

XVIII.

Guiltless and Without Sin.

“For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.”—*Heb. vii. 26.*



Throughout the ages the Church has confessed that Christ took upon Himself real human nature from the virgin Mary, not as it was before the fall, but such as it had become, *by and after* the fall.

This is clearly stated in *Heb. ii. 14, 17*: “Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same . . . Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” It was even such a partaking of our nature as would make Him feel Satan’s goad, for there follows: “In that He Himself hath suffered, *being tempted*, He is able to succor them that are tempted.” Upon the authority of the divine Word we can not doubt then that the Son of God became man in our fallen nature. It is our misery, by virtue of the inherited guilt of Adam, that we can not live and act but as partakers of the flesh and blood corrupted by the fall. And since we as children are partakers of flesh and blood, so is He also become partaker of the same. Hence it can not be too strongly emphasized that the Son of God, walking among men, bore the same nature in which we spend our lives; that His flesh had the same origin as our flesh; that the blood which ran through His veins is the same as our blood, and came to Him as well as to us from the same fountain in Adam. We must feel, and dare confess, that in Gethsemane our Savior agonized in our flesh and blood; that it was our flesh and blood that were nailed to the cross. The “blood of reconciliation” is taken from the very blood which thirsts after reconciliation.

With equal assurance, however, bowing to the authority of the Scripture, we confess that this intimate union of the Son of God with the fallen human nature does not imply the least participation of our sin and guilt. In the same epistle in which the apostle sets forth distinctly the fellowship of Jesus with the human flesh and blood, he bears equally clear testimony to the fact of His sinlessness, so that every misunderstanding may be obviated. As by virtue of our conception and birth we are *unholy, guilty, and defiled, one with sinners*, and therefore burdened with the *condemnation of hell*, so is the Mediator conceived and born *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens*. And with equal emphasis the apostle declares that sin did not enter into His temptations, for, altho tempted in all things, like as we are, yet He was ever without sin.



Therefore the mystery of the Incarnation lies in the apparent contradiction of Christ’s union with our fallen nature, which on the one hand is so intimate as to make Him susceptible to its temptations, while on the other hand He is completely cut off from all fellowship with its sin. The confession which weakens or eliminates either of these factors must, when logic-

ally developed, degenerate into serious heresy. By saying, “The Mediator is conceived and born in our nature, as it was before the fall,” we sever the fellowship between Him and us; and by allowing that He had the least personal part of our guilt and sin, we sever His fellowship with the *divine nature*.

Does the Scripture not teach then that the Mediator was made sin and bore the curse for us, and “as a worm and no man” suffered deepest distress?

We answer: Yea, verily, without this we could have no redemption. But in all this He acted as our Substitute. His own personality was not in the least affected by it. His burdening Himself with our sins was a High-Priestly act, performed vicariously. He was made *sin*, but never a *sinner*. Sinner means one who is *personally* affected by sin; Christ’s person never was. He never had any fellowship with sin other than that of love and compassion, to bear it as our High Priest and Substitute. Yet, tho He was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, tho He was sorely tempted so that He cried out, “Let this cup pass from Me,” in the center of His personal being He remained absolutely free from the least contact with sin.

A close examination of the way by which we become partakers of sin will shed more light on this subject.

Every individual sin is not of our own begetting only, but a participation in the common sin, the one mighty sin of the whole race against which the anger of God is kindled. Not only do we partake of this sin by an act of the will as we grow up; it was ours already in the cradle, in our mother’s womb—yea, even in our conception. “Conceived and born in sin” is the awful confession which the Church of God’s redeemed can never deny.

For this reason the Church has always laid such stress upon the doctrine of inherited guilt, as declared by St. Paul in [Rom. v](#). Our inherited guilt does not spring from inherited *sin*; on the contrary, we are conceived and born in sin *because* we stand in *inherited guilt*. Adam’s guilt is imputed to all that were in his loins. Adam lived and fell as our natural and federal head. Our moral life stands in root-relation to his moral life. We were *in* him. He carried us in himself. His state determined our state. Hence by the righteous judgment of God his guilt was imputed to all his posterity, for as much as, by the will of man, they should successively be born of his loins. By virtue of this inherited guilt we are conceived in sin and born in the participation of sin.

God is our Creator, and from His hands we came forth pure and undefiled. To teach otherwise is to make Him the Author of individual sin, and to destroy the sense of guilt in the soul. Hence sin, especially original sin, does not originate in our *creation* by the hand of God, but by our *vital relation* with the sinful race. Our person does not proceed from our parents. This is in direct conflict with the indivisibility of spirit, with the Word of God, and its confession that God is *our* Creator, “who has also made *me*.”

However, all creation is not the same. There is mediate and immediate creation. God created light by immediate creation, but grass and herbs mediately, for they spring from the

ground. The same difference exists between the creation of Adam and that of his posterity. The creation of Adam was immediate: not of his body, which was taken from the dust, but of his person, the human being called Adam. His posterity, however, is a mediate creation, for every conception is made to depend upon the will of man. Hence while we come from the hand of God pure and undefiled, we become at the same time partakers of the inherited and imputed guilt of Adam; and by virtue of this inherited guilt, through our conception and birth, God brings us into fellowship with the sin of the race. How this is brought about is an unfathomable mystery but this is a fact, that we become partakers of the sin of the race by generation, which begins with conception and ends with birth.

And now, with reference to the Person of Christ, everything depends upon the question whether the original guilt of Adam was imputed also to the man Jesus Christ.

If so, then, like all other men, Christ was conceived and born in sin by *virtue of this original guilt*. Where imputed original guilt is, there must be sinful defilement. But, on the other hand, where it is not, sinful defilement can not be; hence He that is called holy and harmless must be undefiled. Adam's guilt was not imputed to the man Jesus Christ. If it were, then He was also conceived and born in sin; then He did not suffer vicariously, but for Himself personally; then there can be no blood of reconciliation. If the original guilt of Adam was imputed to the man Jesus Christ, then by virtue of His sinful conception and birth He was also subject to death and condemnation, and He could not have received life but by *regeneration*. Then it also follows that either this Man is Himself in need of a Mediator, or that we, like Him, can enter into life without a Go-between.

But this whole representation is without foundation, and is to be rejected without qualification. The whole Scripture opposes it. Adam's guilt is imputed to his posterity. But Christ is not a descendant of Adam. He existed before Adam. He was not born passively as we, but Himself took upon Him the human flesh. He does not stand under Adam as His head, but is Himself a new Head, having others under Him, of whom He saith: "Behold Me and the children whom Thou hast given Me" ([Heb. ii. 13](#)). True, [Luke iii. 23, 28](#) contains the genealogy of Joseph, which closes with the words, "The son of Adam, the son of God"; but the Evangelist adds emphatically, "as was supposed"; hence Jesus was not the son of Joseph. And in Matthew His genealogy stops at Abraham. Altho on Pentecost St. Peter says that David knew that God would raise up Christ out of the fruit of his loins, yet he adds this limitation, "according to the flesh." Moreover, realizing that the Son did not assume a human person, but the human nature, so that His Ego is that of the Person of the Son of God, it necessarily follows that Jesus can not be a descendant of Adam; hence the imputation of Adam's guilt to Christ would annihilate the divine Person. Such imputation is utterly out of the question. To Him nothing is imputed. The sins He bore He took upon Himself voluntarily, vicariously, as our High Priest and Mediator.



XIX.

The Holy Spirit in the Mystery of the Incarnation.

“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.”—*John i. 14.*



There is one more question in the treatment of this subject: What was the extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit that enabled the Son of God to assume our fallen nature without being defiled by sin?

Altho we concede it to be unlawful to pry into that behind the veil which God does not freely open to us, yet we may seek the meaning of the words that embody the mystery; and this we intend to do in the discussion of this question.

The Incarnation of Christ, with reference to His sinlessness, is connected with the being of sin, the character of original sin, the relation between body and soul, regeneration, and the working of the Holy Spirit in believers. Hence it is necessary for a clear understanding to have a correct view of the relation of Christ's human nature to these important matters.

Sin is not a spiritual bacillus hiding in the blood of the mother and received into the veins of the child. Sin is not material and tangible; its nature is moral and spiritual, belonging to the invisible things whose results we can perceive but whose real being escapes detection. Wherefore in opposition to Manicheism and kindred heresies, the Church has always confessed that sin is not a material substance in our flesh and blood, but that it consists in the loss of the original righteousness in which Adam and Eve bloomed and prospered in Paradise. Nor do believers differ on this point, for all acknowledge that sin is the loss of original righteousness.

However, tracing the next step in the course of sin, we meet a serious difference between the Church of Rome and our own. The former teaches that Adam came forth perfect from the hand of his Maker, even before he was endowed with original righteousness. This implies that the human nature is finished without original righteousness, which is put on him like a robe or ornament. As our present nature is complete without dress or ornament, which are needed only to appear respectable in the world, so was the human nature, according to Rome, complete and perfect in itself without righteousness, which serves only as dress and jewel. But the Reformed churches have always opposed this view, maintaining that original righteousness is an essential part of the human nature; hence that the human nature in Adam was not complete without it; that it was not merely added to Adam's nature, but that Adam was created in the possession of it as the direct manifestation of his life.



If Adam's nature was perfect before he possessed original righteousness, it follows that it remains perfect after the loss of it; in which case we describe sin simply as “*carientia iustitiae originalis*,” *i.e.*, the want of original righteousness. This used to be expressed thus: Is original righteousness a natural or supernatural good? If natural, then its loss caused the human