Original Sin.
Eccles. 7:20. Gen. 6:1-13
Eph. 2:1-10.
Ps. 58Ps. (908)
Ps. 687
Ps. 405
Ps. 1532
Ps. 338
Ps. 184
Ps. 855
Ps. 999
Ps. 633
Ps. 1150
Ps. 66
Ps. 365
Ephesians 2:3.
By nature, the children of wrath.
Some years since, it was my privilege to be present at a gathering of Sabbath School children, where, about two hundred and fifty in number they were being publicly questioned of their pastor upon the Westminster catechism. The subject to be illustrated was the 18th question: Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate wherein to man fell? Answer: The sinfulness of that estate wherein man fell consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness and the corruption of his whole nature which is commonly called Original sin: together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.
The specific point suggested by this question was: why is it that we do commit so many sins against God while he is so good and wholly our friend, never asking of us anything but what is right and for our highest good. The question was addressed to the band of little ones, and the pastor stood for some minutes in silence awaiting a reply, and then a silver voice from a child not more than 10 years old, and of no extensive religious education, answered: because it is natural. It was the simple utterance of a childlike spirit and experience: an oracle from the sacred sanctuary of the intuitions, but there was in it a force, an emphasis
a power, which to those who hear more far more effectual, convincing, irresistible than all the dogmatic dissertations and theological syllogisms in the wide world.

The text tells us we are by nature children of wrath—not such as that we become children of wrath: but are so by nature. The idea which the apostle's words convey is simply this, that we are all by our natural constitution, our innate disposition and qualities, by our native moral tendencies, modes of thinking, feeling, acting as unenlightened by the influence of divine Truth, children of wrath—connected with exposed to, partaking of the punitive wrath...
of God, liable to such divine judgments as which are to be inflicted upon the wicked. And of all the arguments which are or may be used to confirm this position no can not find in theological treatises, one so cogent and convincing as every man carries in his bosom. Whether we become children of wrath according to the theories of traditions or creationism, of Edwards or Emmons, of Wesley or Woods, matters nothing. Is it a fact that we do naturally incline to sin, and if so what are the practical inferences? I shall at this time use but one argument to prove it a fact: it may be called the appeal to experience.
I use the word experience now not in the narrow sense of one's own internal life, — for as J. S. Copley remarks, "with most men, experience, in this sense, is like the stern lights of a ship which only illuminate the path she has traversed. As I use the word I mean the collective and admitted experience of the race — the wisdom of human experience everywhere, and Surely here we may find in this a beacon light, stationed for direction and warning far ahead, whose far-reaching rays light up our onward path through life & urging — sea toward the haven of rest. In the arguments from experience so defined, may b
found that keen edged sword which with the Damascus blade cuts through the plate mail of conventionalism's prejudice and pierces to the very marrow of conviction, or, I use a biblical figure, casting aside the kingly armor of theological discussion let us suffer a child with a simple sling and a few pebbles from the stream of common life, to smite the Goliath of infidelity on the forehead.

Sin is natural. Let experience prove it, leaving for a while the field of dogmatic discussion. If the simple witness of our common observation of others & self were denied us how inefectual all logic or metaphysics
Imagine a man born and bred under every conceivable combination of circumstances calculated to induce holiness of heart and life. What will be that man's inevitable certain history.

Let us outline his biography, guided by what is the common history of the best of men. Let us suppose him born in the very heart of a Christian community and of Christian parents. His father and mother like Zacharias and Elizabeth, well advanced in years, matured by a life of discipline and experience walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. He is remay imagine an only child, the ex-
clusive object of careful, pious training
care is taken that
and every acquaintance and neighbor who
crosses the threshold of the infant's home
shall bring into the household atmosphere no contagion
mean on face and on hear the likeness of
of moral disease.
Jesus. Nay to make the supposition strong
in the child
let us suppose him naturally richly en-
dowed with gifts of mind & heart & disposition.
Now unless like John Baptist he be
attended by the Holy Ghost even from his
mother's womb, what will be that child's
developments. Every advantage is his for
the culture of piety. (alone.) His saintly
mother guards every hour of his early life
with vestal devotion. His pious & godly
father sheds around him the continua
Sunshine of a holy example. No evil companion ever breathes moral pestilence about that pure home: from morning till even-ning no unhallowed scene or association po-lutes the atmosphere inhaled by his soul.

Now, no possible surroundings can surpass these for the promotion of everything good and pure. Yet what will be that child's first conscious acts? It has often been testi-fied by those whose opportunities of obser-vation have been most extensive, that even before conscious activity, there are unmis-takable indications of a temper not very obvi-ously sanctified at least, and a will not very clearly in sweet submission to God.
or man. Judging from appearances, it would seem that the spirit within me is not always either that of an angel or a saint. But however this may be, let us come to the first acts of conscious life, what will be its nature. I should say, sinful. Notwithstanding the holy influences which flow in their streams upon him, unless the power of divine grace will develop in the soul prevent, the first conscious act will be sinful: the first expressions of the inward being of which we can affirm a personal, moral character will be unholy. In other words, no surroundings however holy can independent of divine grace within make a voluntary act holy. But grace
is not nature; it supersedes nature, and must not come into the question, since we are endeavoring to show that by nature we are children of wrath. How can we account for the fact that the first act should bear the seal of sin. If the nature be not depraved—if there be not a want of original righteousness, a corruption of the whole nature, why will the first conscious or voluntary act prove either a want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God. If there be no sinful bias there which inclines the soul to sin, why does the soul first lift itself to the stature of a moral agent, the dignity of personal choice and action.
Straightway turns inward. If its moral state be entirely indifferent, neither leaning to sin nor holiness nor is it that under certain circumstances favorable to goodness, there is such inclination to sin (in action).

Some may deny that the first conscious acts would be sinful. Not to insist on narrow distinctions, suppose it to be destitute of any evil, or even so far moulded in the cast of godliness in which it takes form as to be holy acts. While holding the supposition an impossible one, we may allow it since it will not interrupt the general force of the argument.

Go on to the first sinful act, still by the supposition allowing every outward in
fluence leading to goodness. Accounts for that first act of sin, if you can. It cannot have come from without for outside influences are pure. The child is kept intact from everything unholy. But even if it did come from without what can account for its quick reception on the part of the child? There was at least more of good than of evil brought to bear upon it: why should the active soul imitate the little that was evil and not the great proportion that was good?

But if that first sinful act was only the fruit of an inward prompting how came that evil prompting there? What planted that seed of sin whose first fruits are the
bitter grapes of Sodom and the associations surrounding it were holy why was not the fruit that of good living And so allowing a sinful act it is impossible to account for it under any other supposition than that of original sin the want of primordial righteousness the corruption of the whole nature.

But let the panorama of life move on and behold a second scene. The child has passed his first conscious acts. Careful training has developed his latent virtues subdued his evil propensities corrected his wrong habits. He has grown into boyhood and under the gentle influences of the Holy Ghost received a new heart. He takes upon himself the personal
roms & duties of a Christian. The service of God is his supreme delight; the culture of holy graces his high aim. To make it more favorable we will suppose him to indulge no thirst for wealth but to engage with quiet content in his appropriate employments. What is his experience?

He finds that in the privacy of his closet he must slay bosom sins. Fights without daily tax his strength to the utmost. Fears within threaten to betray him to his foes. The dust of the flesh, the last of the eye and the pride of life harass him with evil counsel while the world & the devil allure him from without.
Age increased and he finds he has just begun to know himself. Some sin lurks at every corner ready to fall upon him as its prey. Often he yields; and when he conquers it is only by fighting against tendencies within as well as limitations without.

How easy to listen, parley, consent when Satan suggests and an evil heart whispers yes! How hard to comply when duty and God both appeal, and his own highest happiness and welfare are to be advanced. Duty is neglected; sin is committed. What is done is imperfect at best, and thus how vast the excess of sin over holiness of heart or life.
And what shall explain this strange preponderance! Where is this law in his members marring against the law of his mind and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death. He shuns himself in a hermit's cloister; but its four walls do not exclude the devil! He seeks the wild waste of a wilderness; but even in the desert he finds a world within peopled with monstrous forms of impurity and iniquity. He cannot flee from himself though he may flee from every human being—and when no finite eye beholds him, introspection shows him that he is not alone. Every outward temptation may be annulled, but tendencies within with base!
nating eyes uplifted hand beckon him on to sin.

The holiest day comes: the day of most faithful struggles. He sits down at nights to reflect. He unrolls before himself the woven web that the shuttle of life has wrought on life's loom, and it presents a dark ground work only here and there relieved by a bright spot, and even these seem to rest beneath sombreshadows. The evil has by far the preponderance, and even the little good is not unmixed with sin. In agony of soul he cries: Who shall deliver me from this body of death? Each day he learns the lesson anew that sin is natural. By nature he is a child of wrath.
The impure effluence that through the floodgates of word and deed passes from the inner to the outer life is a convincing witness to the impurity of the fountain within: for how can foul flood flow from a sweet spring?

But allowing that unholy associations around him pour streams of corrupt influence into his soul: why do those floodgates that often inwardly always yielding to perturbed tides! Why does the soul give easy entrance to sin and so steadily oppose the quiet inflowing of every sacred stream? Every hour records the unmistakable antithesis of the heart to all that is good and pure. He analyzes & dissects his best feel-
ings & deeds & finds selfishness, pride, hypocrisy common elements in them all. No hour so hallowed—no shrine so sacred, no retreat so retired, no place so holy, as to be free from the intrusion of thoughts, desires & feelings born of sin & bearing its brand. Prayer, the word of God & God himself may be devoutly loved: he cannot be so blind as not to discover that the love of evil is far more natural than the love of Good.

If he begin to close a candid self-examination—if he be gifted with true knowledge & discernment of self, he will feel most sensibly that while receiving & reflecting the light of heaven's central sun he is revolving
about earth: that however much his outer side may seem luminous, it is at best but a dependent moonlight—a reflection merely, which waxes and wanes, even to human light, in inconstant phases: a light too often brought into eclipse, because the world comes between itself and the face of God. He will know also that there is another side to his character which is almost always shrouded in darkness. He will be conscious that much of the outward blamelessness of his life is owing to the unconscious if not irresistible influences of that Christianity which surrounded him from youth upward, and in its mould shaped his plastic character.
When the reduction is made—subtracted all the results of mere impersonal agencies, all the negative virtues, all the imperfect services and all the unholy alloys—what of good is left! How little to counterbalance the evil in the other's preponderating scale. If he had not his Saviour to make up his imperfect righteousness by his own infinite and perfect righteousness by his own fulfillment of the law of God, how could he hope even in the grace of God. If he had done all that it was his duty to do, he would still have been an unprofitable servant: but now that his best services lack so much
what must he feel. Were he never so holy—never so Christlike nor far short has he fallen of the perfect stature of a perfect man in Jesus Christ.

Let the panorama move on and behold the last scene in this imaginary life. As the first delineated his first earliest conscious life and the second showed the man in the full vigor of middle age, let the third now picture the old man.

Four score years have passed with them the bloom of youth, the passions of manhood and the frailties of inexperience. The old man has trodden to the very verge of human life: his dim eye catches a glimpse
of the gates of the city of death down in the darkness... and already he seems to stand in the light of the future glory that breaks through the parted-lifted curtains of the Hereafter. His life work is done. These closing hours afford a retrospect of a lifetime—a life given to Christ and spent in his service. But what is his deepest knowledge even of such a life.

Memory goes up and down the halls of retrospection. Past life lies before the soul in full view—in all the solemn shadows of a very near Eternity. The life of service has passed in review—it various scenes have moved before him now what is his
deepest consciousness. The old man will be true to himself now if he never has been before for he already reads the threshold of the eternal state.

His first conviction will be that from prologue to epilogue his life drama has been one of sin. Predominantly and chiefly. The scenes may have shifted often and the thoughts & feelings that were the actors may have been masked but there were saddest tracts of evil in them all. From the first conscious act of which memory gives report, to the last that fled into the eternal bygone upon the wings of the last hour. He knows that sin has been the common
characteristic of them all. He cannot recall one hour in all his life—or if one surely not many in which unholy thoughts, affections, desires, did not lead across the entrance to his soul, either to go within or to go without. He cannot remember a day in which he performed his appropriate work, without yielding to some form of temptation, some subtle, secret tendency or impulse at war with the law of God.

From the dawn of life, through the morning, perfect day to the evening, whose twilight shadows now wrap his soul and bespeak the approaching night, he is deeply sensible that it has been much
natural and perhaps but too frequent with him to turn his eyes away from the true light that lighteth every man who is truly illumined, to hate that light. He knows that however his course may have been guided by grace, however it may have curved around at last through the same holy influences to the portals of the heavenly city—its deflections have been many and great. Those variations have been so frequent that he is almost indoubt whether it ought not to be called rather a sinful than a holy course. To be sure all his wanderings have been but temporary—"the path has returned to the right line."
showing that some great attraction to the right and true has ever been the presiding principle—the main motive power of his activity. But in the frequency and often greatness of these variations, how convincing—how absolute the argument for a depraved nature commonly called original sin.

Why should that course the old man has travelled, so continually deviate from its straightforward line of direction if there be not some disturbing force always too strong and sometimes wellnigh irresistible, drawing it from a normal and constant course toward sinful territory which borders it on either side.
While the planet Neptune was yet undiscovered, certain deflections were noticed by astronomers in the orbit of Uranus. After long and careful computation, it was announced to the world that these irregularities could only be accounted for by the existence of some other planet outside itself. So close exact was the calculation that he even announced when at a certain time the newly discovered planet would be found. Turning the telescope toward a given sign in the Zodiac at the hour and moment designated, Neptune was found. And shall we pronounce less certainly and surely upon the phenomena of the mental
and moral universe? What more conclusive witness can be found for the existence and power of original sin, than that it is ever drawing the soul out of its true path toward iniquity & hell.

But suppose we admit that the old man in question feels & feels truly that his life has shown a decided preponderance of holiness and not of sin. Even looking at his good deeds, his acts of service to Christ, his self-denials for him, what must his feeling be! How surely will he know that none of them have been absolutely sinless. They may have been chiefly inspired by Christian love and holy emotions going out Godward but
how grievously have they been mingled with sin at the best. With how little complacency is he able to regard them. He brings to God only an imperfect service. Often he has halted between two opinions and when he has decided in favor of God it has only been oftentimes after the severest struggles against the demon within. And now as he lays down his armor soiled and spotted with the dust and blood of the conflict, jubilant in the hope of a near release from soldiers service—when he shall end the trial in the triumph and lay down the cross to wear the crown— he feels that all he can do is to cast at the Saviour's feet that crown which his unworthy to bear.
upon his own brow. He has no righteousness of his own to plead; he has no wedding garment to wear: his only hope is the righteousness of Christ and he drops into the arms of death, and casts aside his earthly vesture of decay and sin for the garments of immortal life and light.

Such under the form of a single human life is the history of the best and purest lives. The form may be a fiction but it is only because no one man saw he who was also god as well as man ever lived a life so comparatively pure and perfect. In presenting a picture of an almost ideal Christian we have seen
at every glance, features of imperfection and depravity: how much the rather then must this hold in those who make but slight approximation even to this standard. This imaginary life, though never realized in any one man, appeals in its lessons to our own individual consciousness; and did all men live under circumstances as favorable as he to Christian nature, so that under the influences of a pure faith all men as good as he, whose imagined history we have endeavored to sketch to the witness to innate depravity—so original sin would scarcely be diminished.

The appeal is from experienced at large
to individual consciousness. Can you walk erect, in human shape with open eyes & ears - qualified to look around you - with powers of introspection and insight qualified to look within you - and yet doubt that you are by nature a child of sin and therefore of wrath? Of course our subject relates to native tendencies merely: while endeavoring to show the channel which human life does universally choose when left to inward impulses, we do not deny that the stream may be dammed up - turned into another channel - but the natural flow is its first unhindered course.
We may endeavor to persuade ourselves that we are not sinful and imperfect creatures but the very persuasion will argue a blindness of mind and heart which witness to the reality of original sin.

In Adam all die we inherit by nature a corrupt depraved moral being and so are by nature children of Wrath. We are born to evil not more naturally do sparks fly upward that do we gravitate toward sin. We naturally hearken to its seductive siren voice. It is more easy to do evil than to do right. We find that the path of wrong doing is broad and descending - the path to holiness narrow and ascending. Can any dispute or deny all this and does not this prove us by nature so.
Several inferences may be drawn from our topic—of great importance to Christian life.

1. Our greatest need is not so much to be saved from wrath as from sin—not so much from sins as consequences as its cause itself. We are children of wrath: but it is not the arbitrary revelation or condemnation of an angry God; it is by nature, by birth. Conceived in iniquity we are shaped in sin and born in depravity. God might save us from wrath; he could not make us happy until he changed our natures and made us by nature—new birth children of God. Hence it is that regeneration is declared a necessity except a man be born again. Eccles. 3: 20.

There is not a just man one earth that doeth good
2. We must remember that sanctification is simply a growth in power over sin. The Christian life starts us upon an upward career by successive & successful struggles we must overcome ourselves our native dispositions and tendencies. We must never imagine that because we give ourselves to Jesus & receive a new heart our preparation for heaven is ended; it is but barely begun. If that preparation be indeed commenced it will manifest its reality by progress daily development. Sanctification which is a process will follow justification which is an act. One gives us holy motives, the other is the outworking of them in the life.
3. Finally, we shall always need Christ. We are too apt to imagine that when we come to Christ and are accepted and justified we have no further necessity for him. But he sustains no grander, sweeter relation to the Christian soul than this: he supplies our daily imperfection. When we come to God after a day of holy struggles and activities we present a very imperfect service marred by sin—the best we can give. But God cannot take pleasure in anything which is imperfect or at all sinful—and so Christ is our continual intercessor. He takes our imperfect offering and continually plea
ding his own faultless obedience xlife, he
makes up our imperfection by the completeness of his own righteousness, so that in God's sight for Christ's sake we stand as though we were perfectly holy. His robe ever covers our nakedness; rags. By nature I am a child of wrath; by second nature I am a child of God. By nature life a sinner; by gracious life I become a Christian. Looking to Christ at the outset I am started forward in the path of duty. Looking to him daily I am enabled to grow in grace, to overcome sin. But every day I need to come to him anew as though I had never come before and be washed anew in his blood that he may present me anew, faultless before the throne.
And at the last great day we shall need him when the dread book of Judgment is opened and the record of our life will be read before the assembled universe. Then it will appear that even after we gave ourselves to God our daily lives, growingly holy were yet even to the latest day mingled with sin. Then Jesus standing as our mediator as well as judge shall with his own blood wipe out the record and with his own robe wrap our souls around and then alone shall we feel how infinitely valuable was the death of Christ to atone for us, the Holy Ghost he sent, to sanctify us and his continual intercession to supply the daily in perfections of those who were "by nature" etc.
Vain and more than vain is it for us who are by nature the children of wrath, to attempt self-regeneration—vain also to attempt works of justification or supererogation—all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Could we without Jesus help clear the record of our past guilt, how are we to prevent future sin and hence future exposure to penalty? If we could prevent future sin, how can we wipe out the record of past guilt. Now are we going to change our own nature? Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do right which are accustomed to do evil. No, the difficulty is a radical one—sin has rooted itself in us. From the crown of the head to the sole.
of the foot there is no soundness in us; the whole head is sick; the whole heart faint. Why should we deceive ourselves. There is no help for us but in God. He says to us, I will give you a new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you. I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh; I will give you an heart of flesh. Until man can do that for himself; he cannot save himself. What we need is a renewed nature not simply a reformed life. The commission of sin is but the fruit of the love of sinning. Having been born one of the flesh we are by nature children of wrath but blessed be God we may be born again of the spirit and be by grace children of God. For there is no consequence of son from which we may not be saved by faith in the Lamb of God.
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