

No. 196.

Arthur's Person

13

Original Sin.

Arthur's Person

58 x 14 Ps. 53.

Eccles: 7:20. Gen. 6:1-13

Eph. 2:1-10.

58 Ps. (908

687.

405

152

338

784

855

999

633

1150

66.

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 wherinto man fell? Answer: The sinfulness of that estate wherinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adams 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 any thing 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 & 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 heard 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 matter

of God, liable to such divine judgments
~~which~~^{as} are to be inflicted upon the wicked. And of all the arguments which are
or may be used to confirm this position we
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 traditionism or creationism, of Edwards
or Emmons, of Wesley or Woods, matters
nothing. Is it a fact that we do natural
ly incline to sin, and if so what are the
practical inferences? I shall at this time
use but one argument to prove ^{that is} it, a fact,
it may be called the appeal to experience

I use the word experience now, not in the narrow sense of ones own internal life, — for as S. T. Coleridge remarks, "with most men, experience, in this sense, is like the stern lights of a ship which only illumine 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 lifes surging sea toward the haven of rest. In the argument from experience so defined, may be

found that keen edged sword which with
its Damascus blade cuts through the plated
mail of conventionalism & prejudice and
pierces to the very marrow of conviction, or
to 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 infid-
elity in the forehead.

Sin is natural. Let experience prove it, leav-
ing for a while the field of dogmatic discus-
sion. If the simple witness of our common
observation of others & self were denied us how
ineffectual all logic or metaphysics

Imagine a man born and bred under every conceivable combination of circumstances calculated to induce holiness of heart & life. What will be that mans 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 & mother like Zacharias & 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 we may imagine an only child, the ex-

clusive object of careful, pious training
and ^{care is taken that} every acquaintance and neighbor who
crosses the the threshold of the infants home
shall bring into the household atmosphere, no contagious
means, on face and on heart the likeness of
of maldisease
Jesus. Nay to make the supposition strong-
er let us suppose ^{the child} him naturally richly en-
dowed with ^{rich} gifts of mind & heart & disposi-
tion. Now unless like John Baptist he be
attended by the Holy Ghost even from his
mothers womb, what will be that ^{his} 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 continual

sunshine of a holy example. No evil companion ~~ever~~ breathes moral pestilence about that pure home: from morning till evening no unhallowed scene or association pollutes the atmosphere inhaled by his soul. ~~Now~~, No possible surroundings can surpass these for the promotion of every thing good & pure. Yet what will be ^{the character of} that child's first conscious acts? It has often been testified by those whose opportunities of observation have been most extensive, that even before conscious activity, there are unmistakable indications of a temper not very obviously sanctified at least, and a will not very clearly in sweet subjection to God.

or man. Judging from appearances, it would seem that the spirit within were 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 ^{then} its nature. I should say, sinful. Notwithstanding the holy influences which pour in their streams upon him, unless the power of divine grace in the soul prevent, the ^{nature will develop} ~~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 their first ^{development of voluntary activity} ~~act~~ should bear
the seal of sin. If the ^{Heart} ~~nature~~ be not deprav-
ed - if there be not a want of original right-
eousness, a corruption of the whole nature
why will the first conscious or voluntary
acts prove either a want ^{ing in} of conformity unto
ⁱⁿ or ~~a~~ 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-
ing itself to the stature of a moral agent
the dignity of personal choice and action

straightway turn sinward. If its moral state be entirely indifferent, neither leaning to sin or holiness how is it that under circumstances so 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~~^{them} to be destitute of any evil, or even so far moulded in the cast of godliness in which ~~it~~^{they} take form as to be ~~a~~ 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. Account for that
first act of sin, if you can. It ^{Scarcely} cannot have come
from without for outside influences are pure.
The child is kept in tact from everything un-
holy. 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 Gomorrah! If 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 primal 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 gra-
ces his high aim. To make it the more favora-
ble we will suppose him to indulge no thirst
for wealth but to engage with quiet content-
ment in his appropriate employments. What
is his experience

He finds that in the privacy of his closet
he must slay besom sins. Fightings without
daily tax his strength to the utmost: fears
within threaten to betray him to his foes. The
lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the
pride of life harass him with evil counsel
while the world & the devil allure him from
without

Age increases 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 temptations without.
How easy to listen, parley, consent when
Satan suggests and an evil heart whis-
pers yes! How hard to comply when duty
and God both appeal, and his own high-
est happiness & 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 pre-
ponderance? Whence this law in his members
warring against the law of his mind and
bringing him into captivity to the law of
sin and death. He shuts himself in a her-
mits 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 & iniquity. He cannot flee
from himself though he may flee from every hu-
man 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 basei-

nating eyes & uplifted hand beckon him on
to sin.

The holiest day comes: the day of most
faithful struggles. He sits down at night
to reflect. He unrolls before himself the mon-
in web that the shuttle of life has wrought
in lifes loom, and it presents a dark ground
work only here & there relieved by a bright
spot, and even these seem to rest beneath som-
bre shadows. The evil has by far the prepon-
derance, and even the little good is not un-
mingled 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 flood-gates of word & 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 flood-gates that open 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 antagonism of the heart to all that is good & pure & true. 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 pure, 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 be given to close & 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 heavens 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 & wanes, even to human sight, in inconstant phases: a light too often brought into eclipse, because the world comes between itself & 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 in its elements. Now what is the result.
When the reduction is made - subtracting
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 & preponderating scale.
If he had not his saviour to make up
his imperfect righteousness by his own inf-
inite & perfect (righteousness by his own) fulfil-
ment 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 how 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 shewed 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 liabilities 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 - its 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 treads 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 trails 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 tread across
the entrance to his soul, either to go with ^{come}
in 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 maturing
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 most

natural and perhaps but too frequent with
him to turn his eyes away from the true
light that lighteth every man who is truly
illuminated, to hate that light. He knows
that however his course may have been
guided by grace, & however it may curve
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 fre-
quent that he is almost in doubt whether
it ought not to be called rather a sin-
ful 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 prin-
ciple - the main motive power of his activi-
ty. But in the frequency and often great-
ness of these variations, how convincing - how
absolute the argument for a depraved na-
ture 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 al-
ways too strong and sometimes well nigh
irresistible, smaying 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 where at a certain time the newly discovered planet would be found. Turning the telescope toward a given sign in the Zodiac at the hour & 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
evidence can be found for the existence and
power of original sin, than that it is ever
drawing the soul out of its true path to-
ward iniquity & Hell.

But suppose we admit that the old man
in question feels & feels truly that his life
has shewn a decided preponderance of ho-
liness and not of sin. Even looking at his good
deeds, his acts of service to Christ his self den-
ials 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 im-
perfect service. Often he has halted between
two opinions and when he has decided in fa-
vor of God it has only been oftentimes after the
severest struggles against the demon within.
And now as he lays down his armor soil-
ed & spotted with the dust & blood of the con-
flict, 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 Saviours 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 save he who was also god as well as man ever lived a life so comparatively pure & perfect. In presenting a picture of an almost ideal christian we have seen

at every glance features of imperfection & 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 his to christian nurture, so that under the influences of a pure faith all men as good as he whose imagined history we have endeavored to sketch the witness to innate depravity - to original sin would scarcely be diminished.

The appeal is from experience 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 tend
encies merely: while endeavoring to show
the channel which human life does uni
versally choose when left to inward im
pulses, we do not deny that the stream may
be dammed up - turned into another chan
nel - but the natural flow is its first un
hindered course

We may endeavor to persuade ourselves that we are not sinful & imperfect creatures but the very persuasion will argue a blindness of mind & 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 than 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 re.

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 consequences as its cause - itself
We are children of wrath: but it is not the ar-
bitrary visitation or condemnation of an an-
gry God: it is by nature, by birth. concei-
ved in iniquity we are shapen 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. 7: 20.
There is not a just man on earth that doeth good
^{or sinneth not}

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 & 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 pleading his own faultless obedience & life, he

makes up our imperfection by the completeness of his own righteousness, so that in Gods sight for Christs 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 natural 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 & 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 dai-
ly lives, growingly holy were yet even to the la-
test day mingled with sin. Then Jesus stand-
ing as our mediator as well as judge shall
with his own blood wipe out the record - and
with his own robe wrap our souls round and
then alone shall we feel how infinitely val-
uable 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 im-
perfections of those who were "by nature" etc.

Vain and worse 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 re-
cord of past guilt. How 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 it-
self in us. From the crown of the head to the sole

if the foot there is no soundness in us - the whole head is
sick - the whole heart faint. Why should we deceive our-
selves. There is no help for us but in God. He says to us
I will give you a new heart and a new spirit will
I put within you. I will take away the stony heart
out of your flesh and will give you an heart of flesh -
what 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 once of the flesh we are by nature child-
ren 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 sin from which
we may not be saved by faith in the Lamb of God.

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