

"The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying :

What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying : The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge ?

As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.

Behold, *all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*

But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right,

Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly ; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God.

If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and hath done all abominations ; he shall surely die ; his blood shall be upon him.

Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, but hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes ; *he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.*

Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live.

*The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son : the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, *every one according to his ways*, saith the Lord God."

In the sacred presence of God's inspired prophet I feel impotent to advance any arguments of my own. What can I add to make God's word stronger? Can there be any doubt left in our minds now on the point of "original sin," as so popularly believed in by the churches, who make it, if I understand English terms, synonymous with "inherited sin," or "inherited iniquity?"

I believe in "original sin," but not as popular belief mutilates that term. Sin in Adam and Eve was a transgression of the law. And that is what sin is to-day—a transgression of the law. Our sins are like the original sin because they are *not inherited*, but because they *originate* in us as Adam's did in Adam.

Ezekiel is not the only instrument

through which God has testified to the sinlessness and innocence of new-born souls. He uttered the sacred truth through Jesus Christ, and He continues to utter it to-day through enlightened conscience. I fear I should greatly wrong a just and loving Providence if I were to think that children come into this world burdened with the sins of their forefathers. I would certainly have to be kept ignorant of the 18th chapter of Ezekiel ; my conscience would need to be deeply seared whenever Omnipotent Wisdom endeavored to set me right ; my faith would need to be blindfolded by superstition whenever I heard repeated the words of Jesus on a certain occasion : "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Now, we must twist this passage somehow, we must qualify it somewhere if it does not mean to us that children are pure and innocent, for who can believe that the kingdom of heaven is like sin-burdened children? If we try to twist this passage, Jesus confronts us with one still plainer : "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be *converted*, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." True conversion means a change of heart from a state of sin into a state without sin. But conversion according to the passage above means a change into the condition of little children. Therefore the condition of little children is a state without sin, if indeed the axiom is true that "things equal to the same thing are equal to one another." Sinlessness surely is one of the chief things Jesus meant by those utterances, and we will acknowledge he speaks everywhere "with authority."

Let us take it into the court of reason if you choose. All will admit that the moral and religious natures of parents grade all the way from the superlative of virtue to the superlative of vice. Hence, if sin is inherited, the children of the superlatively vicious and wicked would be, from the outset, weighed