, “I saw our forefathers from the beginning with Adam and Eve, and I sighed and wept and spake of the ruin *caused* by their wickedness.”

In 4 Ezra 7:119 (ca. the last quarter of the first century A.D.), the author laments,

O thou Adam, what hast thou done! For though
it was thou that sinned, the fall was not thine
alone, but ours also who are thy descendants!

According to 4 Ezra 3:21, it was not only Adam who transgressed and was overcome by sin, but also all who were born from him. It is added in 4:30-32 that present human evil is the outgrowth of an evil seed, which was first planted in the heart of Adam. It is clear from 4 Ezra that Adam involved the race in sin and that his descendants have been overcome by sin and an evil heart because of his deed.

Both 4 Ezra and Syriac Baruch wrestle with the problem of determinism in connection with the doctrine of original sin. Syriac Baruch 54:15-19, states initially, "...Adam first sinned and brought untimely death upon all "...But the author wants to avoid determinism and to make a place for individual freedom and responsibility. He thus adds immediately,

Yet those who were born from him, each one of them, has prepared for his own soul torment to come; and again each one of them has chosen for himself glories to come. Adam is, therefore, not the cause save only of his own soul, but each of us has been the Adam of his own soul.

Fourth Ezra 7:127-129 and 8:56 follows the same course. Human freedom and individual responsibility are asserted over against the doctrine of original sin with little attempt to resolve the tension. Adam is viewed as the originating cause of sin in human experience, but each man is made responsible for his own sin.

A second Jewish tradition dealing with the origin and nature of sin—especially significant for Pauline theology—is the rabbinic doctrine of the *yetzer hara*, or "evil inclination." The doctrine has its biblical basis in the Hebrew of Genesis 6:5 and 8:21 where the word for "imagination" of the heart of man is *yetzer*. The earliest inter-testamental reference to the *yetzer hara* is in Ecclesiasticus 15:11-14 (ca. 180 B.C.) where man's sin is traced to his *yetzer*. The later rabbinic doctrine elaborates this earlier passage.

W. D. Davies⁵⁴ has summarized the rabbinic teaching under six points, the essentials of which include the following emphases:

- 1) The locale of the *yetzer* is the heart, by which is understood the intellectual and volitional elements in man.
- 2) The evil *yetzer* motivates man to all kinds of sins but particularly to unchastity and idolatry.
- 3) God is said to be the origin of the *yetzer* but not of its evil. It was originally the divinely given impulse in human life toward self-preservation and propagation, which was subverted and enslaved by the fall.
- 4) The evil *yetzer* was always with man and could be held under control by reading of the Torah or by uttering an oath in the name of the Lord, but man could never be freed from it in this life.
- 5) But in the eschatological Age to Come, the evil *yetzer* would be slain and man would be freed from its power forever.
- 6) Most of the rabbis held that the evil *yetzer* entered man at birth, or before birth, but it was not until the age of thirteen, when a young man became a son of the covenant, that the struggle with the *yetzer* began.

The New Testament writers take for granted the Old Testament teaching on the corrupting effect an universal extent of sin.⁵⁵ But it is the Apostle Paul who develops the idea of original sin most fully in the New Testament. The *locus classicus* for the doctrine is found in Romans 5:12-21. It must be kept in mind, however, in approaching the passage that it is part of a larger context extending from Romans 5 through 8 and is related to the larger themes of justification and sanctification, which are treated there. Paul does not here attempt to develop an exhaustive and systematic treatment of original sin. He is

content merely to affirm that the present experiences of sin and death have their historical origin and cause in the sin of the first man. Throughout, his larger concern is to magnify the comprehensiveness of the work of Christ, over against whom Adam is placed in antithesis.

The limits of this study exclude any treatment or evaluation of the various interpretations of the Romans 5 passage, which have been advanced in the history of the church.⁵⁶ The tendency has been to raise more questions than Paul answered here and to answer questions, which Paul probably never had in mind when he wrote the passage. The Apostle does not make clear in what sense Adam acted for his descendants, or, vice-versa, how his posterity was involved in his original act of sin. Nor does he specify clearly how sin and death are transmitted to each generation from the original parents.

Our concern at this point must be limited to the more obvious content of the passage. The causal connection⁵⁷ between the sin of Adam and the sin of mankind is stated by Paul in 5:12 as an axiom, which needs no further proof. The sin of the first man had three results for his descendants: the race became enslaved to sin (5:12,19), it was made subject to death (5:12,14, 15, 17, 21), and it passed under divine judgment and condemnation (5:16, 18). As such, the family headed by Adam became the old creation, which is characterized by sin and death, and stands in contrast to the new family headed by Christ, which is characterized by righteousness and life (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9f.; Galatians 6:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17).⁵⁸

In Romans 5, Paul discusses the problems of sin and death as a matter of history and in their collective aspects with reference to the race as a whole. In Romans 7, he discusses what it means to the individual to be under the powers of sin and death. Romans 5 thus treats original sin from the historical and racial perspectives, while Romans 7 approaches the same

theme in terms of the personal and psychological aspects of original sin.⁵⁹

It should be stated at the outset that Paul does not suggest that the sin of Adam injected some substantive virus into each of his descendants, which was absent before the fall, but was added afterward as a biological impulse to sin. This is not what it means to be “carnal” (*sarkinos*, v. 14). Such a view would involve a metaphysical dualism whereby the body is regarded as inherently evil, an unacceptable idea to a Hebrew who believed that God was the Creator of all material being.⁶⁰ The “principle of sin” (v. 25)⁶¹ at work in the flesh is not understood by Paul in such a crassly materialistic fashion.

But neither is the language of deprivation adequate to understand Romans 7. Paul has in mind more than a loss of fellowship with God and the disintegration of a relationship. The rabbinic doctrine of the *yetzer hara* is here appropriated and adapted by Paul to speak of the power of sin in human life.⁶² He understands that a dynamic force of sin has taken up residence in fallen human personality and operates to bring the total man under its control. Throughout the passage, sin is regarded as an immanent power, sharply distinguished from the individual in whom it dwells, but nonetheless subjectively present, dominating the life and holding it in bondage.⁶³ Notice in Paul’s language how the dynamic force of sin is carefully distinguished from the self at the same time that it wages a successful battle against and within the self:

But sin...wrought in me all kinds of covetousness (7:8). For sin...deceived me and...killed me (7:11). It was sin working death in me...(7:13). So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin, which dwells within me (7:17, 20).

But I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin, which dwells in my members (7:23) immediate sphere of this “principle of sin” is the flesh, or, synonymously, the “members” of the body. Besides its reference to the physical substance of

which man is made, the word “flesh” is also used in both Testaments to denote man in his creaturely weakness.⁶⁴ Paul uses the word “flesh” both in a morally neutral and in a morally bad sense. In the latter instance, there is an almost automatic association of flesh with sin. Sin for him is a “quasi-personal power”⁶⁵ which sets up its base of operation in the weakest part of man’s nature and from that base it spreads its control to all parts of man’s being. W. D. Stacey’s description of this process is worth noting:

In it [Romans 7] sin is the active power, the flesh is passive. Sin aims at subduing the entire man and the flesh is the element most easily corrupted. Sin and the flesh are thus differentiated, the former being dynamic and corrupting, the latter being passive and corrupted...Sin, residing in the flesh, sets up a war against man’s better nature (Romans 7:23). Man’s natural desires are no longer the morally indifferent expressions of the will to live, they become sinful and rebellious, and they alienate the man from God and envelop him in spiritual death.⁶⁶

The principle of sin then is not fundamentally some impulse, biological or psychological, which belongs essentially to fallen human nature, but rather is a spiritual dynamic, alien and distinct from human nature at the same time that it is immanently present within human nature. The operation and function of this spiritual dynamic is to enslave and condition the biological and psychological drives of human life in the service of sin.

Just as Christ and Adam are paralleled in Romans 5, two spiritual dynamics are juxtaposed in Romans 7 and 8 and set in antithesis to each other. To be in Adam is to be indwelt by the power of sin and bound by death; to be in Christ is to be indwelt by the power of the Holy Spirit and set free for life. This indicative becomes the basis for the imperative to holy, spirit-

filled living. The rabbinic expectation that the *yetzer hara* would be destroyed in the Messianic Age has become a reality for Paul, because to him the Christ-event signaled the turn of the ages and the dawning of the new creation.⁶⁷ This in turn accounts for the radical death and liberation language which he uses with reference to original sin and all that belongs to the old creation (Romans 6:1-11, especially verse 6; 8:2, 10. 12, 13, 15, etc.)

But that is the subject for a later essay in this series, so this discussion must be terminated at this point.

Conclusion

Reinhold Niebuhr has observed that “the Christian view of human nature is involved in the paradox of claiming a higher stature for man and of taking a more serious view of evil than other anthropology.”⁶⁸ The assertion that man bears the image of God is to affirm his uniqueness with reference to the sphere of nature. Man does not find his destiny by total identification with nature as the most intelligent of animals. There is that within him, which seeks to transcend, his world and which orients him toward his Creator.⁶⁹ Man’s destiny in the world is only realized as he responds to the call of God in loving obedience and responsibility.

But the Scriptures tell us that this is precisely what man has failed to do. He refuses to acknowledge his creatureliness and attempts to set himself in the place of God. He wants to look to himself as the source of his life and personal security. But he is constantly brought under bondage to the very sphere of nature, which he has attempted to control from himself, and loses his true identity and selfhood in the process.⁷⁰ This is the meaning of sin, and it is to this paradoxical situation that the biblical message of salvation is addressed.

Notes

¹ Helpful studies in this connection include: A. R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1949); H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Doctrine of Man* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1947 reprint); C. Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Man* (London: Epworth Press, 1951); W. D. Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1956); Robert Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971); W. G. Kúmmel, *Man in the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1963).

² See Stefan Porubcan, *Sin in the Old Testament* (Rome: Herder, 1963); C. Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Sin* (London: Epworth Press, 1953). Most of the standard Old and New Testament theologies also have sections on the theme.

³ Jean R. Zurcher, "The Christian View of Man: I," *Andrews Seminary Studies*, 2 (1964), 157; Choan-Seng Song, "Man and the Redemption of the World," *Southeast Asia Journal of Theology*, 2 (4, 1961), 64f.; W. R. Nelson, "Pauline Anthropology: Its Relation to Christ and His Church," *Interpretation*, 14 (1960), 14ff; Otto A. Piper, "The Biblical Understanding of Man," *Theology Today*, 1 (1944), 191.

⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1958), III/1, 192f.; cf. also K. L. Schmidt, "'Homo Imago Dei' im alten und neuen Testament," *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, 15 (1947/48), 158-162.

⁵ R. G. Crawford, "The Image of God," *Expository Times*, 77 (1966), 233f.

⁶ James Barr, "The Image of God in the Book of Genesis," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 51 (1968), 12.

⁷ D. J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin*, 19 (1968), 57f.

⁸ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles/ Scribner's Sons, 1943), 49, 152-161. This tendency is already observable, however, in the inter-testamental Hellenistic-Jewish book of Wisdom 2:23.

⁹ Barth, *ibid.*, 184f., 195f., 199.

¹⁰ Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), 102-105.

¹¹ Clines, *ibid.*, 54-61. Clines' presentation is a summary of a survey by J. J. Stamm, "Die Imago-Lehre von Karl Barth und die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft," in *Antwort. Festschrift für Karl Barth*, ed. by E. Wolf et al. (Zelliken-Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1956), 84-98.

¹² Clines, *ibid.*, 55f.

¹³ Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1967). II, 122.

¹⁴ H. Wheeler Robinson, "Hebrew Psychology," in *The People and the Book*, ed. by A. S. Peake (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 369.

¹⁵ Of the several Hebrew words which could have been used to convey the idea intended in the Genesis 1:26f passage, Barr, "Image of God," 15-24, has shown that *šelem* and *deuth* had less provocative associations with idolatry and were least offensive to the belief in the uniqueness of God.

¹⁶ On this basis, Friedrich Horst has suggested that the references to man as "image" and "likeness" of God implies in turn that God is the "prototype" and "original." See his "Face to Face. The Biblical Doctrine of the Image of God," *Interpretation* 4 (1950), 259-277.

¹⁷ Those who interpret the image of God to have reference to man's upright posture or physical form generally see some connection between the Old Testament and the larger Ancient Near Eastern view. Cf. Clines, "Image of God," 56-59, 70-73, and the bibliography there.

¹⁸ Clines, *ibid.*, 70f.; cf. Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Newton, Massachusetts: Charles T. Bradford Co., 1970), 319-323.

¹⁹ See von Rad's essay in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), II, 390. Cf. Horst, *op. cit.*, 261, and Barr, "Image of God," 24. The disclaimer by Clines, *op. cit.*, 91f., in this connection, however, suggests some caution along this line of interpretation.

²⁰ Cf. pp. 11 below.

²¹ Clines, *op. cit.*, 57, 79, 87, 101; cf. von Rad, *TDNT*, II, 391.

²² Clines, *op. cit.*, 83ff., 92-95.

²³ On Barth's view that the image of God is found fundamentally in the man-woman relationship, see his *Church Dogmatics*, III/1, 184f., 195f., 199.

²⁴ Clines, *op. cit.*, 60, 94f.; Vriezen, *Old Testament Theology*, 170f., 387-390, 398f.; Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 140, II, 318f.

²⁵ Clines, *ibid.*, 53f.; Horst, "Face to Face," 266f.

²⁶ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, II, 129f.; Barr, "Image of God," 25f.; Clines, *ibid.*, 101.

²⁷ Crawford, "Image of God," cites J. K. S. Reid's *Our Life in Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1963), in this connection.

²⁸ Horst, "Face to Face," 262.

²⁹ Clines, "Image of God," 97; cf. P. C. Craigie, "Hebrew Thought About God and Nature and Its Contemporary Significance," *Canadian Journal of Theology*, 16 (1970), 6.

³⁰ Clines, "Image of God," 83f., 87-92; cf. Jean R. Zurcher, "The Christian View of Man: II," *Andrews Seminary Studies*, 3 (1,965), 71f.; Kleinknecht, *TDNT*, II, 389f.

³¹ Clines, "Image of God," 70-80. It is the difference between the *beth essentiae* and the normative *beth* in Hebrew. It should be pointed out, however, that most Old Testament interpreters opt for the narrative *beth* excluded under either interpretation, but it is strengthened if the preposition is regarded as a *beth essentiae*.

³² Clines, "Image of God," 88, 92.

³³ This accounts for the common occurrence of the themes of darkness, old creation, light, glory, knowledge, understanding and seeing in close proximity to the image theme in the New Testament, cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:9-15, 3:5-11, Hebrews 1:3.

³⁴ Horst, "Face to Face," 269f.; Clines, "Image of God," 101f.

³⁵ Clines, "Image of God," 103; cf. Kittel, *TDNT*, 395f.

³⁶ Samuel Laeuchli, "Monism and Dualism in the Pauline Anthropology," *Biblical Research* 3 (1958), 15f.; Piper, "Biblical Understanding of Man," 190; Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man*, 4-12.

³⁷ A convenient survey of the Greek understanding of man has been written by W. D. Stacey, "The Greek View of Man," in his *Pauline View of Man*, 59-81.

³⁸ The adjective "unitary" is preferable to the term "monistic" which has been used by several recent authors who seem to think that the proper alternative to dualism is monism when describing the biblical view of man. The word "unitary" signifies that man is composed of more than one entity but that these separate entities intercohere in the one reality of man. The term "monistic" more properly fits the modern empirical view of man in which man is regarded as composed of only one substance, matter, and in which such words as "spirit," "soul," "mind," and "conscience" are poetic word-symbols describing brain and nerve cell activities or glandular functions.

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- ³⁹ A. R. Johnson, *Vitality of the Individual*, 7f.; cf. Stacey, *Pauline View of Man*, 85, 87.
- ⁴⁰ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 148f.; Vriezen, *Old Testament Theology*, 407f.
- ⁴¹ Stacey, *Pauline View of Man*, 85, cf. 88-95.
- ⁴² H. Wheeler Robinson, "Hebrew Psychology," 353; Stacey, *op. cit.*, 91-95.
- ⁴³ W. G. Kümmel, *Man in the New Testament*, 83; cf. D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 37f.
- ⁴⁴ E.g., Paul's use of the word *nous* to denote functions of the heart (*leb*) in the Old Testament, cf. Stacey, *Pauline View of Man*, 196f., 198-205.
- ⁴⁵ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, II, 389, 407, 396.
- ⁴⁶ Eichrodt, *ib.d.*, 410.
- ⁴⁷ F. R. Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin* (New York: Schecken Books, 1968 reprint of 1903 ed.), 104.
- ⁴⁸ Gen. 5:29, Isaiah 65:25, Job 10:9, 34:14f., Psalms 104:29f., 146:4, Ecc. 12:7, Proverbs 3:18, 11:20, 13:12,14; Gen. 13:10, Isaiah 51:3, Ezekiel 28: 13-15, 31:7-9, 16-18, 36:25.
- ⁴⁹ Possibly also in Hosea 6:6, depending on the translation of *adam* as a proper name or as a generic reference to mankind.

⁵⁰ Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Doctrine of Man*, 58-60; F. R. Tennant, *Sources*, 89-94, 100, 104; N. P. Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1927), 12-20. It is interesting in the connection that although there is a highly developed conception of social solidarity in the Old Testament whereby guilt and punishment for the sins of kings, clan heads, and fathers are visited on their nations, clans, and families, there is no explicit attempt in the Old Testament to connect the sin of Adam with the guilt and punishment of the race. Cf. Stefan Porubcan, *Sin in the Old Testament*, 383-399.

⁵¹ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, II, 406f., 409, 411.

⁵² Vriezen, *Old Testament Theology*, 415f.; cf. W. B. Neenan, "The Doctrine of Original Sin in the Scripture," *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 28 (1961), 55.

⁵³ For surveys on the Jewish doctrine of original sin from 200 B.C. to 100 A.D., see Tennant, *Sources*, 106-247, Williams, *Fall*, 15-91, Smith, *Doctrine of Sin*, 59-113.

⁵⁴ W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1948), 21-23.

⁵⁵ Tennant, *Sources*, 248; Smith, *Doctrine of Sin*, 159-169; Kümmel, *Man in the New Testament*, 18-34.

⁵⁶ A survey of the various interpretations may be found in J. P. Lange, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1869), 191-197.

⁵⁷ Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 31f., n. 3.

⁵⁸ Alan Richardson, *The Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 242-249.

⁵⁹ Tennant, *Sources*, 252.

⁶⁰ Whiteley, *Theology of St. Paul*, 37.

⁶¹ There is general agreement that *nomos* here has no reference to the law of Moses, but means “principle,” “norm,” or “constraint.” Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), I, 259; W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), 554, col. 1.

⁶² Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, 23-27

⁶³ Tennant, *Sources*, 268.

⁶⁴ Stacey, *Pauline View of Man*, 93, 157f.

⁶⁵ H. H. A. Kennedy, *The Theology of the Epistles* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 33.

⁶⁶ Stacey, *op. cit.*, 162f.

⁶⁷ Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, 30f.

⁶⁸ Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man*, 18.

⁶⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What is Man?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 1-13; Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, 14f.

⁷⁰ Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, 16f.; Pannenberg, *op. cit.*, 28-40.

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Franklin Morrison at 50th Anniversary Banquet.

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