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OF
TRACTS
ON THE
DOCTRINES, ORDER, AND POLITY
OF THE
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EMBRACING
SEVERAL ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.
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No. 85.

SIN MUST DIE

OR

THE SOUL MUST DIE.

BY

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SIN OR THE SOUL MUST DIE.

FEW men know or care for the evil of sin. It is strange that they should be so blind and so reckless. To be in sin is worse than to be in rags, in pain, or in prison. To some this will sound strangely, but it is every word true. Just think :

I. All sin is against God. God is the greatest and the best being you ever heard, or read, or thought of. It is very wrong to offend against a father or mother. But it is far worse to sin against God. He is over all. There is none so high, so holy, so great, so good.

II. He who sins does the greatest wrong to his own soul. Sin is a kind, the worst kind of self-murder. It is the death of the soul. So the wicked are said to be "dead in trespasses and sins." The more they sin, the more dead they are. The Bible says some of them are "twice dead."

III. But those who live in sin, sin all the time. It is their trade, and they work hard at it. They love it, and have pleasure in those who practise it. "They weary themselves to commit iniquity." "They sleep not except they have done some mischief." "They draw iniquity with a cart-rope." "They love death." "They dig up evil." They "fill up their sin always." They "do always resist the Holy Ghost." They never for one hour love the Lord their God with all their heart, nor their neighbour as themselves. They are always sinning.

Two things are required to make an action right. One is that it be lawful in itself. The other is that it be done with a right motive. If the thing done be itself wrong, no motives can make it right. To steal, or curse, or murder, or despise the poor, or hate the just, can never, under any circumstances be right. To do evil that good may come is

the doctrine of none but devils, and the worst of men. On the other hand the thing done may be right in itself, but the motive which governs us may be wrong, and so the act may be sinful because the motive is sinful. Bad motives in good actions are like dead flies in sweet ointments. They corrupt the whole. The heart is every thing. Most men of the world in Christian countries do many things which are very proper, but not from love to God. No man, who has not been born again, ever does any thing with holy motives. His life is better than his heart. Indeed his heart is the worst part of him. It is all wrong. It is hard, and proud, and selfish, and unbelieving, and without any love to God. It is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Matt. xv. 19. So far from pleasing God, all men, who have not been born again, offended him all the time. Their very best works are but "splendid sins." "Every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually." Gen. vi. 5.

There are reasons found in human nature which render it certain that unrenewed men will do nothing but sin. They are blind and see no beauty in holiness. They have no spiritual discernment. "They have eyes but they see not." "They know not what they do." If they do not see the beauty of holiness, how can they love it? No being can love that, which does not seem to him good or comely.

The man who is without the grace of God never fully approves the law of God as holy, just and good, or adopts it as the rule of his life. He does some things which it requires, and abstains from some things which it forbids, not because he loves God or his law, but because it promotes his health, or wealth, or honour, or quiet, to do so. God is not in all his thoughts. He would live very much as he does if the law of God were not known to him. Ask him, and he will tell you that he does not aim with a single eye to honour God in every thing. He does not frame his doings to that end at all. All the lines of his conduct meet and end in himself. He is without God in the world. He serves the creature more than the Creator. Nor is his heart without objects of love. He loves the world and the things of the world. When he prospers in the things that perish he counts himself happy. He is greatly pleased with gold and

silver, and objects of sense, and works of art. These are his gods, because he sets his heart on them. He thinks of them ten times as much and a thousand times as eagerly as he thinks of God.

What makes his case worse is that he is commonly much at ease. He is well pleased with himself. He is not sighing over his failures and lamenting his sins. He thinks he is nearly good enough. Rivers of water never run down his eyes for his own sins or the sins of others. He seldom cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and when he does, it is rather a form than a hearty prayer. His real belief is that God could not righteously and for ever condemn him; at least he says, "If I am lost, I know not what will become of many others." Would it not be strange that one, who cares not to serve God, should do it? that he, who tries to please himself and wicked men, should, as by accident, please God? that he, who seeks the honour that comes from man, should find the honour that comes from God only? Surely there is no such confusion where God reigns. He does not put darkness for light, bitter for sweet, sin for holiness, and vice for virtue.

Nor should men be offended at this doctrine. It is not new. It is not of human invention. It is not the doctrine held by a few only. It is not a mere theory. It is very practical, very important. No truth concerns any man more than this. It is the very doctrine of the Bible in many places. Paul says: "They that are after the flesh [who are unregenerate by God's Spirit] do mind the things of the flesh. * * To be carnally-minded is death. * * The carnal [or unregenerate] mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. viii. 5—8 Could words be plainer or stronger? Until God shall be pleased with a heart that is *enmity* against him, and with a mind that "*cannot be subject*" to his law, until he shall cease to be a holy God, he cannot be pleased with any thing done by a man who has not the Spirit of God, and whose heart has not been thoroughly changed.

Ploughing is itself a lawful act. If there be no ploughing, there can be no bread. Yet God says: "The ploughing of the wicked is sin." Yea, he puts it down with other sins that greatly offend him. The whole verse reads thus: "An high look, and a proud heart, and the ploughing of the

wicked is sin." Pr. xxi. 4. If God had intended to teach that every thing, even the most common and necessary thing done by wicked men, was sinful, could he have chosen more fit words?

But here is a passage which shows that all the religious services of sinners are defiled with sin. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight." There are but two classes of men known in the Bible. They are called saints and sinners, the just and the unjust, the righteous and the wicked, men of the way and men of the world. Their end will be different because their characters are different.

This is the common doctrine of the great body of Christians in the world. Hear the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.—"Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." 13th Article.

The 5th Article of the Church of Ireland contains the same words without alteration. It holds also this language: "We have no power to do good works, pleasing and acceptable unto God, without the grace of God preventing [going before] us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will." It also incorporates these words from the Lambeth articles: "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn, and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God."

The Reformed Churches generally fully agree with the above testimonies.

The Synod of Dort says: "There is indeed remaining in man, since the fall, some light of nature, by the help of which he retains certain notions concerning God and natural things; concerning the difference of things honourable and shameful, and manifests some desire after virtue and external discipline: but so far from his being able, by this light of nature, to attain to the saving knowledge of God, or to turn himself to him, he does not use it rightly in natu-

ral and civil things: nay, indeed, whatever thing it may at length be, he contaminates it all in various ways, and holds it in unrighteousness, which, when he does, he is rendered inexcusable before God."

The French Confession says: "Although man can somewhat discern between good and evil, yet we affirm, that whatsoever light he hath, it straightway becometh darkness, when the question is of seeking God, so that by his understanding and reason he can never come to God. Also, although he be endued with will, whereby he is moved to this or that, yet in so much as that is altogether captivated under sin, it hath no liberty at all to desire good, but such as it hath received by grace and the gift of God."

The Augsburg (or Augustan) Confession, which is the standard of Lutheran Churches in Germany and America, says: "We condemn the Pelagians and all such as they are, who teach that by the only powers of nature, without the Holy Spirit, we may love God above all, and fulfil the law of God, as touching the substance of our actions. We do freely and necessarily mislike these dreams; for they do obscure the benefits of Christ. For therefore is Christ the Mediator set forth, and mercy promised in the gospel, because that the law cannot be satisfied by man's nature, as Paul witnesseth when he saith, Rom. viii.—"The wisdom of the flesh is enmity against God. For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." For albeit that man's nature by itself can after some sort perform external works (for it can contain the hands from theft and murder) yet can it not make those inward motions, as true fear, true faith, patience, and chastity, unless the Holy Ghost do govern and help our hearts. And yet in this place also do we teach, that it is also the commandment of God, that the carnal motions should be restrained by the industry of reason and by civil discipline, as Paul saith, ** "The law is given to the unjust." And again: "Albeit that men by their own strength be able to do outward honest deeds in some sort, and must also perform this civil obedience; yet so long as men are void of faith, they are in the power of the devil, who driveth them to shameful sins, occupieth their minds with wicked and blasphemous opinions, for that is the kingdom and tyranny of the devil. Moreover, nature is weak and cannot, without God's help, strengthen itself to any spiritual works."

The Moravian Confession says: "And since through faith the Holy Spirit is given, thus also the heart is made fit to do good works. For before that, as long as it is without the Holy Spirit it is too weak; and besides it is in the power of the devil, who impels the poor human nature to many sins. * * * Without faith and without Christ, human nature and ability is far too weak to do good works; as to call upon God, to show patience in suffering, to love one's neighbour, diligently to discharge offices entrusted to us, to be obedient, to avoid evil lusts. Such noble and truly good works cannot be done without the help of Christ, as he himself speaks—John xv. "Without me ye can do nothing."

The Heidelberg Catechism, which is the Confession of the Reformed Churches of Holland and Germany, and of the German Reformed and Reformed Dutch Churches of America, has these questions and answers:

Ques. What doth the love of God require of us?

Ans. Christ teacheth us that briefly, Matt. xxii. 37—40: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and the great command; and the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commands hang the whole law and the prophets.'

Q. Canst thou keep all these things perfectly?

A. In no wise; for I am prone by nature to hate God, and my neighbour.

Q. Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness?

A. Indeed we are, except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God."

The Westminster Confession says: "Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner, according to the word, nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God."

This article is found without alteration in the Confessions of all the Presbyterian bodies of Scotland, Ireland, and Canada, and of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. It was incorporated entire into the Savoy Con-

fession, into the Saybrook Platform, into the London Baptist Confession, into the Philadelphia Baptist Confession, as well as into the Confession of numerous smaller bodies in this and other countries.

The eighth article of the Methodist Episcopal Church, of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and of the Protestant Methodist Church in the United States, is in these words.

“The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and works to faith, and calling upon God : wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have that good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.”

The Confession of Seuveland says : “Good works (which are good indeed) do proceed from a lively faith, by the Holy Ghost, and are done of the faithful according to the will or rule of God’s word.”

The Confession of Basle says : “The Lord himself saith, ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’ John xv. 5 : that is, nothing that may please God and be for your salvation. * * Faith and love are the fountain and square of all virtues and good works, according to the testimony of the apostle : ‘The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith not feigned.’ 1 Tim. i. 5. And again : ‘Without faith it is impossible to please God.’ Heb. xi. 6.”

The Confession of Belgia says : “We are justified by faith in Christ, yea, even before such time as we could bring forth any good work : for our works before faith can no more be good, than the fruit of a tree can be good, before the tree itself be good.”

The Confession of Saxony says : “External discipline, even where it is most honest, is not a fulfilling of the law. *
* But all this discipline is an external government, such as it is ; like unto the leaf of the fig tree, wherewith our first parents, after their fall, did cover their nakedness : neither doth it any more take away sin, and the corruption of nature, and death, than those fig-leaves did.”

The Confession of Wirtemberg says : “We confess and believe that to do and practise such righteousness as is acceptable to God, these virtues be necessary ; faith, hope, and love : and that man cannot of himself conceive these virtues, but doth receive them of the favour and grace of God.”

These extracts from the standards of different bodies of Christians might have been much more extended. They are, however, sufficient to show that the doctrine set forth in this tract is not novel ; is not the doctrine of a few extreme writers, but is the common doctrine of the purest and most zealous churches. The fair arguments used and the texts quoted in these Confessions do mightily strengthen the arguments and proofs before quoted. It is not too much to say that it has been fairly and scripturally proved, that unregenerate men do sin always, and that none of them do any thing but sin against God. If this be so, it follows :

1. That the misery of an unregenerate state is indescribable. I wonder not that awakened sinners deeply lament their misery, and cry out in agony, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" "What must I do to be saved?" "God be merciful to me a sinner." Nor do I wonder that pious men have such overwhelming emotions, when they contemplate the state of the unregenerate. David said : "Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law." "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law." "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved ; because they kept not thy word." Ps. cxix., 53, 136, 158. For a time Ezra "did eat no bread, nor drink water because of the transgression of them that had been carried away." Ezra x. 6. Jeremiah says : "Hear ye and give ear ; be not proud : for the Lord hath spoken. * * But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride." Jer. xiii. 15, 17. Even Daniel "was astonished for one hour and his thoughts troubled him," when he foresaw even the temporal calamities that would come on the tyrant of Babylon for his sins. Even the Son of God, in the midst of the triumph, which prophecy had decreed to him, was bathed in tears, when he thought of the sins and the doom of the city, which was about to shed his blood. God himself is twice spoken of as wondering at the ruin of man, and the utter helplessness of the whole race. Isa. lix. 16, and liii. 5. It is not very difficult to over estimate the evil of many crimes against man or society, but no man ever exaggerated the evil of sin against God. And the unregenerate are all dead in sin. They sin more and more. They do nothing but sin. If for a little while they seem to reform, they soon return to it, as the dog to his vomit, or as

the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. Their goodness is as the morning cloud ; and as the early dew, it passeth away. They sometimes return from outward acts of sin ; but they return not unto the Lord. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man and returns again, "the last state of that man is worse than the first." Matt. xii. 45. Neither mercies, nor judgments, nor promises, nor threatenings, nor hopes, nor fears, without the grace and spirit of Christ, will or can ever cure the love, or arrest the practice of sin.

2. How justly deserved will be the sentence of exclusion from the presence of God and his powerful glory ! No sentence will be more holy, more righteous than that. All heaven, all earth, and all hell will see and feel how just it is. O man of the world, can thy hands be strong, or thy heart endure when God calls thee to account ? "What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee ?"

3. No wonder that men must be born again.

To hold that man in order to be saved must be born again may be mysterious. But to hold that man can be saved without regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absurd. The doctrine of a spiritual renewal is fundamental. The fact of regeneration is essential to salvation. Can the Ethiopian change his skin by an act of his will, by the use of snow water and fuller's soap, by any thing he can do ? No more can he, who is accustomed to do evil, learn to do well, until God gives him a new heart. Regeneration is as much a fruit of infinite mercy as free pardon. We need a change of heart as much as we need a change of state. We need deliverance from the power of sin no less than from the curse of the law. The plague of an evil heart, if it be not cured, will as certainly destroy us as the wrath of God. The fountain must be made good, or the streams will for ever be bitter. Heaven without a change of nature will be as impossible to us as it now is to fallen angels. We "must be born again, born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Either sin or the soul must die. Both cannot live. Sin is a mortal enemy.

4. How vain is the hope of pardon and acceptance with God by our own merits ! Where are our merits ? All our works are stained with sin. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Every man of the least spiritual discern-

ment will say, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Ps. cxliii. 2. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John i. 8. What we all need is pardon, not justice; forgiveness, not equity. If God accepts us, he must be moved thereto by his love, not by our obedience; by his mercy, not by our deservings; by the *blood* of his Son, not by our *tears*. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Rom. iii. 20. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke xix. 10. If you are not a *lost* man, Jesus Christ can profit you nothing. The great Physician came to heal the sick, not the whole. By denying your guilt, and misery, and helplessness, you declare that you have no part in the plan of salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ. Salvation is by grace without human merits. It is all of grace. It is by grace alone. This way of salvation suits us all. It suits us exactly. O that it pleased us all and pleased us well. Such a Saviour, such mercy, such love ought to charm us, would charm us, if we were not blind, and vile, and proud, and unbelieving. The worst of sins is the rejection of gospel grace. I had rather answer for the guilt of murder and treason, than for the guilt of neglecting so great salvation.

5. Will you not say: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son?" O that you would. "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." Dan. ix. 9, 10. There is none like him. He pardons like a God. What you do, you must do quickly. If *you* linger, *death* does not, the *judgment* does not. Are you halting? Cease to hesitate. If *you* decide not soon, *death* will decide for you. There is but a step between you and death. The very fact that you live, and that you are reading these words of mercy and entreaty, shows that you may yet be saved. But an hour's delay may close the door against you for ever. O cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding; seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures. Turn at God's reproof and he will pour out his Spirit unto you, and will make known his words unto you.

“Seek the Lord, while he may be found ; call upon him while he is near.” Cry as Bartimeus, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” And if your sins, and habits, and errors, and friends, would hinder you, “cry a great deal more earnestly, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” Beware how you make light of these things. Beware, “lest thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!”



A PRAYER.

O thou blessed God ! I am as nothing before thee. But in mercy, for Christ's sake, hide thy face from my sins ; and blot out all mine iniquities. Let the precious blood of thy Son, which saved the dying thief, avail for me. Clothe me with Christ's perfect righteousness ; make me thy child by adopting me into thy family ; and never let me seek any other Saviour but Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. I need no other Saviour besides him.

Heavenly Father ! Pour out upon me thy Holy Spirit. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Grant to me that new birth and that holy nature, without which no man can see thy face. Uphold me by thy free Spirit. Thou desirest truth in the inward parts. In the hidden parts make me to know wisdom. Help me to put off the old man, which is corrupt, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

I ask nothing in my own name. I ask all in the name of Him, in whom thou art ever well pleased, even Jesus Christ, the righteous. AMEN

THE END.