

THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF CONDEMNATION

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Divinity in
Grace Theological Seminary
May 1979

Title: THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF CONDEMNATION
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Degree: Master of Divinity
Date: April, 1979
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Many Evangelists and Theologians, in the process of presenting the Gospel, use the analogy of a court room. The picture of a condemned sinner is often likened to that of a condemned felon of our judicial courts. The Bible itself is full of much court room terminology. While this analogy is often used and rightly so, it is incomplete in many details. In the judicial system of the United States the first step in the system is the declaration of specific charges against the defendant. While it is granted from a Biblical view that man is condemned, the logical question must be, On what charge is he condemned? In other words, What is mankind charged with in God's court? In this paper three possible charges are considered.

The first possible charge is that man is condemned because of the sin which each one of us commits from the time of our birth until our death. There are some verses that seem to point to this as a logical charge.

The second possible charge is that man is condemned for the rejection of Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. It might be argued that not all men are made aware of the offer of Christ so therefore cannot personally reject that message. However, every man is exposed to some revelation and when this is rejected he stands without excuse.

The third possible charge is that as a result of Adam's sin, we are all born with original sin, all men are condemned or worthy of hell from the moment we came into existence. Rather than falling into a state of condemnation, man came into existence with the death sentence already standing upon him.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree
Master of Divinity

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Charles R. Smith", written in dark ink.

Advisor

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of this paper is to examine three possible basis upon which mankind is condemned to hell, and to decide which, if any, meet the Biblical data. The writer became curious about this subject when he realized the great amount of legal language used in the Bible. This prompted the question: with what crime is mankind charged? For the purpose of this paper three charges are to be examined and a proof text used for each.

The first possible basis is that an unbeliever is condemned to hell for the sin that he actually commits between the time of his birth and death. For this view the proof text of Romans 2:5-6 is to be evaluated.

The second theory to be examined is that a man is sentenced to hell for unbelief. This can be in either the form of rejection of Jesus Christ or in the rejection of whatever revelation surrounds him in his environment. The proof text examined here is John 3:18.

The last theory to be considered is that all men merit hell from the moment they are born because of original sin in the race. While the question of infant salvation might come to mind it will not be dealt with in

this paper as other have already addressed this issue. The proof text to be studied in this section is Romans 5:12.

CHAPTER I

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

In surveying a given tract of land, a benchmark must be established before any accurate measurements can be taken. The benchmark is a known point from which things can be measured and surveyed. When one is speaking about the condemnation of man to an eternity in hell, there must be a benchmark in thought or logic. The reference point of this subject must be in the holiness of God. The reason that many people have not accepted the doctrine of hell is that there has been no study of the importance of the holiness of God. Indeed, without holiness in the Godhead there is no specific reason nor any necessity for judgement of any man on any basis. If man is left without a picture of the holiness of God then one can only arrive at the opinion of a talk show host who said that when we appear before God He will surely say "Ah, shucks, fella! Just forget it. I can't hold a few things against you forever."¹ Many so-called theologians hold to the view that hell is an

¹L.A. King, "Hell the Painful Refuge," Eternity, Vol. 30, No. 1, January 1979, p. 28.

illogical doctrine. Bishop James Pike once said:

A Heaven of infinite bliss and Hell of infinite torment is an impossible contradiction. The kind of people who would qualify for heaven would not be in bliss knowing that there were a lot of people in suffering with no chance whatever for change--the love-nots, the underprivileged. These suitable for Heaven would want to go to Hell to be alongside them in their needs. Jesus, as shown by the reports of His ministry on earth, would be alongside them too. God in His heaven would find Himself lonely and might well join everybody there--or change the whole scheme.

Any study of the reasoning behind why a man is sent to hell must have its benchmark in the study of the holiness of God, and the necessity for the judgement of man.

The Biblical Data in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament the holiness of God is set forth and pointed to dramatically quite often. One of the most common terms in the Hebrew language for the holiness of God is וְיָתֵר. It functions as a "general term for the moral excellence of God."² There are many possible meanings yet the resultant concept conveys the idea of "Freedom from impurity."³ The root word is found in the form יָתֵר.

¹Quoted in William Oursler, Protestant Power and the Coming Revolution (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1971), p. 173.

²Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), I, 413.

³Ibid.

"Which means to cut or separate."¹ There is some thought that the word comes from the Assyrian language and means purity, but perhaps it is better to say that the word means separate.² While the word means separation, the question must be raised, Separation to or from what? In the Bible it is used of the priests in their service to show how they are separated unto God for a specific purpose, that of service. But in the subject of divine holiness it must be realized that what is being stated is that God is separate or free from all evil.³

Another term in the Old Testament that speaks of the holiness of God is *ṣḏq*. Girdlestone says this word refers to a straightness or stiffness, perhaps some sort of standard.⁴ In relation to God this word shows that God has a standard of basic rightness or righteousness that is not external but

¹L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), p. 73.

²James Orr, ed., The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1939), p. 1403.

³Francis J. Hall, The Being and Attributes of God (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1918), pp. 295-296.

⁴R.B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948), p. 159.

is internal and is that which is in accord with His being.¹

The righteousness of God is not something that can be changed or deviated from such as the laws of man are. The righteousness or holiness of God is inseparable from the character of God Himself.²

The title לְיֵהוָה is given to God and is used in associations with Gentiles as in the accounts of Malchizedek and Baalam.³ In Deuteronomy 38:8 the title is used for the only time in the book and is to show the sovereignty of God over all men and nations.⁴ This title shows the right and power that God had to enforce the internal standards of His righteousness.

God is different from all other gods because of His holiness. In Exodus 15:11 God is contrasted to the many gods of Egypt in that He is distinct from all conceivable objects of comparison. His holiness, or absolute purity of nature, makes Him transcend all man's imaginary gods.⁵

¹C.F. Whitle, "Deutero-Isaiah Interpretation of SEDEQ," Vetus Testamentum October 72, Vol. 22, p. 470.

²Ibid. p. 471.

³G.T. Manley, The Book of the Law (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), p. 45.

⁴T.C. Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy, The New International Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), p. 379.

⁵James G. Murphy, Commentary on the Book of Exodus (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1868), p. 163.

Biblical Data in the New Testament

The writers in the New Testament used Greek, which was the common language of the day. In order to be understood by their readers they were forced to use words that were already in existence and use, sometimes even by pagan religions, in order to describe the one true God.¹ From the Greek word ἅγιος we get the idea of holiness. It was used by the pagans in their worship, especially of "temples, or places of worship ... and to designate that which deserved and claimed moral and religious reverence."²

Another word used by writers in the Greek New Testament to describe the holiness of God is ὅσιος . While this word is often used in quotes of Old Testament passages it is a very descriptive word that is usually used in a context of God alone being holy. It incorporates in its usage the idea of God being holy in His judgment and condemnation of those doing evil.³ In Revelation 15:4 this word is used to name the reasons that all men and nations will worship God--because of His holy nature. In fact this

¹ Kenneth S. Wuest, Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962), p. 30.

² Ibid. p. 32.

³ Colin Brown, ed., The New International Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), II, 237.

verse not only states that God is holy within His nature but that He is holy in the nature of His acts and conduct in the realm of exercising judgment. "God is righteous and holy in the fact that He indicates persecuted believers and exercises judgment on malefactors. He alone is worthy to be praised and perfectly blameless, maintaining righteousness and truth without abridement or disruption and bringing salvation by His acts."¹

What God's Holiness Is, and is Not

Holiness is a self-affirming purity within the personality of God. It is the purity of His nature in both His will and His being. "Holiness in God is ... an inward character of perfect goodness. It is a character rather than a trait of character."² God's holiness is not dependent upon some outward standard that He must conform to, but is rather an inward basic part of His own nature that makes Him true to Himself. But, God's holiness is not in any way a form of self love, nor is it selfish in any way. While the Bible states in 1 John 4:8 that God is love, it must be recognized that this love is not in any way an impurity

¹Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. V., G.W. Bromiley, Trans. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 491-492.

²William Clarke, An Outline of Christian Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's & Sons, 1899), p. 89.

within the holiness of God. While holiness demands judgment and love demands forgiveness the two do not negate each other but rather provide us with the doctrine of salvation by grace to save from the penalty of sin.

Holiness is God's Basic Attribute

An attribute of God is a quality that is essential for His nature. Without this quality or attribute He would not be God.

Holiness includes both the perfection of God's Self, and the fact that He is always true to Himself. He cannot contradict Himself, but is morally capable only of action that truly expresses His character. He acts in perfect freedom; and every act of His perfect freedom is, in perfect harmony with His perfect character.¹

Holiness in God is different from man's holiness. While man conforms to an external standard set up by God, God conforms to Himself. Within this idea of conformity to self there comes the idea that holiness must be the basic attribute of God's nature.²

How God's Holiness Affects Mankind

While God's holiness is a conformity to His own nature, man's holiness is a conformity, in a lesser measure, to the nature of God. When man does obey and conform to God

¹ Ibid. p. 90.

² Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 73.

there are rewards given, as is seen in Psalm 58:11, Matthew 25:34, Romans 2:7, and Hebrews 11:26. If rewards are given, and it is readily admitted by almost everyone that rewards are given, then it is only reasonable to expect punishment when man does not conform to God's will. The quality of God's will is essentially an expression of His divine nature. And since the basic character of His nature is holiness, when man is not holy he transgresses God's will.¹ God demands that mankind follow His will in purity.² And if man refuses to follow God's will in holiness it is only reasonable to expect God to be consistent with His nature and give out punishment in the same manner as He gives out rewards. The passages which show this punishment are Isaiah 3:10-11, and Romans 3:23.

¹Henry Clarence Thiessen, Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1952), p. 129.

²Ibid. p. 74.

CHAPTER II

CONDEMNATION BY SINFUL ACTS

This chapter is an evaluation of the moralist position that a man is condemned to hell only on the basis of the sins he personally commits between his birth and death. This is the position held by the majority of the secular world that claims to believe in some type of theism. This theory naturally finds much in common with the Pelagian view of the imputation of sin.

Pelagius was a British monk who taught a unique system of doctrine that was condemned by the Council of Carthage in 418. This system of doctrine teaches that every human soul is immediately created by God as an innocent free spirit who is just as able to obey God as Adam was at the time of creation. The only way that Adam's sin affects mankind is that it is an evil example. According to Pelagianism, Adam's sin hurt only himself, and affected only himself, and in no way affects his posterity. This position believes that newborn infants are exactly in the same moral condition as Adam, and that the law is as good a means of obtaining salvation as the Gospel of Grace is.¹

¹Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1976), p. 597.

A Description of the Theory

The basic format of this system is that a man is sent to hell because he sins during his lifetime. It does not take into account any inherited or original sin. This theory holds that there is a "kind of people who would qualify for heaven"¹ much like Bishop Pike said. The idea that there is a certain kind of people who would be suitable for heaven shows that there is an idea that man must qualify within himself for heaven or be disqualified for heaven. It is a general thought within this theory that although a single sin may be considered a serious matter, whether or not a man is sent to hell depends upon his habitual sinning or lack of sinning. As Joseph Angus said ". . . men are destroyed only by character--by the sin or impenitence that is habitual."² This idea of good works is found within the Jewish Rabbinical School.

Measure your alms by what you have, if you have much, give more; if you have little, give less, but do not be mean in giving alms. By doing so, you will lay up for yourself a great treasure for the day of necessity. For almsgiving delivers from death and saves men from passing down to darkness.³

¹ Oursler, Protestant Power and the Coming Revolution, p. 173.

² Joseph Angus, That Unknown Country (Springfield, Mass: C.A. Nichols Co., 1892), pp. 103-104.

³ The Jerusalem Bible, "Tobit 4:8-10" (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1966), p. 609.

There is also a related idea that in judging a man God will place on a balance his good works and his sins. As the two are weighed the balance beam will determine whether the man is worthy of heaven or hell. Although this is a completely unbiblical concept there are not only quite a few secular minds that agree with it, but even a few commentators on Scripture. As James Macknight states on the judging of Abraham:

In judging Abraham, God will place on the one side of the account his duties, and on the other his performances. And on the side of his performances He will place his faith, and by mere favor will value it as equal to a complete performance of his duties, and reward him as if he were a righteous person.¹

In this theory mankind is not condemned on the basis of Adam's sin anymore then he is allowed to enter heaven on the basis of Christ's work. This is strictly a humanistic or moralistic position on the basis of condemnation.

Exegesis

One passage that might be considered by some to support the view that man is condemned on the basis of his own sin is Romans 2:5&6. The theory is based on this passage because in verse 6 it states that God will render to each man a treasure judged on the basis of his works. The word ἀποδώσει, which is translated will render,

¹ James MacKnight, MacKnight on the Epistles (Grand Rapids: Baker Bookhouse, 1969), p. 252.

means to fulfill an obligation or expectation. This word means to repay in a reward or a punishment, i.e. retribution.¹ Donald Grey Barnhouse takes verses 6,7, & 10 to be referring to good Christian believers who get a reward for the works that they practice on earth.² What Mr. Barnhouse fails to realize is that ἀποδώσει, can refer to the reward of a Christian or the reward of the non-Christian in his punishment for his evil deeds.

The idea given here is that man will be rewarded with his treasure or what he treasured up to himself. The word here for treasuring up is θησαυρίζω. While this word is translated "to treasure up," it can also be translated as it is in Proverbs 1:18 from the LXX as "ambush." The word is also used when a person keeps or hoards up a treasure as in a treasury of a kingdom. It is often used to describe the treasuring up of earthly wealth that is condemned in Scripture.³ On the positive side it is used in Matthew 6, of the treasures in heaven that do not corrupt.

All this treasure is to be rendered on the day of wrath. The word for wrath here is ὀργῆς. While the word

¹Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, p. 167.

²Donald Grey Barnhouse, Romans, God's Wrath (Wheaton, Ill: Van Kampen Press, 1953), II 35.

³Fredrich Hauck, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. III, p. 138.

θυμός is used for a sudden quick outburst of anger, can contain an element of deliberate thought that contrasts with the suddenness of human anger. It is more of a planned outburst of anger by God.¹ In fact, the picture here is the treasuring up of wrath--that which is the opposite of the true treasures we should have in heaven as described in Matthew 19:21. Here we have described man's sinful acts being deposited in a bank in heaven which becomes literally a capital investment of wrath that is heaped in heaven and this "capital of wrath grows until the Last Judgment and will then be payed with compound interest; hence this day is the *ἡμέρα ὀργῆς* .²

While some might say that in this passage Paul is speaking from the Old Testament point of view there is nothing to support that contention. The idea that God's judgment will be at least in part based on man's deeds, is stated over and over in Scripture in the Old and New Testament.³ But as William Shedd said; Paul is talking

¹H.C. Hahn, The New International Dictionary of The New Testament, Colin Brown, ed., II, 110.

²Gustav Stahlin, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, V, 438.

³J.A. Emerton & C.E.B. Cranfield, The International Critical Commentary, "Romans," Vol. I (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1975), p. 146.

about, "the ethical ground of judgment, namely, the character and conduct of men."¹ Original sin passed down from Adam shows up in the character of men and this character influences the conduct. Shedd is also talking about a two-fold aspect of judgment--not divorcing the conduct from the character. The situation is much like Lenski describes, works are included within the presence or absence of faith because even though God's secret basis of judgment are the good or evil works give public proof of correctness of the judgment.²

Advantages and Disadvantages

To use this verse to support the position that God condemns a man to hell only on the basis of the sins that he personally commits is to ignore the context of this verse and the setting of it in the entire framework of Scripture. As Moses Stuart said, "the apprehension that Paul here contradicts salvation by Grace, and makes it depend on the merit of works, has no good foundation."³ Moses Stuart has analyzed the position correctly. If you are going to

¹ William Shedd, A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary on the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), p. 38.

² R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans, (Columbus, Ohio: Lutherna Book Concern, 1936), pp. 149-150.

³ Moses Stuart, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Andover: Gould and Newman, 1835), p. 103.

say that man is condemned to hell by his own personal works then one must also say that if a man committed no personal sin he would be deserving of heaven. This would make it possible to achieve heaven on the basis of positive works or at least the absence of negative works. The only way to get around this diversity is to divide the issue of salvation and condemnation. That is to make salvation by one road and condemnation to hell the result of following another road. This is what Leon Morris does when he says "there is a difficulty in that salvation is always regarded as due to the good gift of Christ, whereas judgment is invariable on the basis of work."¹ The proper evaluation of these verses may be found in Dr. Hoyt's comment that "in this passage the apostle is not discussing the way to be saved or the way to be lost. That is taken for granted. . . . In this passage Paul is discussing judgment, which will be the evaluation of deeds for the corresponding degree of reward or punishment."²

This passage is not referring to the way that a man is condemned to hell. To say that a man is condemned on the basis of his own personal works is to dangerously undermine the gospel of grace and at the very least sets up a dangerous scheme in the doctrine of salvation.

¹ Leon Morris, The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1960), p. 67.

² Herman A. Hoyt, The First Christian Theology (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1977), p. 44.

CHAPTER III

CONDEMNATION BY UNBELIEF

This chapter deals with the question whether a man is condemned to hell for the sin of unbelief only. This unbelief is most usually in the form of the rejection of Jesus Christ as the individual's personal Savior. This is by far the most popular theory among conservative Christians. This theory is very attractive and has some Scripture references which tend to lend it support. One of these texts is John 3:18; "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

A Description of the Theory

This theory holds to the idea that man is sent to hell on the basis of the fact that he personally rejects Jesus Christ as his personal Savior or rejects the revelation around him. This theory is a very popular one and is held by many commentators especially those who have written commentaries on the Gospel of John. Godet and H. Jacottet

believe that a man is saved by justification by faith but that he is condemned on the basis of unbelief.¹ Likewise Lenski declares that man is guilty "because he has not believed in the name of the Only--begotten Son of God!"² But these are not the only commentators that hold this view. In fact, Dr. Hoyt, former president of Grace Theological Seminary, states that "the only way to be saved is by faith in Christ Jesus, and that is grace. The only way to be lost is to reject the grace in Christ Jesus."³ This theory seeks to identify belief as the basis for salvation or condemnation. J.H. Bernard takes the idea of salvation to illustrate the process of condemnation. He states that John in his Gospel shows that eternal life begins at the time a person accepts Jesus Christ and does not wait until physical death to begin. He feels that just as eternal life begins at the moment a person accepts Jesus Christ, so judgment begins at the moment Christ is rejected.⁴

¹F.L. Godet, H. Jacottet, Commentary on the Gospel of John (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), I, 397.

²R.CH. Lenski, Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, p. 269.

³Hoyt, The First Christian Theology, p. 44

⁴J.H. Bernard, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), I, 120.

Perhaps no person has been more explicit and clear in his explanation of John 3:18 and the Biblical basis for condemnation than James Montgomery Boice. Boice states that ". . . they are condemned because they will not have the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior."¹ Sin is very often defined as falling short of the mark that God sets as perfection. Mr. Boice says that the condemnation of man is not on the basis "that we fall short of God's standard of perfection."² He believes that man is condemned because he does not even strive in the proper direction. Therefore, since he is not going to be in the proper direction he can not fall short of the mark. He believes that man is saved only by belief and condemned only by the failure to believe.

One unique aspect, held by some, though far from all who hold this theory is the understanding that 1 John 2:2 teaches that the cross work of Christ paid in actuality, not just potentiality, for every sin of every man. Now, therefore, every man is guilty of only one sin and that is unbelief. A question must be raised here, Why did not the cross work of Christ pay for the sin of unbelief also? J.P. Lange states

¹ James M. Boice, The Gospel of John (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), I, 304.

² Ibid. p. 305.

that

Christ is and remains the ἵλασμός —both for all sins and the sins of all, and for all ages and generations; His atonement is permanent in its operativeness. Not only in a general way, but the individual, every individual, is the object of expiation and reconciliation. This passage teaches the predestination of the salvation of all men.

It must be recognized of course that in context of Biblical Revelation we realize that not all men will be saved. The Seventh-Day Adventists hold an understanding of 1 John 2:2 that would seem to make the cross work of Christ pay for all sins except the sin of unbelief. The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary says that the cross of Christ paid for the "sum total of the sins of the world." In this view the reason the cross work of Christ did not pay for the sin of unbelief is that belief was established as the test of salvation.²

A Definition of Rejection

To make this theory realistic there must be a definition of just what is being rejected in unbelief. It is obvious that not all men are familiar with Jesus and His teachings. Therefore, to say that a man is condemned

¹ John P. Lange, ed., Commentary on the Epistle of John (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, n.d.), p. 46.

² Francis Nichol, ed., The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Associates, 1957), VII, 636.

to hell for his rejection of Jesus Christ leaves a great many in a state of being neither condemned or saved because not all men know enough about Jesus Christ to reject Him. The Bible does teach that all men are responsible for the amount of revelation around them, and that all men do have some amount of revelation given them. The very universe and environment around a man is a source of theology--that is, natural theology. The Bible often tells us that God has shwon Himself to us through nature. There is the outward witness of God in the nature surrounding man and the inward testimony of God's existence and character in the moral character and make up or very being of man himself.¹ In fact, Scripture often does not even attempt to prove that there is a God but assumes that man knows of God's existence through the universal witness in the universe. This is what is expected of the theologically untrained man or the heathen as is proven by Romans 1:19-21. God has put this evidence before every man.² To hold to the position that man is condemned by the rejection of revelation one must hold that a man can be condemned for the rejection of the revelation

¹Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Old Tappen, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1907), p. 26.

²Ibid. p. 68.

around him. The only alternative to this is to either take a universalist position by which all men would be saved or the position of Clark Pinnock. Pinnock holds to the position that the only way to be saved is through Jesus Christ but not all men have the chance to accept Jesus Christ while on earth. While he is seeking to embrace the hope of a universal salvation he misinterprets 1 Peter 3:19 as implying the idea that after the death of a person not having personally heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ there will be an occasion where that soul would then have the Gospel presented to him to either accept and experience salvation or reject and experience condemnation.¹ This position of Mr. Pinnock's has no exegetical support as even he admits. Therefore, to make the theory on condemnation of unbelief work we must hold to the position that man is condemned to hell on the basis of the rejection of the revelation around him.

Evaluation of the Theory

There is much truth in this theory and it is quite common to find many conservative evangelical scholars seeming to uphold this general theory. But in reality, many of those cited as supporting this theory might really only be guilty of imprecise language.

¹Clark Pinnock, "Why is Jesus the 'Only Way,'" Eternity, Dec. 1976, 27:12, pp. 12-15.

One of the basic problems with this theory is that it makes man morally neutral up until the time of a decision for or against belief. But the Bible teaches us that a man is not neutral but morally depraved. One must ask himself at this time what would happen to an infant or one who is mentally incompetent at the time of death. Neither the infant or the incompetent could be considered guilty of rejecting Christ or the revelation around him as neither are capable of evaluating that revelation. Therefore, to sentence either to an eternity in hell seems severe if they are only morally neutral. Yet it is also inconceivable that a morally neutral person could enter Paradise. Those who hold this position must therefore decide what is the destiny of the "morally neutral" after death.

Within the text of John 3:18 there is some direction given as to a proper interpretation. The Greek word $\mu\eta$ is a regular negative with a participle which marks a person as continuously believing or not believing.¹ The perfect form $\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\rho\iota\tau\alpha\iota$ shows that this judgment has occurred and stands indefinitely. Some would say this would raise the problem of an idea of the final judgment in the Last Day. As Lenski

¹Lenski, Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, pp.267.

says:

But will not a grand and final judgment take place at the last day? Not in the strict sense of the word. Then all men will already have received their judgment even as Jesus tells Nicodemus at this moment. Immediately after they are raised from the dead they will be ranged either on the right or on the left of the Judge by the angels.¹ That could not be done if they were not already judged.

The root form of the word judgment is κρίσις, which means to sentence, judge or separate. Here, in John 3:18, the judgment by Christ was to sift out, like a magnet, the ones who were destined to heaven from the remainder of the population.² There is a problem with this. The idea is that a judgment is made that is not fixed for all eternity, as it would be after the judgment of Christ. The unbeliever can repent and believe and be saved, he is not in a hopeless situation as those sentenced to an eternity to hell. Here the thought is that if all remains the same as it is, then the unbeliever is as good as judged or already judged.³ The question must be raised at this time, Is a man being sent to hell for an eternity for the rejection of Jesus Christ as a basis or is it merely a corresponding action? An analogy

¹Ibid. p. 268.

²G.H.C. MacGregor, The Gospel of John (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran and Company Inc., 1929), p. 83.

³Lange, Commentary on the Epistle of John, p. 185.

might be made to a man drowning in an ocean. As the man floats in the ocean and begins to sink someone might throw him a life preserver. In the man's panic he fails to put on the life preserver but instead struggles and becomes weary and drowns. One might say that the man died because he did not grasp the life preserver, but in fact the reason the man died was that he could no longer breathe because the water was in his lungs. This is the situation in John 3:18, the unbeliever has rejected the life preserver which can be found in the grace of Christ Jesus. The basis of condemnation was not the rejection of Jesus Christ. This has been very well stated by Dr. MacEvilly:

If he believes; then, he is not judged; but is rescued and saved by the mercy of God and the superabundant merits of our Savior, from the general condemnation, in which all men would be involved, and receives abundance of grace. If he believes not, then no further sentence is needed. He remains in the state of damnation, in which all men are involved, as "children of wrath."¹

¹ John MacEvilly, An Exposition on the Gospel of St. John (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1889), p. 59.

CHAPTER IV

CONDEMNATION BY ORIGINAL SIN

This theory sets forth the idea that every person born into this world possesses an inherited sin nature from Adam and merits hell without any added aspects. On the basis of this original sin alone every human being merits being condemned to hell. While this theory would allow for other sins to be included in the judgement the basis of judgement in the most refined sense would be original sin alone. Other sins only make him even more deserving of special judgment.

A Description of the Theory

The main detail of this theory is the idea that the primary charge against mankind, in the court of God, is that man is sinful in nature. Even if the person never committed another sin in his life-time, impossible due to his sinful nature, he would still merit hell as a sinful being who has fallen short of God's standard. As Emil Brunner says:

I want to make it clear from the outset that I am in complete agreement with the twofold aim of Augustine: to represent sin as a dominant force, and humanity as bound together in a solidarity of guilt.¹

¹Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption: Dogmatics (London: T.&T. Clark, 1952), II, 103.

The key idea that mankind is bound in a solidarity of guilt. Every man and woman is equally guilty and incapable of achieving salvation by his own merit. Another major proponent of this view is Lewis Sperry Chafer.¹ Chafer confronts the problem of the universal nature of sin in all men and reasons that the only basis for this is original sin. Adam and Eve were the only humans without original sin and have the freedom to choose to sin. Mr. Chafer states that Adam was "the only one to become a sinner because he sinned--all others sinned because they are sinners already."² Chafer states that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was demanded because man was found to be with a sin nature which was transmitted from Adam. He claims that Christ's death was a judgment upon the sin nature and states that His death provides a means for the Holy Spirit to control the sin nature.³

¹There is some indication that during his earlier years, Mr. Chafer held to the theory that man is condemned by unbelief. In his book Salvation, which was written about 1917, Mr. Chafer says on page 37 that "men are said to be lost in this age because they do not believe." Here he also quotes John 3:18 to support his view. Also, on pages 38 and 89 there seems to be some thought that man is held accountable for only one sin, that is, unbelief. This observation is open to question and may represent only imprecise terminology.

²Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1976), II, 284.

³Ibid. III, p. 64.

The Reason Man is a Sinner

It is not a universal point of agreement among all theologians that man came into existence as a sinner. Those of the Pelagian group would disagree. But, their position is not supported by Scripture. John Murray gives a synopsis of the various views. He says that the Pelagians would view Adam as a prototype. They would deny Paul's entire argument that because of one man's sin we become sinners and that on the basis of another man's act we are saved. The Roman Catholics would take the view that Adam was in a covenant relationship with mankind. This was put forward at the Council of Trent by Ambrosius Catharinus. But this view also, has no real Biblical support. The view that reconciles itself with Scripture is the Calvinistic view which affirms that when Adam was divested of God's likeness he could only beget seed that was like himself. The reason, therefore, that we sin is because we come into existence with a natural corruption and tend to become even more wicked.¹ As John Calvin himself said, ". . . the natural depravity which we bring from our mother's womb, though it brings not forth immediately its own fruits, is yet sin before God, and deserves his vengeance: and this is that sin which they call original."²

¹ John Murray, The Imputation of Adam's Sin (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), pp. 10-18.

² John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, John Owen, Trans. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1947), p. 200.

It is a basic fact that Paul in his argument in Romans 5, especially verse 12, seeks to prove that ". . . as Christ is alone responsible for our salvation, so too Adam must alone be responsible for our ruin."¹ Mankind is bound together as sinners already at the time of birth. Therefore, God in His holiness must judge all sin, and man as he comes into existence stands a condemned sinner.

Exegesis

The basic proof text for the idea of original sin is generally held to be Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." The basic subject dealt with in Romans 5:12 is that of sin, *ἁμαρτία*. The basic idea of this word is that all are separated and fall short of God. They are therefore sinners apart from any action on God's part.² Alford said that this verse then means the power that rules over all men and in all men and shows itself through our conduct.³

¹C.E.B. Cranfield, "The Epistle to the Romans" The International Critical Commentary, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd. 1975), I, 278.

²K.H. Rengstrof, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. I, p. 328.

³H. Alford, The Greek Testament (London: Cambridge, Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1877), II, 360.

The word for death here is *θάνατος*. This may represent not just physical death but also spiritual, and eternal death. It really represents the entire penalty of sin that is passed along to all mankind.¹ The word death refers to all the spheres of evil that all the world has been introduced to.²

The third significant portion of Romans 5:12 is the phrase *ἐφ' ᾧ*. It is translated in the King James Version, "for that." The proper translation for this phrase is "on the ground that" or "because." The Greek word *ἐφ'* is just a euphonic way to write the preposition *ἐπί*. Thayer states that the primary significance of this word is "upon."³ Meyer says that this phrase is equal to *ἐπὶ τούτῳ ὅτι*, and that the whole phrase should be translated, "and so death passed unto all on the ground of the fact or because all sinned."⁴

The Results of Adam's Sin

The basic ingredient in this theory is that Adam's sin affected more than just himself. There are several effects that later men feel as a result of that sin. Of

¹ Ibid. p. 360.

² Albert Barnes, Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Epistle to the Romans (New York: Harper & Brothers, n.d.), p. 131.

³ Joseph H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Co., 1974), p. 231.

⁴ H.A.W. Meyer, Epistle to the Romans, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Pub., 1884), I, 251.

course there is the self awareness and guilt associated with the sin, but there is also spiritual death, physical death, and a universal condition of sin among men. The proof that all of this is a result of Adam's sin is the physical death that all men experience, even infants that could have committed no personal sin. As Haldane says, "if infants did not participate in the guilt of Adam's sin, they would not experience death, disease, or misery, until they become themselves actual transgressors."¹ What is claimed here is that if infants did not experience a sin nature worthy of condemnation then they would not die. "As physical death is related to imputed sin . . . spiritual death is related to the transmitted sin nature."² Chafer again states that imputed sin carries with it the penalty of death and is the only reason that physical death reigns universally among men.³ Since we know that physical death is the result of man's sin we also know that the inherited sin nature is universal and is the basis for all condemnation.⁴

¹Robert Haldane, Exposition on the Epistle to the Romans (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1856), p. 210.

²Chafer, Systematic Theology, II, 284.

³Ibid. Vol. VII, p. 289.

⁴Alan F. Johnson, The Freedom Letter (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 87.

Advantages and Disadvantages

There are many advantages to this position. It is the only theory that explains man's relation to Adam, and fits all the Biblical data. The universal reign of death is also explained. It explains Romans 5:12 better than any of the other views.

There are some disadvantages, in that questions are raised. One question is that of eternal destiny of infants or the mentally handicapped that die never having accepted the Gospel but under the curse of original sin. Other papers have been written to answer these questions, and we must trust in the grace and goodness of God. Also, there is the question of how to deal with John 3:18 and Romans 2:5-6 which seem to indicate that other factors affect a person's eternal estate. This idea will be dealt with in the conclusion.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

It is the opinion of this writer that the basic reason that a man is sent to an eternity of hell is that he is born a condemned sinner. Many people refer to unbelief or personal sin as the reason for a sentence to hell because they are not careful or specific in their terms. There are also others who truly hold beliefs that are in error.

This writer believes in different levels of punishment based upon Matthew 11:20-24 and Revelation 20:12. Therefore, the conclusion to this question is that the crime man is charged with is that he is a sinner from birth. But the amount of revelation that is rejected and the personal sins committed affect the degree of punishment. It is admitted however, that the most "mild" of punishments in hell are an eternity from the lowest seat in heaven.

It is this writer's opinion that the condition in which man finds himself is much like that of a condemned criminal in our judicial system. In the course of a trial the evidence is presented to the jury. The jury then deliberates the evidence and returns with the verdict of guilty or not guilty. If the verdict is guilty the defendant is

condemned already. The judge will at this time recess the court for a period of time until sentencing can be passed. At the time of sentencing, many factors will be taken into consideration such as; Was this the first offence, Were there any extreme circumstances, etc.? At the sentencing the judge will pronounce the degree of punishment to be administered. This is the condition that man finds himself in. All men are united in guilt and condemnation. All men have been found guilty. This is why in John 3:18 Jesus can say that the unbeliever has been condemned already. At the sentencing God will take into account the amount of revelation rejected, and the amount of personal sin committed and will on that basis evaluate the man for the degree of punishment deserved. The only way that man can be found not guilty is to accept Jesus Christ's payment for his sin.

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