

## **Is Sin a Type or a Reality?**

It has been suggested by some one as an advanced truth, that the cleansing of our theology is the antitype of the bearing away of sin by the scape-goat, making sin a type of false theology. This is a novel if not a dangerous idea. Novelties are striking; new things are eagerly sought for, and too apt to be received as truth, without careful examination, or to be received as advanced truth because new. But if "faith is counted for righteousness, why is not false theology counted for sin?" we are asked. This seems plausible, and may carry conviction to many trusting, honest souls, but it is sophistical. It is not a proper contrast. If faith were a clean theology, then a false theology would be unbelief. Unbelief is one kind of sin. The Holy Spirit reproves the world of sin because "they believe not on Me," said Christ.

But a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is not to be confounded with a perfect knowledge of God's plan of salvation. Every babe in Christ has faith in Him. He could not be even a babe without this, but his knowledge of the plan may and should be a growth during his whole life. When Christ said to one who came to Him, "Oh, woman, great is thy faith," he certainly could not mean that she had an extensive knowledge of the plan of the ages. It would be presumption to think so.

It has been the privilege of every Christian to have a strong faith in Christ, but it has never been the privilege of any Christian to have a perfect knowledge of God's plan. We do not underrate the value of knowledge, nor in any sense belittle the responsibility of the Christian to grow in knowledge. God forbid. But we believe, in order to have the right effect, it is best to call things by the right

names. Sin is sin – transgression of law, and ignorance is not always sin. Jesus says: "If you were blind, ye should have no sin."

The Holy Spirit was not promised to lead each individual into all the truth, but the church as a whole, as represented by the apostles, was to be led into all truth, and we can not doubt that the Christians of every generation have had all the truth due in their time.

But the holiest and most enlightened Christians, even now living, may well adopt the language of the Apostle Paul, "Now we know in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part will be done away." 1 Cor. 13. That certainly cannot be until after the marriage – the complete union and glory for which Christ prayed (Jno. 17), when "we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known." The papacy claims infallibility, and therefore sets itself up as the judge of men. Let all beware of imitating the unworthy example. Intercourse with a great variety of Christian people has convinced us that many dear children of God have a strong faith in the Lord Jesus, which enables them to lay hold on many blessings, both temporal and spiritual, though in many cases their knowledge of the plan of God is deficient. Others, wiser in the mysteries of God, seem sometimes to have a weaker faith, less love and a less perfect life.

"They that be wise shall shine as the firmament, but they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars." Dan. 12:3. The stars are brighter than the firmament. Oh, that we might be able to combine wisdom, love and Christian work in our lives.

Faith is one thing; knowledge is quite another. "Add to your faith virtue, and to your virtue knowledge," &c. Sin is one thing, and imperfect theology is another. "Now ye are clean" was spoken to the disciples in an early stage of experience, but it was their life-work to learn. He that is in Christ is counted "complete in Him," faith

being counted for righteousness. A perfect theology is never counted for righteousness, though it is one important part of the disciple's work to grow in grace and knowledge. Faith is at the foundation, where but little knowledge is expected, while the knowledge comes gradually, as we advance.

It would do violence to language to introduce the phrase "imperfect theology" where the word "sin" occurs, which would not be the case if they meant the same thing; and it must be an "imperfect theology" indeed, that assumes to confound them. "By one man an imperfect theology entered into the world and death by an imperfect theology." "By the law came the knowledge of an imperfect theology." "Until the law, an imperfect theology was in the world, but it is not imputed where there is no law." "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the – " No, we will not write it, it is too absurd. But it is no more absurd than the idea that the scape-goat work associated with cleansing the sanctuary in the law, was a type of the cleansing of theology here. The removal of sin from the sanctuary, would, it seems to us, far more fitly represent the cleansing of the church from all the works of the flesh, so that they might bring forth more fully the "fruits of the Spirit." Gal. 5. The tendency seems to be to make too little of character by exalting theology. And the false application of sin as a type of false theology, while it does not lead us to think little of a clean theology, it does lead us more clearly to see that character is the ideal of Christian life – the "wedding garment."

"No truth is vital, nor any error fatal, which, when believed and obeyed, does not affect character."

J. H. P.

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