

A Treatise on the Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin

by
H. A. Boardman

PART I.

NATIVE DEPRAVITY.

The question, *What is the native character and condition of man?* is an important one, for several reasons. In the first place, it is one in which all men have a direct personal concern. In the second place, scriptural views on this subject lie at the foundation of all sound theology. He who misapprehends the disease under which the race labours, will fail of understanding the remedy that has been provided for it. And, in the third place, such formidable attempts have been made in our day to set aside the ancient doctrine of Original Sin, that there seems to be a special propriety in re-examining the grounds upon which it rests.

The doctrine of the standards of the Presbyterian Church in relation to the native character of man, may be learned from the following quotation from the Larger Catechism: "The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consisteth in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually; which is commonly called Original Sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions."

The doctrine of the Church of England is thus expressed in her Ninth Article: "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk,) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil; so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every person, born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation." The reference to the "Pelagians" in this Article, requires an explanation which may be of advantage in the discussion before us.

Pelagius was a Briton, who lived in the early part of the fifth century. He published a set of opinions on some of the fundamental points of theology, which alarmed and convulsed the Church, and were, with their author, condemned in numerous councils. His sentiments on the subject immediately under consideration, were substantially adopted by Socinus in the sixteenth century, and are held by the modern Socinians. He maintained that the sin of the first pair injured no one but themselves; that their posterity have not been affected by it; and that all infants are born as free from sin as Adam was before his transgression. "Our

first parents, (according to his theory,) who sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, were not distinguished in any essential respect from those who sin in after ages, and our condition is not the worse for their sin; as they were to blame for yielding to a temptation which they might have resisted; so all of us, by a proper attention to cultivating our natural powers, may maintain our innocence amidst the temptations with which we are surrounded; and therefore we fall short of that which it is in our power to do, if we do not yield a more perfect obedience to the law of God than Adam yielded."¹ (See note A.)

A modification of this opinion has appeared in our day among professedly orthodox Christians. According to this view, the posterity of Adam are not born with a depraved nature, nor have infants *any moral character* at all prior to the commencement of moral agency. But, although neither holy nor sinful, up to that period, they are placed, by a divine constitution, in such circumstances as to render it certain that they will sin as soon as they become moral agents. The principle which is mainly relied upon to sustain this theory is, that morality can attach only to acts of the will--that there can be no such thing as a moral disposition, antecedent to the exercise of the moral powers. (See note B.) In accordance with this principle it is maintained that Adam was not created a holy being, but became holy by the first act of his will, in which he chose God as his portion. Nay, it is (in perfect consistency) argued that even the infant Jesus was not holy until he became a moral agent!

It will be my object to prove, in opposition to the dogmas of this dangerous philosophy, that our Confession of Faith is correct in asserting that "the same death in sin and corrupted nature," which attached to our first parents, as the fruit of their transgression, are "conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation;" and that their posterity are "defiled and corrupted" from the womb. It is not meant, by this language, that any of the original faculties of the soul are destroyed. Man has all the faculties before regeneration which he has after it. Nor is it meant that depravity is a material substance which is infused into the soul; it is moral, not physical depravity, of which the Confession speaks. But it is meant, that the soul has lost its "original righteousness;" that it is destitute of holiness; and that as the absence of light causes darkness, so the absence of holiness causes mental darkness, and involves all the faculties and affections of the soul in disorder. They cannot, in this state, answer the purpose for which they were created, of loving, serving, and honouring God. The insubordination and confusion which reign within, involve a sinful tendency to forsake God--a propensity to do wrong, which manifests itself with the earliest dawn of reason.

This, as I understand it, is the orthodox doctrine of native depravity. They do not hold, (as some have reported,) that there is a *mass of corrupt matter* lodged in the heart, which sends off noxious exhalations like a dead body. But they maintain that the soul has entirely lost the image of God, in which it was originally created; that there is nothing pure or good

1 Hill's Lectures in Divinity.

remaining in it; that, in consequence of the withdrawal of those special, divine influences, which were given to our first parents, the proper balance of the powers is destroyed; they have lost their conformity to the law of God, and the holy dispositions, which were at first implanted in the soul, have given place to *sinful dispositions*, which are the source of all actual transgressions.

With this explanation, I shall proceed to prove the doctrine. Our first appeal must be to the Scriptures. This doctrine is taught in our text; "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." The word flesh is used in a variety of senses in the New Testament. Apart from its literal meaning, it is frequently used for *men*, as in the phrases, "all flesh," "no flesh," &c. And frequently for human nature, with the accessory ideas of weakness and corruption, or human nature considered as corrupt and sinful. In this sense it is used in the following passages. Rom. vii. 18: "I know that in me, that is, in my *flesh*, dwelleth no good thing." Rom. viii. 5, 8: "They that are after the *flesh* do mind the things of the flesh."--"They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Gal. v. 17: "For the *flesh* lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh." The context shows that this is substantially its meaning in the close of the sentence under consideration. Our Saviour is speaking to Nicodemus of that which excludes men from the kingdom of heaven: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Why not? Because, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." By the phrase, "that which is born of the flesh," is meant, that which is born of corrupt nature--of man in his depraved state. "Is *flesh*"--that is, is itself corrupt or depraved, like its source. The word 'flesh,' in the second clause, denotes the opposite of 'spirit,' in the close of the verse. But the word 'spirit' there clearly means that which is spiritual or holy--that which is born of the Holy Spirit, is spiritual or holy. Of course, the parallel expression means, that which is born of the flesh is *depraved or sinful*, in other words, all men are born in a state of depravity.

This interpretation, which is the only simple and obvious one, not only proves that men are depraved, but traces back their depravity to their birth. That which is produced by the natural birth is contrasted with the product of the spiritual birth. And as holiness is ascribed to the spiritual birth as its source, so depravity is ascribed to the natural birth as its source. Those who reject one part of this interpretation, ought to reject the whole; for if the passage does not teach that men are depraved by nature, it does not teach that they are made holy in their regeneration.

Another passage which may be adduced in support of this doctrine, is, Job xiv. 4: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." And chap. xv. 14: "What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous?" The word 'righteous' shows that Job and his friend are not speaking here merely of man's natural frailty, but of his want of moral purity. He springs from a corrupt source, and is 'born' 'unclean,' i.e. unrighteous. He is *depraved* from his birth.

Again, Mark vii. 20-23: "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For

from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within and defile the man." And, Gen. vi. 5: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." These testimonies to the character of man were given by the same Divine Being, more than two thousand years apart. They do not, it is true, assert in so many words, that man is depraved from his birth, but this is strongly implied. They ascribe all his vile passions and crimes to a sinful heart; and affirm that "every imagination of the *thoughts* of his heart is only evil continually." The frightful catalogue of offences enumerated by our Saviour, is a general summary intended to cover all outward transgressions. It embraces the sins of childhood and youth, as well as those of mature years; and he declares of them all, that they spring from the same corrupt source within. This inward fountain of corruption must have an existence before such streams can flow from it. If 'all these evil things' proceed out of the '*heart*,' the heart itself must be 'desperately wicked,' antecedent to its bearing such fruits. In this view, these passages confirm the doctrine of native depravity.

Again, Ps. li. 5: "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did by mother conceive me." Could language express more distinctly than this does, the doctrine we are attempting to prove? The royal penitent, overwhelmed with a sense of his vileness, does not stop with a confession of his outward sins, but in the exercise of true contrition goes back to the polluted source from which they sprung, the original depravity of his heart. He bemoans the defilement of his nature; and bows down under the abasing consciousness, that he has been a corrupt and depraved creature from the very commencement of his being; "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Would it be believed that in order to elude the force of this explicit testimony to the native sinfulness of man, the opposers of this doctrine, both in our own and former times, have resorted to the unworthy and absurd subterfuge, that David is referring here not to his own but his *mother's* sins? As though a man overwhelmed as he was with his own crimes, would be disposed to bring a mother's sins into a solemn confession of his own! And as though filial reverence would not have prevented it, had he been tempted to do it! Besides, there is not the slightest evidence, that David's mother was remarkable for her transgressions; nor that he was born out of 'lawful and honourable wedlock.' The interpretation just named is a calumny, both upon the mother and the son; while it treats the sacred text with a violence which would make the Bible mean anything or nothing, according to the prejudice or fancy of the reader.

Another proof-text occurs, Eph. ii. 3:--"And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." The word here translated "by nature," means by birth. "We who are Jews by *nature* and not sinners of the Gentiles." Men are "children of wrath" "by nature," i.e. they are under the wrath of God from their birth. Why they are so, is elsewhere stated; they belong to a condemned race--a race upon which sentence of condemnation has been

passed on account of the sin of the first man, their covenant-head. The fact that they are so, implies that they inherit a depraved nature. The interpretation which makes this text, and the one previously cited, mean merely that men will become the children of wrath as soon as they are old enough to commit actual sin, is a striking example of the extreme to which men will go in perverting the simplest scriptural statements, when they have a theory to support.

Again we may refer to Rom. v. 12-21. The design of the Apostle in this passage is to compare the method by which men are justified through the work of Christ, with the mode by which they were brought into a state of condemnation by the sin of Adam. He is not therefore treating primarily of native depravity, but this doctrine is involved in his argument. He asserts that "death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"--that "by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation"--and that "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." The meaning of these declarations is, that on account of the sin of Adam, his posterity are regarded and treated as sinners; they are under condemnation; by that "one man's offence" death reigns over them. This certainly implies that men are depraved from their birth. If they are from that time under condemnation, (as we are here expressly taught,) they must be destitute of those moral qualities which God approves, and possessed of a character at variance with his holy law; that is, they must have a corrupt nature.

The Scripture testimony now cited is sufficient, it is believed, to prove the doctrine of native depravity, but it may be well to adduce a few additional arguments.

I. INFANT BAPTISM IS A PROOF OF THIS DOCTRINE.--Would this ordinance have been instituted if this doctrine were not true? Has it any significancy if infants are not depraved? The Scriptures represent baptism as implying the moral pollution of the subject. Ananias said to Saul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." Peter says, "The like figure whereunto, baptism, doth also now save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God." Baptism is a seal of the new covenant--a sacrament of the new dispensation. It is administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It recognises the Father as the author of salvation, the Son as our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier. But it is manifest that pure and innocent beings stand in no need of a Redeemer or Sanctifier. Why, then, if infants have not a depraved nature, should they be baptized? Surely the ordinance is nothing less than solemn trifling on this view. Nor does it meet the difficulty at all to say, that "they will become sinners by and by, and therefore it is proper to baptize them." For, in the first place, according to the theory alluded to, they may never become sinners, since they may die before moral agency commences. And in the second place, the Bible gives us no warrant to baptize innocent beings, on the ground that they *may* sin at a future time. Surely consistency requires that those who adopt these sentiments should withhold their children from baptism until they can distinguish between good and evil. (See note C.)

II. NATIVE DEPRAVITY IS PROVED BY THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION.--"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." All sound commentators understand this as a universal proposition, extending to the whole race, and to every individual of the race. They regard it as tantamount to a declaration, that no descendant of Adam (by ordinary generation) can enter heaven, except he be regenerated by the Holy Spirit. If this be its meaning, then, obviously, infants need to be regenerated; and if they need to be regenerated, they are depraved; for nothing but depravity can create a necessity for regeneration.

And farther, it deserves notice, that if infants are *susceptible* of regeneration, that is, susceptible of being made holy, this proves the possibility at least of their being sinful prior to that change. The popular philosophy of the day denies this. It contends that there cannot exist sinful dispositions or a sinful nature antecedent to moral action. Of course, as there is no greater difficulty in a metaphysical view, in the existence of sinful than holy dispositions, apart from moral action, it follows, that if an infant may not have a corrupt and sinful nature, it cannot by any process acquire a holy nature; that is, it cannot be regenerated. And since, "without holiness no man can see the Lord," infants cannot on this view be saved. This is the legitimate conclusion to which we are driven by the tenets of this pernicious philosophy. (See note D.)

III. NATIVE DEPRAVITY MAY BE PROVED BY A REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF REDEMPTION.--Our Saviour tells us that "he came to seek and to save that which was *lost*." He died to save sinners. If infants are not the subjects of a sinful nature, if they are not condemned and lost, they need no Saviour. "Who ever perished, *being innocent?*" God will not deal unjustly with them. If they are not depraved, they will not be punished hereafter.

But supposing them to be *neither holy nor sinful*, it is not easy to see how they can be benefitted by the atonement, which was made exclusively for sinners. It must in consistency be admitted on this view, (as it sometimes has been,) that infants need no Saviour, (see note E.;) and then it follows (assuming that they are saved) that there will be two distinct classes in heaven, those who have been saved through the blood of Christ, and those who have been accepted on the ground of their own innocence. A conclusion like this deserves no refutation. Those who receive with docility the instructions of the Bible, not only believe that infants may be saved through the atonement, but they find in this fact, strong confirmation of the humiliating truth that they are depraved from the womb.

IV. NATIVE DEPRAVITY IS PROVED BY THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF INFANTS.--"The wages of sin is death." The Scriptures represent all suffering as resulting from the curse pronounced upon our first parents. And they represent natural death in various passages as a penal evil. Thus they say, "We are consumed by thine anger;" "We pass away in thy wrath;" "The sting of death is sin;" "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so *death* passed upon all men, for that all *have sinned*." These passages furnish the only satisfactory solution of the sufferings of infants. It is incredible that they should be

subjected to so much pain and misery under the government of a righteous God, if they did not belong to a condemned race, and were not the subjects of a depraved nature.

V. Another proof of this doctrine is furnished by THE EARLY INDICATIONS OF DEPRAVITY IN ALL CHILDREN.--What stronger argument can be demanded in support of this doctrine, than the fact that all children begin to sin as soon as they can sin? And what satisfactory explanation can be given, if we reject this doctrine, of the fretfulness, and impatience, and selfishness, and anger, which are so frequently exhibited even in infancy? "I sinned," says Augustine, "in my infancy; and although I do not remember what I then did, I learn it from the conduct of others at the same age. I discovered dispositions which would be blamed in me now, and which, when we grow up, we are at pains to eradicate. I sought with tears what it would have been improper to give me; I was indignant at my superiors and my parents, because they would not comply with my wishes, and attempted to avenge myself by striking them. I have seen (he adds) a child that could not speak, full of envy, and turn pale with anger at another that was nursed along with it."

This humbling confession of an eminent servant of God, will find confirmation in the experience of every parent. Some children, it is true, are more amiable than others, but with the exception of the very few, who, like Jeremiah, and John the Baptist, are sanctified from the womb, they all manifest wrong tempers at a very early period.

Reason and Scripture unite in deciding that there must be some inborn depravity to produce these effects. This will be still more apparent when we mention,

VI. As another proof of the doctrine under consideration, THE UNIVERSAL PREVALENCE OF SIN IN THE WORLD.--The testimony of the Bible on this subject, is, that "there is none righteous, no, not one:" that "all are gone out of the way, and are become unprofitable;" that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The whole history of the race is a commentary on this representation. And the world is at this moment (as it has ever been) so full of the dreadful fruits of sin, that it is presumed no candid person will question the fidelity of the picture.

How is this fact to be accounted for? How happens it that all men have become sinners--that all begin to go astray as soon as they acquire the use of their rational faculties? To say, that it is owing to bad example, is only to explain the thing by itself. For the question returns, why is it that a bad example prevails universally? Or if it be alleged that this is not the case, that there are multitudes of parents who set a good example before their children; I ask, again, why is it that even the children of such parents begin to sin with the first dawn of reason, and persevere in sinning till they die, unless God is pleased to give them repentance? Surely these things would not be unless there were a predisposition to do wrong, a proneness to sin antecedent to actual sin, and producing it. No other cause but a depraved and sinful nature, as the common inheritance of the race, is adequate to account for the universal prevalence of sin.

VII. Finally, it is no small confirmation of the doctrine of this essay, THAT IT HAS IN EVERY AGE RECEIVED THE ASSENT OF THE LARGEST AND PUREST PORTION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.--It was held by all the Reformers. It is incorporated in the Augsburg, French, Belgic, Bohemian, Helvetic, Savoy, Moravian, Scotch, and Westminster Confessions, in the Articles of the Church of England, and the Saybrook Platform. (See note F.) And moreover, it is believed by the great mass of sincere Christians in every Protestant sect. There is a strong presumption, that a doctrine is true which is found in the Bible by plain readers, whose minds are unperverted by metaphysical subtleties, and who study the Scriptures, not for controversy, but profit. That this class of persons generally understand the Bible as teaching that children are born with a depraved nature, will not, it is presumed, be denied.

For all these reasons, then, and others which need not be mentioned, we maintain the doctrine of native depravity. If the doctrine is not susceptible of proof, it would be difficult to prove anything, either from Scripture or observation. The main objection urged against it in our day, is a philosophical dogma. It is affirmed, (as already stated,) that morality can attach only to acts of choice, that there can be no such thing as holy or sinful *principles* anterior to moral action, and that therefore depravity commences only with moral agency; up to that period a *child has no more moral character than a brute*. I shall not stop to examine this theory in detail: if I have succeeded in establishing the true doctrine, its fallacy has already been shown. It may be well, however, to observe that the scriptural statement, that "sin is the transgression of the law," gives no countenance to this theory. For the word rendered 'transgression of the law,' is of much more extensive signification than that phrase, and means 'want of conformity to the law;' and this is just as applicable to dispositions or principles, as to actions. If a malicious act be sinful, a malicious disposition cannot be less so. Nay, it is what lies back of an act of the will, that gives it its character, whether good or bad, holy or sinful. A holy disposition makes the actions which flow from it holy; and a sinful disposition the reverse.

The views which have now been presented, suggest several observations of a practical character, with which I shall conclude the first part of this dissertation.

First. *The doctrine of native depravity is a doctrine of great importance.*

It is a mistake, to suppose that this is a merely speculative subject, in relation to which men may safely hold any opinions they please. No error is harmless, in questions of a moral nature; and that it cannot be a matter of indifference what sentiments are held on *this* subject, is evident from several considerations.

One of these is the prominence assigned to it in the Scriptures. Another arises out of the very nature of the case. Surely if any question be important to us, it is the question, what is our own native character and condition? Are we depraved or holy or without moral character altogether? Are we in favour with God or under condemnation? Again, the

views which men form on this subject usually modify their views on all the distinctive truths of the gospel. The gospel cannot be understood unless we understand the evils which it was designed to meet. That evil which lies at the basis of all others, is the depraved nature with which men are born. And ecclesiastical history shows, that whenever the doctrine of native depravity has been abandoned, other leading doctrines have fallen with it. Thus it was with Socinus, and before him, with Pelagius; and thus it is with errorists in our own day. Defection from the faith has usually commenced here. And it is easy to see how. If men are not depraved, there is no absolute necessity either for an atonement or for regeneration. The absence of depravity implies either positive holiness or plenary ability to comply with the demands of the law. If men possess this ability, and especially if they possess it without any wrong bias, why may they not comply from the outset with all the requisitions of the law, and thus acquire a title to heaven by their own works? Why must they depend on the merits of another being for salvation? Why may they not be justified on the ground of their own righteousness? These questions are not mere rhetorical figures. The principles on which they bear, constitute, as everyone knows, a portion of the Socinian creed. And toward these principles, every departure from the true doctrine of native depravity tends. Wherever this doctrine is relinquished, the necessity of regeneration is either openly denied, or the new birth dwindles down into a mere reformation of manners or a decent observance of the forms of religion; and reliance upon Christ for salvation comes to mean nothing more than this, that our crude and imperfect works are mingled with the merits of his infinitely precious sacrifice as the ground of our acceptance with God; that is, Christ does not save the sinner, but helps the sinner to save himself. There is but one step more to downright Socinianism.

To show that the importance of this doctrine has not been overestimated, I will quote a few remarks from Professor Neander, of Berlin, the most learned and profound ecclesiastical historian of the present age. He is speaking of the controversy on this subject between Augustine and Cælestius, the coadjutor of Pelagius in the fifth century. "Nor did Augustine (he observes) concede to Cælestius, that this controversy was so unimportant in its bearings on Christian theology. Believing that the doctrine of a Redeemer and a redemption, in which the essence of Christianity consists, presupposes the recognition of the need of redemption; he held that the doctrine of redemption is therefore closely connected with that of the depravity of human nature, and consequently with the doctrine respecting the first sin and its consequences; and that the former fundamental doctrine loses all its significance unless the latter doctrines are presupposed. In the contrast between Adam and Christ, therefore, consists the *very essence of Christianity*."

"If we confine ourselves (Neander proceeds) to the points which were stated by the two parties themselves, and of which they had formed distinct conceptions, it must appear that this controversy arose from the different modes of considering human nature in its present state; or rather, from the different views entertained respecting the relation of the present moral condition of mankind to the sin of Adam. In everything else which came into discussion--the different views entertained as to man's need of assistance, as to the

nature of redemption, as to the work which Christ performed, and the influence of Christianity, as to the object and efficacy of Baptism, in short, every point debated between the two parties was intimately connected with this fundamental difference. Augustine always came back at last to this, that man is in a state of corruption; and this, on the other hand, was always the point to which the disavowal of the Pelagians especially referred."²

To this quotation, might be added the concurrent testimony of the ablest theologians both of Europe and America. They have with great unanimity considered the doctrine of native depravity, as a *primary and fundamental* doctrine--one that could not be abandoned without jeopardizing all that is worth contending for in the gospel. (See note G.)

In the second place, we may learn from this discussion *the dreadful evil of sin*. Sin alone has reduced our race to its present deplorable condition.

If we are born depraved and corrupt, if

"Soon as we draw our infant breath,
The seeds of sin grow up for death,"

sin is the cause of it. What conceptions must we form of the evil of sin in God's sight, when we consider that condemnation has passed upon all men for the "one offence" of the first man; that his one sin has involved all his posterity in guilt and wretchedness, and has been the prolific source of all the pain, and sorrow, and crime, and wo, and death, which have filled the earth for six thousand years. Surely it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God.

Thirdly. This doctrine *ought to humble us*.

Revolting as is the picture of human nature which has been drawn, it is an unexaggerated picture of our own hearts, and incorrect only because inadequate. If it is proper for the children of an intemperate father to feel humbled on account of his misconduct, it becomes us all to abase ourselves under the consciousness that we are the degenerate offspring of an apostate head.

It should humble us also to reflect that even in our infancy we manifested symptoms of depravity, and that with the earliest exercise of our rational faculties, we began to oppose the authority and to abuse the goodness of that beneficent Being who had given us an existence and supplied us with numberless comforts.

Fourthly. This subject *exhibits in an affecting manner the responsibilities of parents*.

2 Biblical Repository.

The depraved nature which our children possess, with all its sad concomitants of pain, and wo, and condemnation, they inherit from us. What parent can contemplate this fact without emotion? Who that is not dead to sensibility, can be unmoved when he reflects that he has transmitted such a legacy to his children? Who does not see that if there be any one duty which a parent owes his children, it is that of using every means within his reach, to subdue this corruption and rescue them from its thralldom?

What then is to be thought of parents who never pray for their children--who never instruct them in the Scriptures--who never converse with them about their souls--who never try to direct their minds to the Saviour, but whose whole example goes to increase their natural blindness and depravity, and to lead them farther and farther from God. Should this book fall into the hands of such a parent, suffer me to ask him, whether this is parental affection? Is this parental kindness? Is this treating your children as they ought to be treated? True, it may satisfy them now; it may be the very course which they love, and they will not *now* reproach you for it. But may not a day come when they will reproach you? Will they always thank you for letting them grow up in the neglect of religion? Have you no apprehension that a period may arrive, when they will say to you, "Why did you not admonish us of the consequences of sin in childhood? Why did you not endeavour to implant religious principles in our minds, at that tender age when you were doing so much to mould our characters? Why did you not, when we looked to you in confiding affection for instruction, direct us to the Saviour of sinners? Why did you not tell us of God and redemption--of the judgment, and heaven and hell? Why did you not

'Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way?'

Why did you bestow all your attention upon our frail bodies, and leave our souls to perish?"

May God preserve both the author and his readers, from the dreadful anguish of ever listening to questions like these.

Finally, What reason have we, in the light of this subject, *to bless God for a Saviour!*

God has not left our race in hopeless misery. The "second Adam" has been sent to repair the ruins of the fall. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

This language is full of consolation to parents who have been called to follow infant children to the grave. The Bible says very little respecting the future condition of infants; but there is strong ground to hope for their salvation. As by virtue of their connection with Adam they are condemned without any actual sin of their own, (agreeably to Rom. v. 18: "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation,") so we are

authorized to conclude that they will be saved through the atonement of Christ, without the exercise of faith and repentance. Less than this can hardly be inferred, either from the general representations of the Divine character in the Scriptures, or from such expressions as these: "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;" "By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." And in relation to the children of Christian parents the case is still stronger; for they are included in that gracious covenant which God has established with his people, and "with their seed after them." To these considerations it may be added that the language of David on the death of his infant child, (2 Sam. xii. 23,) gives, on one interpretation, (not perhaps the best one,) confirmation to this opinion: "*I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*"

Let me urge every reader of this essay, then, to seek an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. His blood can cleanse us both from original and actual sin.

"No bleeding bird, nor bleeding beast,
No hyssop-branch, nor sprinkling priest,
Nor running brook, nor flood, nor sea,
Can wash the dismal stain away."

But in Christ we may find full and complete deliverance from its power and pollution. He is made unto his people, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." They are "washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. And these exalted privileges will be ours, if in humble dependence on his grace, we commit ourselves to him as our Lord and Redeemer.

Part I, "Native Depravity," in *A Treatise on the Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin* by H. A. Boardman, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1844). **Note:** The text has not been modified.