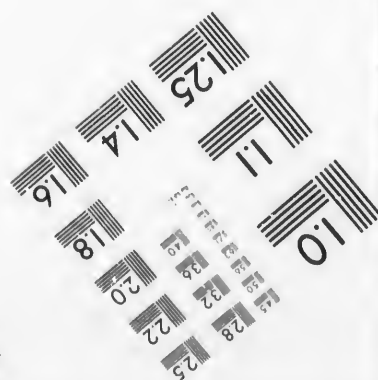
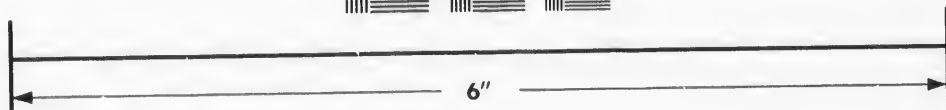
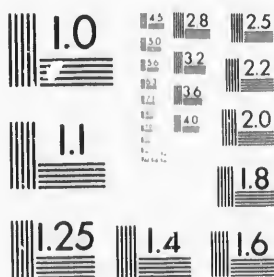


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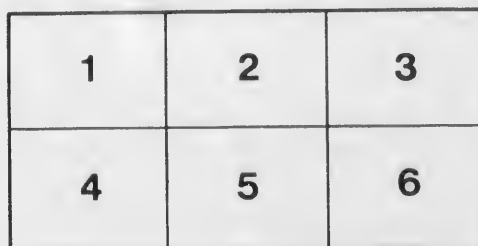
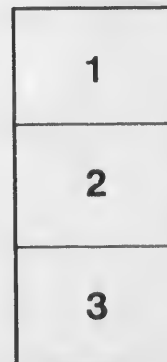
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THE
RELATION OF CHILDREN
TO
THE FALL, THE ATONEMENT,
AND
THE CHURCH.

BY N. BURWASH, S. T. D.

Professor of Theology in Victoria University.

TORONTO:
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This Essay was prepared for and read before the MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION of the Cobourg District, and is published at its request.

T H E

MORAL CONDITION OF CHILDHOOD.

THE subject of the moral status, or rather relations of childhood, is one which has always had a deep interest for the Church. This interest is practical as well as speculative; for upon the foundation from which we start will depend the character of the superstructure which we will build, and if our foundation be in error our superstructure cannot stand. The eternal well-being of our children depends upon a proper apprehension of their present moral condition, and upon the means which we employ to meet the necessities of that condition. A mistake in either direction is dangerous. If with Augustine we apprehend fully the consequences of the fall, but do not equally apprehend the universal provisions of redemption, we are in danger of the indifference of despair. If with Pelagius we apprehend the great fact that every man has within reach the powers necessary for a genuine personal probation, but lose sight of the full extent and reality of the consequences of the fall, we are in equal danger from over-confidence, or of missing the only true way of salvation.

What saith the Scripture? is the first enquiry of the Protestant Christian; and, subordinate to this highest standard, he may further ask, What saith the Church? We shall in this essay endeavour to present the replies furnished by these two authorities.

We shall analyze the teaching of Scripture and of the Church creeds by means of four questions which will, we think, cover the entire ground.

I. What is the relation of childhood to the fall?

II. What is the relation of childhood to the Atonement?

III. How do these two relations mutually limit each other?

IV. How do they form the basis of the child's relation to the Christian Church?

These four questions will enable us to define clearly the moral status from which the child enters upon its probation.

I. What is the relation of childhood to the fall? The Church answers this question by three dogmatic statements which constitute the doctrine of original sin. 1. All men from their birth inherit a sinful nature. 2. They inherit death and various sufferings as the penalty of sin. 3. They inherit guilt or desert of God's displeasure as the result of their sinful nature. To the first proposition all assent except the Pelagians. So to the second though there are various interpretations of the term death. The third proposition is matter of wider difference of opinion.

This entire doctrine is very clearly summarized in the ninth article of the Church of England as follows :—
“Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk,) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil ; and, therefore, in every person born into this world it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.” You will, of course, observe that in our seventh article, the last clause containing the third proposition as above is omitted, leaving this element of the doctrine open for further definition.

The scriptural foundation of this doctrine we shall find in two classic passages which, with their contexts and parallel passages, will require very careful examination.

The first of these is John iii. 3, 5, 6. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again (anew), he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” There are three terms here which require definition : the Kingdom of God, the New Birth, and the Flesh. The definition of the first is plainly indicated by Christ when he says, “The kingdom of God is within you ;” and by St.

Paul when he says, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." The kingdom of God is not an external organization, either in time or in eternity. It is not either the Church, or the heavenly state; but it is an internal moral condition, the condition into which the grace of the Gospel introduces every believer. The precise nature of this state is defined in Gal. v. 22, 23. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

We are now able at once to define our second term the New Birth. It is that great change symbolized by the outward washing of water, and wrought by the inward work of the Spirit, whereby man enters into this moral state called the kingdom of God.

This change is wrought by the instrumentality of God's word. 1 Peter i. 23. "Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." It is conditioned on faith. John i. 12, 13. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." 1 John v. 1. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." And it is a self-evidencing change, v. 10. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

We have quoted these passages and have mentioned these characteristics of the New Birth to show that that view thereof which *Methodism introduced into modern theology* is the true and Scriptural one. The New Birth never in Scripture signifies a mere introduction into the outward and visible church ; nor does it signify an unconscious germ of grace, such as is supposed to be implanted by baptism in the heart of the infant. Nor does it signify a secret efficient influence of the Spirit working by the unknown predestinated counsel of God ; but everywhere a conscious work of the Spirit, applying the Word to renew the heart, and conditioned upon a personal faith in Christ.

But further our Lord in the passage before us asserts that we can enter into that moral state called the kingdom of God, only by this moral change called "being born again," not because we have *lost the gracious moral condition of our infancy* or natural birth, but because we *were born in an opposite moral condition*, which he calls the "*flesh* ;" "that which is born of the flesh is flesh."

The word flesh (*σαρξ*) is used by Christ and by all the apostolic writers, apart from its original meaning of muscular tissue, first, to designate human nature. "The word was made flesh." "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee," &c. Secondly, to designate human nature as weak. "The flesh is weak ;" "all flesh is grass." Thirdly, to designate human nature

as sinful and corrupt; see especially the seventh and eighth of Romans; the fifth and sixth of Galatians, the second of Ephesians, and the second of first John. In these various passages, which we need not quote at large, we have the fullest statements not only of the nature but also of the extent of this depravity, and all agree in presenting it as a state out of which no good thing can be brought by the power of our own will. And this is the moral state in which we are born, and from which we can be delivered only by the great change of the New Birth. This passage and its collateral texts certainly justify the first and most important element of the Church doctrine of original sin.

The second and third elements have been evolved entirely from the second great classic text referred to above taken in connection with one or two collaterals. This passage is Rom. v. 12-19, which we must next examine. This text is a summary and expansion of the whole doctrine of sin and salvation contained in the preceding epistle, chap. 1. 17—v. 11. The “wherefore” grows out of the entire argument which proved man’s universal sin, and the sole possibility of his salvation in Christ. But it goes beyond the line of the preceding argument, and shows the correspondence of the *origin of sin* with the *origin of salvation*.

Let us bear in mind that especially in chapter iii. the Apostle had emphatically asserted, and in chapters i. and ii. proved indirectly, the universality of sin. In verse 12, he goes to the root of this universal fact,

and assigns its cause. "By one man sin entered into the world;" literally "*the sin*," sin as a generic principle, as an active moral force in humanity, for "the world" is doubtless the world of human kind. "And by *the sin, the death*, generic death, the principle and power of death;" "and so the death passed through unto all men." (The second *ὁ θάνατος* is doubtful, it may read, "and so it passed through unto all men," i.e. "the sin" and "the death." Even if the *textus receptus* is correct, the passage of "the death" implies the passage of its vehicle "the sin.") "Whence all have sinned." It is well known that the particle which we have here translated "whence," *ἐφ' ᾧ*, has been the source of difficulty to translators from the fourth century downward. Jerome and Augustine translate "in whom" whence their doctrine of the sin of the race in Adam. Most moderns take it as a causal particle or conjunction equal to *ἐπὶ τούτῳ ὅτι* "on account of this that" all have sinned." It would thus assign a reason for the passage of death. So Meyer, Philippi, Hodge, Stuart, Alford, Lange, Winer, Watson, Whedon, and Beet. This reason is supplementary to that given in the adverb *ὥστε* "so" or "in this way." This translation of *ἐφ' ᾧ* certainly may be justified by usage both classical (*ἐφ' οὗ*) and New Testament. But it is not the only meaning of the term; and it here involves great difficulty. First, it makes the apostle assign two independent and almost conflicting reasons for the universality of death; secondly, it makes the

second reason defensible only by strange contortions of the plain meaning of the words, "all sinned;" a simple historical actual fact must be read, "all sinned in Adam" an unjustifiable addition, Bengel, Olshausen, and Philippi and Meyer; or "all have been treated as sinners," Hodge, and most Arminians; or "all are sinful," Calvin, Watson, etc.; or "all have personally sinned," Tholuck, Stuart, Whedon, Lange. But while this last is the only interpretation grammatically defensible, it is difficult to prove it true in fact when more than half the race die without personal commission of sin, as Paul goes on immediately to state. We are therefore driven back to look at the conjunctive particle *ἐφ' ὧ*. It occurs in the New Testament three times, all in the writings of St. Paul, viz., here, and 2 Cor. v. 4, and Philippians iii. 12. In Corinthians we have in the received text, *ἐπεὶ ὧ*, and the translation is evidently "because," or "for that." But in the second passage where the reading is uniform, it evidently means "on account of which." This sense it also has in several classical passages referred to by Schleusner. Now we have only to use this simple meaning of the particle here, as Thomasius has already done, though somewhat awkwardly, and the meaning is clear. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death (or it) passed through unto all men; on account of which all (as before stated) have sinned." The relative *ὧ* is taken as neuter and refers not to death but to the *entire fact*

stated in the two preceding clauses. This result is stated because *it connects the summary with the previous argument and is not an irrelevant addition.* It also makes the protasis exactly correspond with verses 18 and 19 when added together. By one offence it came unto all to condemnation, and by one disobedience many were made sinners; so here "all have sinned." But before introducing his apodosis the apostle stops to explain, as is his wont, with *γὰρ* "For there was sin in the world up to (the time of) law;" a confirmation of the doctrine of the universality of sin which could have taken place only by the transmission of "the sin" from Adam, inasmuch as "sin is not imputed in the absence of law;" hence sin could not have *originated during this period by individual transgression.* Hence the conclusion that sin entered into the world and was transmitted through those pre-Mosaic ages by inheritance from Adam, a conclusion strengthened by a further fact introduced by *ἀλλὰ*; "yet, still death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," *i.e.*, against a positive law with definite penalty of death, under which the sin could be charged and the penalty exacted. The axiomatic principle, "sin is not charged in the absence of law," stands thus between two well-known facts, to each of which it is adversatively opposed, and with which it can be reconciled only by conceding the three great principles announced in verse 12.

In further illustration of those principles, we are told in verse 15, that "through the offence of one, many died;" that "judgment from one, issued unto condemnation;" that "by the transgression of one, death reigned through one." Finally, in verse 18, the apodosis is repeated. "Therefore, as by the offence of one, it passed through unto all men unto condemnation; * * * for as by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners," etc. The teaching of Paul in this passage may thus be summarized as follows: By the positive transgression or disobedience of one man (Adam) the principle or power of sin entered into the world bringing with it death as the sentence against sin, and this principle of sin and death passed through unto all men, resulting in universal sin (actual) and universal condemnation. Parallel with this passage is the declaration of 1 Cor. xv. 22. "In Adam all die," not "did die" when he sinned and died, but "do (individually) die" in the present. So, also, that of Eph. ii. 2, "And were by nature children of wrath." The expression "children of wrath," like "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction," signifies *fitness* or *justice arising from character*. And this character we have *φύσει* not by habit or act, but naturally; by birth *our moral character* is such as *fits us for wrath*, makes us just objects of Divine wrath.

But it is important to note what is not asserted in these passages as well as what is. It is not asserted that we are objects of Divine wrath apart from our

depraved character; nor is it asserted that we are objects of Divine wrath apart from the manifestation of our sinful nature in actual transgression; nor is it asserted that the sentence of death passes upon us apart from the transmission to us of a sinful nature, ("the sin,") but rather as the result of such transmission. But it does appear that the transmission of the sentence of death is independent of the imputation of personal transgression. If we read aright, Paul asserts that universal personal transgression (he is speaking of adults) and universal death, both proceed from the principle of sin (*η αμαρτια*) introduced by Adam. And it certainly can proceed from Adam only through infancy. What is this principle of sin (*η αμαρτια*)?

This question, Paul has very fully answered in the seventh and eighth of Romans, where he uses the term eleven times, and clearly identifies it with "*lust*" and with "*the flesh*," and speaks of it as "*dwelling in me*," "*in my members*" and "*in my flesh*," and as being a "*law of sin and death*." This is "*the sin*" which, according to St. Paul, every man, and hence every child, receives as an inheritance from Adam; and this is the moral state in which, according to the teaching of Christ, each one of us is born into the world. "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*"

But, besides this identification of the principle of evil, and this clear statement of the extent of its powers which we have in the seventh and eighth of Romans, we have also some very important teachings

regarding the development of this principle in the human conscience, and its process of cure. Sin and death are not unfolded in their powers and relations, either to the physical or the moral nature, all at once. There is a stage in the life of man where he does not yet recognize "the sin that dwelleth in" him, and when he has not yet passed into conscious spiritual death. "I did not know the sin, except through the law." "Apart from the law sin is dead." "I was, at one time, alive without or apart from law." "But when the commandment came, sin *rose up into life*, and I died." The doctrine of these words seems to be that the existence of this principle of sin within is not manifest, and that its conscious result, death (spiritual) or the separation of the soul from God is not experienced until we arrive at that stage of moral development, which brings us into conscious contact with the law of God. The child knows not, as yet, either sin or death. Sin is latent or "dead" in the sense of being inactive. And its fruit, death, is only experienced when sin awakes up into life, *i.e.*, breaks forth into *actual transgression* in antagonism to revealed law. This is St. Paul's presentation of what we call *the innocency of childhood*. Thus the whole practical question involved in our subject is reduced by Paul's statements to this: Are there any provisions of the Gospel by which this *waking up* of "the sin" into life may be entirely *prevented*? by which the root of evil may be destroyed before it has ever put forth

buds or blossoms, or borne its deadly fruit of conscious separation from God? Certainly, according to this teaching, "the sin" is not, even in the child, a *mere nominal* or *theoretical matter*, but a terrible power ready to wake up into life. Before we can answer this question, we must consider the second grand enquiry of our subject.

II. What is the relation of Childhood to the Atonement? It might be supposed that this question could be answered apart from all theories or views of the atonement. This is, however, not the case. It is only an Arminian view of the atonement, (which regards the work of Christ as securing certain substantial benefits impartially for all the race alike,) which admits of the discussion of this question. Under any Calvinistic view of the atonement, there is absolutely no difference between the relation of childhood to the atonement and the relation of manhood to the atonement. If the child is elect, or the man is elect, the atonement absolutely secures his final salvation; if not—nothing. On the other hand, Arminianism teaches that Christ died for all men, and that in virtue of that death, certain provisions of salvation are secured for all men, infants included, and are extended to them *as their moral development admits*. Let us carefully examine what these provisions are, and then we shall see clearly how far they apply to infancy.

I do not know that in the entire round of dogmatic theology, you can find a more accurate setting-forth of

what Christ has effected for the whole race than is given by Mr. Wesley in the Standard of our own Church. Sermon V. (i. 9.) "By the sacrifice for sin made by the second Adam, as the representative of us all, God is so far reconciled to all the world that he hath given them a new covenant; the plain condition whereof being once fulfilled, there is no more condemnation for us, but we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." This statement is evidently founded upon two passages of Scripture, Rom. v. 12-19, and 2 Cor. v. 18-21. These we must now consider in their bearing on the general work of Christ.

We have already examined Rom. v. 12, &c., in its exposition of the results of Adam's sin. It, on the other hand, presents that which comes to all the world through the righteousness or obedience of Christ as, first of all, "grace" *χάρις*; secondly, as "a gift or giving (*δωρεα εν χαριτι*) through grace." *χαρισμα* and *δωρημα* are the more manward or passive aspects of the same. But these are expanded in v. 17 by the addition of *εις δικαιοωμα* and *της δικαιοσυνης* "grace unto justification and a gift of righteousness." And this is said to come "unto all men unto justification of life," and by it many are "constituted righteous." But between these terms and the corresponding terms of the fall into sin, there is a perfect parallel. By one man's disobedience the sin absolutely entered into the world. So, by the one man's obedience, grace is

revealed and comes to all. But that sin works out its results of death, and actual transgression, and personal separation of individual men from God only by a process of development described in Rom. vii. So grace works out its results of justification and life only by an operative development. But the grace comes absolutely to all men. So in Titus ii. 11, "the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared for all men." What is implied in this grace? This question we will answer after we have examined our second passage.

2 Cor. v. 18, &c. The passage may be literally rendered as follows: "All things are of God who *hath reconciled* (past tense) to himself by Christ, and *gives* (present) us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit that God *was* in or by Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them and committing to us the word of reconciliation." Mr. Wesley has evidently taken the aorist participle and the imperfect tense as referring to a *definite past historical fact*, and that as *accomplished* by the atoning work of Christ. So, in later times, Alford, Meyer, Kling, &c. All these authorities agree in recognizing here a reconciliation of the world of *mankind at large*, as a body, or a race, a placing of *the entire world* in a new and *merciful relation to God*, a relation directly opposed to the relation in which they were placed by the sin of Adam; but a relation which *does not do away with the necessity for individual reconciliation*,

but *opens or prepares the way for it, and leads to it.* "The saving grace revealed for all men," and "the reconciliation of the world," and "the gift and grace unto all men unto justification of life," are all *one and the same thing*,—a relation of God in mercy to the world opened up by Christ.

This gracious relation of the world to God in Christ Mr. Wesley designates as "a new covenant" of probation, given to the whole world, and to every individual of the world, but still demanding that the probational conditions of that covenant be fulfilled. Upon the fulfilment of these conditions all the blessings of the covenant are bestowed; but the entire race are embraced in the covenant, and can be excluded from it only by their individual act of transgressing the covenant. "He that believeth is not condemned, but he that believeth not is already condemned, because he hath not believed on the only begotten Son of God." "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." * * "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God *remaineth* on him." These last expressions are very significant, as showing clearly that each individual, while embraced in God's covenant of mercy toward the race, sees life and escapes from God's condemning wrath, personally, only by the exercise of faith in Christ. The same truth is taught

in 2 Cor. v., where the reconciliation of the world in Christ still leaves it necessary that each individual should for himself "*be reconciled to God.*" Hence, neither in the infant nor in the penitent adult are we to confound the mercy of God's covenant of grace with the whole world in Christ, with individual justifying grace. It is something that looks toward, and, when not frustrated by actual transgressions, issues in justification of life, but it is *not yet such justification, nor does it supersede its necessity.*

But Divine grace is not merely a relation of favour or mercy in which God stands toward the race, it is an inward operative power for man's salvation; just as the sin which entered into the world by the first man was a relation of opposition to or estrangement from God, but also an inward corrupting power of evil. Mercy as a relation would be in vain without mercy as a helping-power. What is the saving moral power which the atonement brings to men? When, and where, and in whom does it begin to work? This leads us into the very heart of our subject.

Various answers have been given to this question. The predestinarian looks upon this grace as of the nature of regeneration. It operates only in the elect, by the secret effectual operation of the Spirit, and in God's own good time. The Arminian looks upon this grace as essentially distinct from regeneration, and as operating in the hearts of all men, but when and how it begins to work has been a question undecided. The

Sacramentarian looks upon this grace as provided for all, but as conditioned by the sacraments, and operating only when and where the sacraments have been properly administered. They, too, regard the grace as being of the nature of regeneration. Some have held that this grace caught, as it were, man in his fall, and prevented his lapsing into a condition from which salvation would have been impossible, thus very closely approximating to semi-Pelagianism. Some have found the answer to this question in the fifth of Romans, in the words, "unto all men, unto justification of life," and have held that this grace is of the nature of regeneration—a new life, and that it is universally and unconditionally given through the atonement, but may be lost, in the subsequent probation. Such hold that this grace fits all dying in infancy for heaven, or, rather, that in virtue of it they are already in that state, and that this is the meaning of the expression, "of such is the kingdom of heaven." It is to be noted that this view makes operative saving grace begin at the moment of initiation of physical life; that it makes it of the nature of regeneration, the communication of a new inner life, and that to give any reality to the strong language of Scripture touching man's natural state, it is obliged to interpret it of a *second lapse* into an estate of spiritual death. Let us examine, first of all, the Scriptures adduced to support this view, and then some further Scriptures which seem to us to preclude it. The first

and most important of these is Romans v. 12-21. Of course we have here a parallel between Adam and Christ, as "both representatives of the entire race, so that their acts, of transgression on the one hand, and righteousness on the other, extended in their effects to all the individuals of the race." The only question is, do these effects pass irresistibly and of necessity to all the race, and *by the same law or process of moral connection*. "The Apostle employs the terms life and death to set forth the effects of Adam's sin and of Christ's righteousness upon the human race." True, but let us see what these terms mean. Life is union of soul and body, and conscious union of the whole man with God. Death is separation of soul and body, and conscious separation of the soul from God. *Death spiritual is not to be identified with depravity.* Depravity, "*the sin*," is transmitted directly from Adam, by virtue of our natural connection with him, but death comes to soul or body only as that depravity has finished its course. "Sin [the sin], when it is finished, bringeth forth death," James i. 15. Now, to *sin*, which passes upon all men by necessary entail, is opposed *grace*, equally universal and unconditional in its outgoing. But as death comes only by a *process of sin*, so life may come only by a *process of grace*. What is this process? That there is such a process is implied in the passage before us. Let us look at it verse by verse.

"But not as the offence, so is the gracious gift; for if through the offence of one the many died, much more the grace of God, and the gift in the grace of the one man, Christ Jesus, hath abounded unto the many." And not as by one who sinned is the gift, for the judgment of one is unto condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto righteousness. For if by the offence of one, death reigned through one, much more they who receive abundance of the grace and the gift of righteousness in life, shall reign through one, Jesus Christ. "Therefore, as by one offence it comes unto all men unto condemnation, so also, through one righteousness it comes unto all men unto justification of life. For as by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Now, we are quite willing to admit, with Dr. Hibbard, in all this the perfect parallel between Adam and Christ, and that as far as the results of Adam's sin are unconditional, so far are the results of Christ's atoning work unconditional. That as the results of Adam's sin are universal, so are the results of Christ's work universal; but beyond this we are not warranted in going. The expressions "unto all men, unto condemnation," "unto righteousness," "unto justification of life," by no means exclude *processes and conditions*, both on the one side and on the other. The preposition *eis*, simply denotes *direction*, the end to which a force is working, not at which it has already arrived. *To interpret it*

otherwise would be to make this passage teach absolute universalism. What is asserted in this passage is, that God's grace in Christ looks to, provides for, and works to the final justification and life of all men, just as the sin of Adam tends to the final sin and condemnation of all men. But the process by which Adam's sin results in the final condemnation of any man is not *an unconditional process*. It is only through his own wilful transgression of law or of condition of probation. So the process by which Christ's grace results in justification and life is not asserted to be unconditional. There is no universal justification, or universal regeneration of life taught here as flowing from Christ unconditionally, but only *a universal grace* leading to individual justification and life, the conditions and process of which are elsewhere explained.

Especially must we insist on this in opposition to Dr. Hibbard, in v. 17, "They who receive," etc., in this case are not all mankind unconditionally, but those *who have fulfilled the conditions*, and thus have received. Any other interpretation of this verse makes it teach absolute universalism, or unconditional election. All through his argument Dr. Hibbard makes this mistake, of taking final effects for immediate ones, reading into condemnation and death a special fictitious or imputation meaning, and leaving out of sight entirely the intervening conditions, so fully implied in every case in St. Paul's *chosen preposition*, *ἐκ*.

The next passage, or rather series of passages, which demands our attention, will be found in St. Matthew's Gospel, eighteenth and nineteenth chapters. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, (or rather turn back), and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, then, shall humble himself as this little child, that one is greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and whosoever shall receive one such little one in my name receiveth me; and whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him," etc. "Take heed that ye offend not (or despise not) one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father in Heaven." "What think ye," etc. "Even so it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones perish." There are two interpretations of this passage. In the one the children are presented by Christ as candidates for the kingdom, with young hearts open to receive the truth, in that believing receptive state into which the seed of the kingdom may most easily enter, and bring forth its fruits of eternal life. They are ready to enter into the kingdom as soon as its Divine Word becomes intelligible to their understanding; they are in a believing, trustful, receptive state of mind; they are candidates for the kingdom most precious in the sight of the great heavenly Father, but still "*lost sheep*" whom the Gospel must "seek and find." Like all

others who shall be heirs of salvation, they are the objects of angelic care, and therefore God is "*seeking them.*" The whole discourse thus sets forth, in most beautiful terms, the fact that religion may begin with the earliest *conscious responsibility*, and that the hardened sinner must "*turn back,*" not, "be converted" in the modern sense, but turn back to the estate of childlikeness before he can "enter the kingdom." This we believe to be the true interpretation of the passage. The other interpretation places the child already in the kingdom, in which case *it would not need to be sought, but only to be kept from wandering.* The nineteenth chapter, verse 14, is precisely similar. "But Jesus said, Suffer the little children and forbid them not (or, hinder them not), to come to me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The genitive, "of such," here may mean belonging to such *as a possession*, or belonging to such *as something promised and provided for them.* We have a precisely similar form of speech in Matt. v., "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs" (literally, of them) "is the kingdom of heaven." This does not necessarily mean that they have already entered the kingdom, but that they are ready to enter. The poor in spirit, the humble-minded, and the receptive spirit of the child, are all alike put *in promise* of the kingdom.

But, on the other hand, we have only to refer back to the passages already adduced as proving the fallen estate in which man is born, to show that Christ can-

not be understood as asserting, in either of these passages, that our children are born already in the kingdom. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." "In sin did my mother conceive me." "By nature the children of wrath." "Sin passed through unto all men, and death by sin, whence all have sinned." Now, if already, by the unconditional provisions of the atonement, the new life had been planted in all men from their very birth, surely all would not have come under the dominion of sin; the new life, in some at least, would have been strong enough to overpower the sin; and the position of Pelagius would have been *actually* true, that "some men might have been sinless."

Again, opposed to this idea of universal regeneration, are all the passages which describe the way to the kingdom. This is universally, "Repent, and believe the Gospel." There is no other way revealed. Repentance is universally necessary. If so, then men are not already in the kingdom by birth, or by baptism; in fact, this whole notion of unconscious, germinal grace or regeneration, has no foundation in the Word of God. The Scriptures make mention of no work of grace except that which is matter of conscious experience, beginning in repentance and faith, and perfected in joy, peace, and love; and this is the kingdom of God, "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Methodism first brought the modern church back to this Scriptural definition of regenera-

tion as *the conscious crisis of religious life*, conditioned on faith, preceded by repentance, and crowned by the witness of the Spirit; and a sad day will it be for Methodism when she forsakes this clear foundation of conscious experience, and begins to trust in any occult work, supposed to be wrought secretly, by unconditional grace, and in unconscious states of existence. It is fraught with all the dangers of baptismal regeneration, or of unconditional election. It was difficult even for John Wesley himself to break away from the old notion of regeneration as a mysterious work wrought in baptism. Rather than deny the old church doctrine he was inclined to look upon men generally as backsliders, and speaks of the time when he himself sinned away the grace of his baptism. But all this belonged not to the Methodist Arminian theology which he was founding, but to the churchism which he was leaving behind. And the whole evangelical Christianity of our day has taken up the central idea of his theology, that the new birth is the conscious crisis of religious experience preceded by repentance, conditioned upon faith, wrought by the Word and Spirit of God, and completed in the full assurance of Sonship. To depart from this view is to reduce the work of the church to a process of *education*, as distinguished from the work of *evangelization*.

III. We are now prepared to see how these two relations limit each other, and in fact we see that they do not limit each other, until *they both begin to work*

in the conscious experience of the moral life. It is very true that there is a physical propagation of sin, because our relation to Adam is physical. But that physical propagation of sin becomes a moral and spiritual state, only when we become capable of moral conscious life. On the other hand our relation to Christ is purely moral, and spiritual; and it, too, begins to take effect just as soon as we become capable of conscious moral life. The very moment we are capable of manifesting the disease, we are capable of using the remedy, and that is repentance toward God and faith on our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus all that the Scriptures declare concerning our relation to Adam is actually, practically true; not hypothetically, putatively, or ideally true. It is to be taken just as it reads without limitation. And so the provisions of the Gospel are to be taken as *to be applied to the disease in God's order*, and on His conditions.

But it is asked what then becomes of those who die before conscious moral life is fully and fairly developed? We can only reply God cares for them and provides for their case. But to them *we have no duty*. For them we can do nothing. How God applies to them the provisions of the Gospel, or on what conditions, we know not. All that we can say is that in those provisions *they have a share*, and God will not deprive them of it. If there had been anything which we could have contributed to their salvation, God would have

revealed it. But as there was nothing for us to do, God hath given no revelation. Revelation never steps beyond that which is needful for us to know. It gratifies no curiosity. It spins no theories. It states only positive facts in which we are directly concerned. The result of the whole teaching of Scripture is this: That all men are born with a physical taint of sin, (the word physical here includes the twofold nature of man,) which immediately that we become capable of conscious moral life, breaks forth in actual transgression, and brings us into a state of conscious spiritual death, out of which we can be delivered only as, with penitent confession of our sin, we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; when the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death."

But we are also born under a dispensation of mercy, in which the Gospel promise meets *the first pang of conscience* arising from the first awakening of inborn sin, and brings with it a word and spirit of grace, the power of a new and eternal life. And when the Gospel thus finds us in the days of our childhood, it finds us in a state of *preparedness* to feel its power, and receive its grace; a state to which we can *return* in after days, only by the mighty power of the Divine Spirit.

And the Gospel thus finds us in the days of our childhood, because we are all born under a covenant of grace and mercy, and are the objects of the Father's intense saving love and compassion, and of solicitude

and joy among his angels. I do not say that God could not save us before we were conscious of it. All I say is that he has not revealed any such way of salvation, but that he has clearly revealed the way of conscious repentance, faith, and new birth of the Spirit; and that he has declared this to be the way for *all men*; and I dare not risk the salvation of my children on any other way, and I dare not attempt to build the church of the future upon any other way. But if these things be so:

IV. What has the Church to do with the children? Much every way, because the Father loves them, Christ died for them, angels watch over them. They are born under a covenant of grace, and are heirs of all its provisions, although they have not yet commenced to enjoy them. They are all ready with the first dawn of moral life, *more ready* than they can be at any later period, to receive the provisions of the Gospel, and to feel its saving power. "Of such" is the kingdom. Now the Church is not composed only of those who have already entered into the kingdom, but of all who are *seeking it*. She baptises all who are *looking for* "*remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.*" She baptises them in token of Christ's covenant of mercy. And as children are only waiting for the opening of moral life, that they too may receive remission and new life, she gives them the sign of the covenant, and takes them into the fold, that just as their moral natures unfold *she may apply*

to them the saving truths of the Gospel of which she is the minister ; not another Gospel of Christian culture, but the old, universal Gospel of pardon through Christ.

The Church takes the children in, not because they have salvation already, but because *they need it* ; and have *a right to it* by God's covenant of mercy under which they have been born ; and the Church has the word of that salvation, and is *in duty bound to give it to them*, as soon as they are able to receive it. And in so doing she is truly fulfilling the command of the Lord, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of God."



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