

LESSON 2

THE NATURE OF SIN

Introduction

The optimistic views of Communism and Humanism concerning man fail to consider the seriousness of sin. The Christian doctrine of man must look not only at man's creation by God which is 'good' but also at man's Fall and experience in sin. Sin prevents God's plan for man from being fulfilled.

A baffling question which man constantly faces is, "If God created this world 'good', why is it filled with tragedy and turmoil?" Part of the Christian answer to that question is the seriousness of sin. Humanism which fails to take sin seriously has asserted the dignity of man and the goodness of the world, but it has not been able to establish a rationale for such an assertion because of the widespread evil of man. Man who was created 'good' no longer maintains that standard because of sin.

The Biblical Concept of Sin

Biblical words denoting sin

Sin.—The Old Testament word *hata* and the New Testament word *hamartia* are translated sin and have the literal root meaning of missing some goal or path. In the vast majority of passages where each term appears, the word indicates spiritual or moral failure. *Hata* appears approximately six hundred times. In about thirty cases, it refers to moral failure in relation to one's fellow-man. About five hundred uses refer to spiritual or moral failure towards God. In some instances, it includes the guilt and punishment accompanying sin. The Biblical uses of the words which are translated 'sin' mean more than just the negative idea of making a mistake resulting from ignorance. They describe a positive and voluntary action which incurs guilt.

Although the New Testament word for sin usually refers to a wrong action which incurs guilt, Paul and John used the term to describe a characteristic of human nature. Paul went one step further and used the term to speak of a quasi-personal power which invades man's life and brings him into

The literal root meaning of words translated 'sin' in the Old and New Testaments is "missing some _____ or _____."

(goal, path)

Which statement, a or b, describes the Biblical uses of the words which are translated 'sin'? _____

- a. A positive and voluntary action which incurs guilt.
- b. A mistake resulting from ignorance.

(a)

Paul and John used 'sin' to describe a characteristic of _____.

(human nature)

slavery. Paul spoke of man's being a slave of sin (Rom. 6:6), sin's reigning in man's mortal body (Rom. 6:12), sin as a master over man (Rom. 6:14), and man as either a slave of sin or a son of God (Gal. 4:7-9). Sin is so powerful and effective through man's carnal nature that it causes him to serve "the law of sin" even though his higher nature desires to serve the "law of God" (Rom. 7:25).

Transgression.—God has partially expressed His will for man by giving to him rules or laws to guide his conduct. Man has chosen to revolt against God and His Law. His revolt is more than a mere mistake or failure. It consists of wilful disobedience. Paul referred to the deliberate breach of a commandment by Adam and Eve as transgression (Rom. 5:14). Transgression is a wilful act of disobedience with regard to God's Law which sets boundaries concerning man's conduct. When man steps over those boundaries, he demonstrates rebellion against God's authority and transgression of God's Law.

Iniquity.—The Old Testament word *awon* may indicate the iniquitous act, the guilt accompanying it, or its punishment. The word can refer to acting wrongly or the perverted and twisted nature of the person who does the intentional wrong.

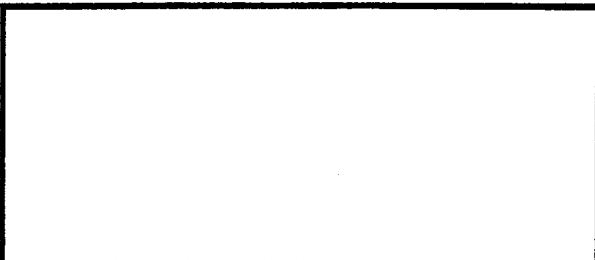
Wickedness.—The inner nature of the guilty man is indicated by the Hebrew word *rasha*. The term emphasizes the guilt of the person who has committed wicked deeds.

Ungodliness.—Paul frequently used the term 'ungodliness' to indicate offences against God. The word distinguishes an act as being against God instead of man. The psalmist cried out, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Ps. 51:4). Paul reminded the Romans that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (1:18).

Unrighteousness.—Unrighteousness is a legal term which refers to injustice determined in a court of law. It refers to any wrong done by one man to another. Man is unrighteous as a result of wrong relations to his fellow-man, but he is ungodly as a result of wrong relations to God.

Jesus' concept of sin

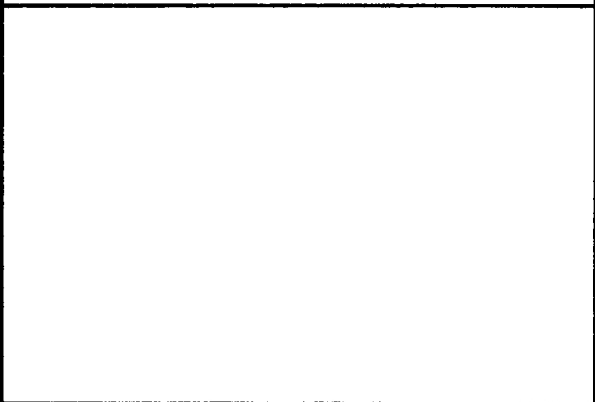
Although Jesus gave no formal definition concerning sin, His emphasis was in contradiction to the religious leaders of His day. The Pharisees emphasized the correctness and meticulous observance of ceremonial worship and the keeping of the "customs of the fathers." Jesus changed the emphasis of sin from external acts to the internal nature of man. He



Man's revolt against God and His Law is

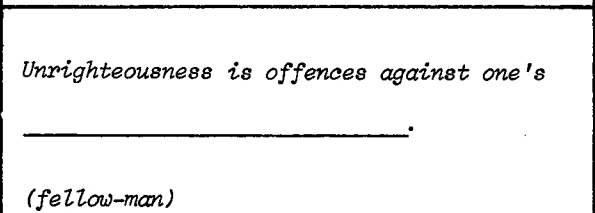
_____.

(transgression)



Ungodliness is offences against _____.

(God)



Unrighteousness is offences against one's

_____.

(fellow-man)

was concerned with the motives and attitudes which caused the acts, not just the errors of external actions.

The Pharisees considered sin to be especially in two areas: failure to keep the Sabbath and to observe ceremonial rituals. No work was to be done on the Sabbath day—neither the healing of a man (Mark 3:1ff.), nor the plucking of corn for food (Mark 2:23ff.). Jesus did not observe the ceremonial customs of the scribes and Pharisees. He ate with publicans and sinners; this was prohibited by scribal law (Mark 2:16ff.). He and His disciples failed to observe the ceremony of washing before eating (Mark 7:2ff.). Jesus did not teach, however, that the Commandments were invalid. He rebuked the Pharisees for claiming to keep them but actually replacing them with traditions of men (Mark 7:7ff.).

Jesus believed that righteous actions grew out of a righteous nature. Men whose hearts are corrupt pretend to do right but they actually are guilty of wrong deeds. Righteousness must originate in the heart of man. Likewise, evil actions come from an evil heart. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that their external ceremonies would not make their hearts (attitudes and motives) right, for "there is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man" (Mark 7:15). It is from the heart of man that evil thoughts, adultery, fornication, murder, theft, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness proceed (Mark 7:21-22).

Jesus did not deny that wrong acts are sins, but he emphasized that sin is more inclusive than external activities. In the Sermon on the Mount, he pointed out that the attitudes and emotions of anger, hatred, lust, and covetousness are the roots of sin. Murder is conceived in a heart of anger. Adultery begins in a heart of lust. Stealing is the result of covetousness. Jesus taught that man's wrong actions flow from a perverse heart or inward nature.

Jesus emphasized that sin involves wrong relationship to God and man rather than wrong relationship to institutions. Man was not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath was made for man. Man's sin does not consist in breaking a rule or regulation with regard to the Sabbath but in failing to use the Sabbath to worship God. Hatred (the lack of concern) for one's fellow-man is the opposite of love. The righteous man loves God and his neighbour. The sinful man revolts against God and neglects his fellow-man. Sin is basically concerned with man's relationship to God. When man fails to love his neighbour, he transgresses the Law of God to love.

Jesus' emphasis concerning sin was that evil actions come from an _____.

(evil heart)

Indicate which is characteristic of a righteous man and of a sinful man.

_____ loves God and his neighbour.

_____ revolts against God and neglects his fellow-man.

(a righteous man, a sinful man)

Paul's concept of sin

Paul's view of sin has already been mentioned briefly. Paul saw sin as more than wrong actions. He spoke of sin as a semi-personal power which takes possession of human nature and leads it astray. The power of sin dwells in man and operates through his flesh or carnal nature. The earthly body of man is a body of sin (Rom. 6:6).

Man's body becomes an instrument of sin. Man's instincts and passions are not wrong as long as they are expressed within the will of God and fulfil God's purpose for him. The power of sin entices man through his passions to transgress the limits set by God. In this manner sin uses the body of man. The 'carnal man' is the 'natural man' outside the will of God. He uses his instincts and abilities to satisfy personal feelings and desires rather than to accomplish God's will and plan. According to Paul, sin is a power which invades man's body and causes him to use his instincts and abilities for selfish ends and goals as well as wrong actions. Man's nature can become so corrupted when he is dominated by sin that his actions are most shameful (cf. Rom. 1:23ff.; Gal. 5:19ff.).

John's view of sin

John spoke of a Hebraic type of dualism which presented a series of opposites: light and darkness, truth and falsehood, spirit and flesh, life and death, righteousness and sin, and the Kingdom of God and the world. He did not conceive of the created world of matter as essentially evil as some of the Greeks did. In fact, God's own Son came in the flesh. John did, however, see this world under the control of evil powers (cf. John 12:31). To be born into this world or of the flesh does not mean to receive a material body which is evil in itself, but it does mean to be born into a realm which is in opposition to God and which does not know the only true God (John 17:3). For Jesus to enter the realm of the world was to leave the Father; for Him to leave the world was to return to the Father (John 16:28). Man who is born of the flesh cannot enter the Kingdom of God. He must remain a part of this world unless he is born of the Spirit (John 3:3ff.). The disciples were in the world, the world hated them, but they were not of the world (John 17:12-18).

The condemning sin of man according to John is unbelief (3:18f.). The world which is under the power of the prince of this world (cf. John 12:31; 16:11; 8:34) is the realm of darkness and evil deeds. God's Son has invaded the domain of the evil powers of this world to deliver man from the power of sin. It is necessary for men to believe that Jesus is the Son

Besides seeing sin as wrong actions, Paul spoke of sin as a semi-personal _____ and as man's _____ nature. (power, carnal)

The '_____ man' is the '_____ man' outside the _____ of God. (carnal, natural, will)

Did John view the material world as evil? _____ John did see the world under the control of _____ powers. (no, evil)

According to John, the condemning sin of man is _____. (unbelief)

of God, the King of God's Kingdom. He has power to deliver man from the evil powers of sin and death. Some men reject Him because of their love for evil and darkness. Only those who believe in Him will be delivered from the evil powers of sin and death. Unbelief is to reject God's Kingdom established by His Son and to remain in the world in darkness and under the control of sin.

Man as a Sinner

A study of the Biblical concept of sin has revealed that sin includes—

man's corrupted nature,

a powerful force which enters man's life and controls him through his carnal nature, and

wrong actions involving relationships to God and one's fellow-man.

The roots of sin are in man's nature (an evil heart), and sin is expressed in the attitudes and actions of man's life.

Man's sinful nature

Sin has the negative meaning of departing from what is normal or "missing the mark." God created man for a certain purpose or goal in life which involves what he is more than what he does. When man departs from his original nature in God's image, he sins. What man does is an expression of what his nature is essentially. Man's nature was not created sinful, but sin entered into his experience and his nature created in God's image became depraved. Depravity does not mean that man has completely lost the image of God nor that he is as bad as he could be. It does mean that every aspect of man's nature has been permeated by sin and, therefore, has become deceitful and perverted. Sin has distorted the image of God in man. Man's nature needs to be restored to the original condition or image of God. Paul stated that God's predetermined plan is to conform men to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29).

Sins of the spirit

The image of God has been defined as man's capacity for fellowship with God. Man is free to respond positively or negatively to his Creator; however, as creature he is not free from the reasonable

*Unbelief is to reject God's _____
and to remain in darkness and in _____.*

(Kingdom, sin)

*Sin is expressed in a _____ and
a _____.*

(attitudes, actions)

*The image of God in man has been distorted
by _____.*

(sin)

*Did God predetermine to conform men to the
image of His Son? _____*

(yes)

requirement of responsibility to his Creator. God's nature is love which is the quality of self-giving out of a concern for others. Man in God's image responds in love to God (giving of self in fellowship, worship, and service) and to his neighbour (responding to the man in need by sharing abilities and possessions). Man does not have to love (share his life and possessions), but he cannot escape responsibility when he fails to love God and man and betrays his true nature in God's image. For man to fulfil his true nature, he must establish relationships with God and man based on his willingness to give himself in fellowship and service to God and others—a life of love. The relation of fellowship requires the centring of life outside one's self and in others. When sin entered man's experience, the trend of centring life in others (God and his fellow-man) became reversed. Man's sinful tendency is to centre life in himself. The natural man continues to have the inclination to love but that inclination is smothered by self-interest. His sinfulness is manifested primarily in two attitudes: selfishness and pride.

The proper roles of self-interest and pride. — Pride as well as self-interest have their proper places in human life, but their distortion and lack of control are the essence of man's sinful nature. Man needs enough interest in self to motivate his provision for his needs and to provide a desire for a right standing with God. When his self-interest gets out of control and becomes distorted, so much attention is focused upon himself that he misuses his fellow-man in providing for his own desires, not just his needs, at the expense of others.

Pride contributes to man's life at the point of providing self-respect. He needs pride in his work in order to be like God who looked upon His Creation and was pleased because it was good. However, when pride becomes distorted and dominates man's life, it becomes the essence of his sinful nature.

Selfishness.—Man's selfishness is expressed in his relationship both to God and to man. His worship of God is hindered by his sinful nature, even though he goes through the form of worship. Some men are so busy pursuing things for self that they are unaware of the blessings which God bestows upon them. Their lives are a continuous neglect of God and failure to express gratitude to their Creator through worship. Their self-interest is manifested even through acts of worship. When man is more interested in things from God than in fellowship with God, his prayer life is dominated by petitions for self, and his worship is equivalent to bribery for future benefits.

The selfish nature expressed in relation to one's fellow-man is characterized by hatred, the opposite of love. The Biblical usage of hatred does not mean

Man fulfils his true nature in God's image by giving himself in fellowship and service to _____ and _____ — a life of _____.

(God, others, love)

Selfishness is expressed in one's relationship to God through continuous _____ of God and failure to express _____ to Him.

(neglect, gratitude)

necessarily to despise but rather to neglect and to have no concern for the other person's needs. One degree of selfishness is a simple neglect of needy man who cries out for help. Jesus touched on this problem in the story of the Good Samaritan. Another manifestation of self-centredness is in man's misuse and abuse of his fellow-man for personal satisfaction and gain. Seduction results from the selfish satisfaction of passions, the lust of the flesh. Injustice is expression of selfishness—gaining the rights and possessions of others for self. Jesus accused the Pharisees of taking advantage of widows and orphans who had no one to defend their rights. Typical of man's sinful nature is the philosophy of "taking care of one's own interests." Man deceives his fellow-man in business transactions, fails to pay a just wage, or fails to render an honest day's work because of his self-interest.

Pride.—Uncontrolled pride in relation to one's fellow-man engenders the attitude of superiority. Racial prejudice is the result of an individual or race considering itself to be superior to another. Distorted thinking causes a person to conclude that his abilities and accomplishments are the result of personal achievement rather than the gift of God. He boasts about what he has done rather than recognizing what God has bestowed upon him.

Pride often is a hindrance to man's relationship to God. It may become the source of his ignoring his Creator. When man claims the accomplishments of his life as his own, he concludes, perhaps unconsciously, that he is self-sufficient and independent. Man's pride causes him to want to be God. He does not want to be subject to anyone, not even his Creator; therefore, he turns his back upon God and breaks his relationship with Him.

Sin as sensuality

The word 'sin' usually brings to mind the concept of worldly or fleshly pleasures. Immoral relations and drunkenness epitomize sin for several reasons: (1) Sins of the spirit are more easily hidden than drunkenness or adultery. (2) These sins are prevalent among people who have not been born into the Kingdom. (3) It is easier to define and identify these sins than those of social injustice, prejudice, and sins of the spirit.

Paul's use of 'flesh' has resulted in an emphasis on sin as sensuality. In the previous section, it has been shown that pride and selfishness are basic to human sinfulness. They are sometimes referred to as sins of the spirit to distinguish them from sins of the flesh.

The effect of one's exaggerated self-interest on his relationship to another person is often _____ or _____ of his fellow-man.

(misuse, abuse)

Uncontrolled pride in relation to one's fellow-man causes the attitude of _____.

(superiority)

Pride often causes man to feel self-_____ and _____ of God.

(sufficient, independent)

The passions of the body are not basically evil; however, their uncontrolled and perverted use is sinful. Just as pride and self-interest have a vital place in God's plan for man, so the physical desires are essential to life. Food is necessary for physical existence, but gluttony destroys health and life. The consumption of liquid is essential for digestion and metabolism, but drunkenness destroys the brain and life. God made the bodies of man and woman for one another and their physical relations are divinely ordained by the Creator. The physical nature was designed for the propagation of the race and the expression of companionship; therefore God gave desires and passions to man's physical nature, but their expression outside of marriage is prohibited by God's Law. The instincts of self-preservation and reproduction are essential for man's existence. However, the failure to control these instincts and to express them within the limits of God's plan is sin. God intends for man to eat food, but man is to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow and not to steal it from his neighbour. To transgress God's Law disrupts human relationships and destroys society. Often the innocent suffer when God's Laws are transgressed. For example, the child born out of wedlock has a diminished chance of a normal social and emotional environment for healthy mental, emotional, and physical development. In some cases, he may receive a pre-natal disease which deteriorates his mind and body. The parents themselves often suffer guilt, mental anguish, the possibility of physical debilitation, and future judgement.

When the Bible speaks of "sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3) or living "according to the flesh" (Rom. 8:12), it is not referring to the physical body alone but to the total sinful man. The "works of the flesh" are the results of the desires of the self being expressed through the body (cf. Gal. 5:19ff.). They not only include the physical sins of immorality and drunkenness but also non-sensual sins of strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, and envy. Sins of the flesh differ from sins of the spirit only in the greater participation of the body in the former. Sins of the flesh have the same origin in man's heart as sins of the spirit.

The Extent of Sin

In the life of the individual

Sin involves man's nature, his relation to God, and his relation to his fellow-man. David's sin with Bathsheba illustrates the inclusive nature of sin. Although David had many wives, his covetous and lustful nature caused him to engage in immoral relations with Bathsheba. His wrong acts were expressions

The physical nature of man is involved in sin through the _____ and _____ use of physical instincts.

(uncontrolled, perverted)

Is this statement true or false?

"Sinful flesh" does not refer to the physical body alone but to the total sinful man. _____

(true)

Where do sins of both the flesh and spirit originate? _____

(in man's heart)

The involvement of sin in man's life is in three areas: (1) his _____; (2) his relation to _____; (3) his relation to his _____.

(nature, God, fellow-man)

of his sinful nature. God had commanded that man is not to covet, commit adultery, nor murder. In order to cover up his shameful deed, David sent for Uriah to make it appear that Bathsheba had conceived by her husband who was called in from the battlefield. When his scheme failed, David plotted the murder of Uriah by having him sent to the front lines. Perhaps David thought his plot had succeeded until the prophet Nathan confronted him with his wrong-doing. Nathan emphasized the littleness and selfishness of a king who had plenty but took the only possession from a poor man under his reign.

Psalm 51 appears to express the penitence of David for his sin. He recognized that he had transgressed God's Law in the acts of covetousness, adultery, and murder; therefore, he acknowledged that his sin was against God (vv. 1, 4). He confessed that his own nature was twisted and perverted (v. 2). He also recognized the consequences of his sin: he had missed the mark or plan for which his life had been created (vv. 3-4). God had raised him from a shepherd lad to a king for the purpose of leading Israel in the ways of the Lord. David was unable to lead Israel in obedience to God's Laws when he failed to keep them himself. There was no question of David's committing wrongs against his fellow-men—Bathsheba and Uriah. After Nathan confronted him with his sin, David had no alternative but to acknowledge his guilt and beg for God's mercy.

Sin is basically against God. It is expressing a perverted nature and committing prohibited acts which prevent man from fulfilling the plan for which he was created. Man's sin, especially disobedience, alienates him from God. Man's disobedience is his revolt against the authority of his Creator.

God has revealed His will and purpose for man. God's purpose has been set forth in a covenant in which the relationship of God and man depends on God's promises and man's obedience. Man breaks that relationship through rebellion—his refusal to obey God.

In the human race

Every member of the human race possesses a corrupted nature which is the source of actual sin. Man has an inborn sinful disposition. The power of sin works in the realm of his sinful disposition and leads to sinful acts. Man is guilty because of his yielding to his sinful inclination and the temptation by the power of sin, not because he possesses the disposition.

Since all men are born with a sinful inclination and all are tempted to do wrong, every member of the human race chooses the wrong and becomes guilty

Sins of murder and adultery are against God because they are _____ of God's

_____.

(transgressions, Law)

In the covenant between God and man, their relationship depends on God's _____ and man's _____.

(promises, obedience)

before God. Paul stated man's condition in Ephesians 2:2-3: "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Paul stated that man's sinful nature has desires and lusts which are controlled by the prince of the power of the air who works in the children of disobedience. Man who is a child of wrath by nature becomes deserving of wrath when he chooses the wrong.

In Romans 5:12, Paul attributed the universality of sin to the head of the human race. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Paul had previously argued in the Epistle to the Romans that both Gentiles and Jews were guilty of sin. He showed that the wrong deeds of the Gentiles were committed against the light of knowledge from nature. The Jews were guilty because they had the Old Testament Law to guide them in righteousness, but they failed to keep it. Both Jews and Gentiles were guided by conscience to live according to the knowledge of righteousness they possessed. Paul concluded the argument in Romans 1-3 with the summation, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (3:23).

The universality of sin had been recognized in the Old Testament. The writer of Ecclesiastes stated, "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (7:20). Isaiah recognized that "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (53:6).

Original Sin

The origin of sin

Some philosophers and theologians are troubled by the question of the origin of sin. If God is the only eternal Being and created all things, did He create sin also? If He did not, where did sin come from?

The Bible does not explain the origin of evil. It does set forth the fact that the first man, Adam, sinned. His sin was influenced by Eve who was enticed by the serpent to rebel against God's command. Why the serpent, a creature made by God, opposed God's plan and word is not explained. In later developments, the serpent became identified with Satan (cf. Rev. 12:9). The writer of Genesis attributed the first sin to the influence of the serpent.

Who controls man's sinful nature which consists of desires and lusts? _____

Man becomes deserving of God's wrath when he chooses the _____.

(The prince of the power of the air, wrong)

Is the origin of evil explained in the Bible?

_____.

(no)

Augustine stated that sin originated as the result of God's withdrawal of His grace from man's soul. To consider sin a deficiency of man for which he is not responsible removes guilt from sin and reduces it to wrongdoing with the blame cast upon God who withdrew the grace needed for obedience. Another view suggests that sin is due to man's weakness. It is a negative, not a positive thing. But again, to attribute it to weakness removes man's responsibility for sin which is contrary to what the Scripture teaches.

Roark suggests that the first sin centred in the words of unbelief or disobedience and was due to pride and egocentricity.¹ This explanation places the responsibility for sin on man, but it fails to deal with the origin of man's pride or egocentricity. As previously discussed, the essence of man's sinful nature resides in his pride and self-interest. These elements of nature are beneficial to man's existence, but it is their perverted use which becomes sinful. The writer of Genesis relates their perversion to temptation by the serpent.

The Bible does not explain the perverse nature of the serpent nor the origin of Satan who apparently used the serpent as an instrument. In fact, Satan does not appear in the Old Testament as a distinctive demonic figure who is opposed to God and is responsible for all evil. In the Book of Job, he appears as a servant of Yahweh who opposes man or accuses man before God. He is subordinate to God and can act only with His consent (cf. Job 1-2). In later chapters of Job, however, the judicial role of accuser is transcended as Satan becomes the worker of Job's misfortunes and in 1 Chronicles 21:1 the inciter to evil.

The Septuagint translated the word for Satan as 'devil'. In the New Testament, Satan is transliterated (a Hebrew word spelled with Greek characters) sometimes rather than translated. Devil means slanderer. Satan is also known as "the tempter" (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5); "the evil one" (Matt. 13:19; 1 John 5:18); "the accuser" (Rev. 12:10); "the prince of demons" (Matt. 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15); "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 16:11); and "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). Satan is represented as the responsible author of men's evil deeds and passions. He tempted Judas and Simon Peter (Luke 22:3, 31; John 13:27); prompted Ananias to withhold his contribution (Acts 5:3); incited men to incontinence (1 Cor. 7:5); and shut men's hearts and ears to the message of God (Mark 4:15).² He prevented Paul from

¹Dallas Roark, The Christian Faith (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969), p. 214.

²T. H. Gaster, "Satan," Vol. IV of The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 227.

Are these statements true or false?

Augustine suggested that God withdrew His grace from man's soul, and the result was sin. _____

Some suggest sin is due to man's weakness.

Roark states that sin is due to pride and egocentricity. _____

(true, true, true)

The Septuagint translated the word for Satan as "_____."

(devil)

visiting the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:18); he is the enemy of God (Acts 26:18); and he is the father of lies, a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). The Bible does not explain the origin of Satan. The favourite explanation of many, based more on Milton's Paradise Lost rather than Scripture, is that Satan is Lucifer, an angel fallen from heaven (cf. Isa. 14:12).

Man who was made in the image of God has been given responsible freedom of choice and the qualities of pride and self-interest. His self-interest is related to the instinct of self-preservation. His pride is related to a recognition of his position in relation to the rest of nature. Sin originates not from the fact that man has instincts, self-interest, and pride but because he distorts them and does not use them within the limits set by God to fulfil His plan. God's plan for man is to relate to his Creator, fellow-man, and nature. Man has been given the capacity and responsibility for these relationships. When man misuses the spiritual elements of his nature, his relationships deteriorate. Love, which is basic to his relationship to God and man (cf. Matt. 22:37-39), keeps man's spiritual life balanced between concern for self and concern for others. The balance is not maintained when man's concern for self (selfishness) completely dominates his life. The result is unconcern ("hatred") for others which destroys relationships. Uncontrolled pride creates a feeling of superiority which includes the attitude of being too busy or too important to have time for others (the sin of many preachers). Life centred in self results in domination by instinctive impulses—"fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2:3). Since man has freedom of choice, he is responsible for the proper use and control of his ego and instincts.

Adam's sin

After the description of man's creation with special emphasis on his relation to nature in Genesis 1 and his relation to God in Genesis 2, the writer describes man's Fall. The Creation account gives the order of existence as lower created nature, man who has dominion over nature, and God who has dominion over man and nature since He is Creator. Man's struggle is to relate properly to nature below him and to God above him. His temptation is to ignore God in order that he can view himself as supreme. Pride is normal as long as it is limited to man's recognition that he is above lower nature. When it overreaches its natural boundaries and attempts to claim the position of God, it becomes the instrument of sin.

Basic to the story of Adam's sin are the serpent who served as the tempter of Eve and the natural impulses and characteristics of man which are to be

Sin originates because man distorts his instincts, _____ and _____ and he does not fulfil God's _____.
(self-interest, pride, plan)

expressed within the limits of God's plan. The temptation involves man's expression of his physical and spiritual life in proper relationship to nature and God. Man's impulse for food must be expressed in proper relationship to God's total plan. Jesus faced the same temptation and did not deny that man needs bread, but He warned that man does not live by bread alone but by the Word of God (cf. Matt. 4:4).

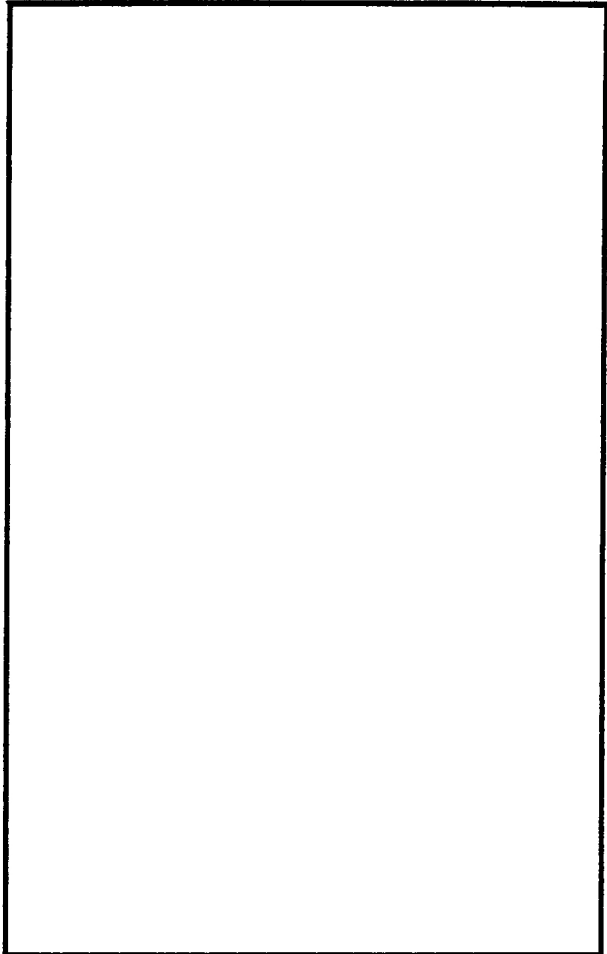
The first temptation appeals to man's natural impulse of self-preservation. Eating is essential for life, and God has provided food in His creation for man's physical existence. The serpent suggested that man's physical needs should not be deprived of the fruit of any tree: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1). God had made available all the trees of the Garden to satisfy man's hunger instinct, but this instinct is not to be supreme and without limitations. Eve recognized that her life was dependent on God and must be lived in submission to God's word: "God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Gen. 3:3).

The second temptation by the serpent was directed towards Eve's pride. She had implied her dependence on God for life, but the serpent suggested that she was not really that dependent on God: "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). The temptation continued with the suggestion that by eating she would declare her independence of God and "ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5).

Eve's nature which was created good was enticed to pervert the normal functions within God's plan at three points:

1. "The tree was good for food"—instinctive hunger sought satisfaction beyond the limit set by God (transgression of God's Law).
2. "It was pleasant to the eyes"—self-interest was perverted to the point of seeking satisfaction beyond the limits of God's plan.
3. "A tree to be desired to make one wise"—perverted pride led to the desire and attitude of superiority. Eve rejected her creatureliness and claimed equality with God.

Since the first sin, mankind has been unable to resist the temptations of perverting his natural instincts and normal attitudes. These perversions disrupt the harmony and plan of Creation.



The areas of Eve's nature which were tempted are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(hunger, self-interest, pride)

Perversions of natural instincts and normal attitudes disrupt the harmony and plan of

_____.

(Creation)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. List the Old and New Testament meanings of the word 'sin'. _____

2. Define transgression. _____
3. Distinguish between ungodliness and unrighteousness. _____

4. What did Jesus emphasize concerning sin? _____

5. Give a summary statement concerning the distinction between the righteous and unrighteous man.

6. Name three ways Paul used the term 'sin'. _____

7. What was John's view of the world? _____

8. How does man fulfil his true nature in God's image? _____

9. How does man's self-interest hinder his relationship to God and to man? _____

10. How does uncontrolled pride affect one's relationship to God and to others? _____

11. How is the physical nature involved in sin? _____

12. What is the meaning of sinful flesh? _____

13. Name three areas of man's life in which sin is involved. _____

14. Explain how the sins of murder and adultery are against God. _____

15. What does Paul state about man's condition in Ephesians 2:2-3? _____

16. List three suggestions concerning the possible origin of sin. _____

17. What is the relation of Satan and devil? _____

18. How is man's sin related to his nature which was made in the image of God? _____

19. What three areas of Eve's nature were tempted by the serpent? _____

Supplementary activity (Level 2):

1. Read pages 204-213 in Christian Doctrine by Shirley Guthrie.
2. According to Guthrie, how does man deny his own humanity?
3. Is sin natural to human nature? Explain.
4. Summarize Guthrie's discussion of "Sin as the desire to be good."

Advanced activity (Level 3):

1. Read pages 1-28 in The Gospel of Redemption by W. T. Conner.
2. Explain the relation of temptation to sin.

3. List the weaknesses of the theories that sin is due to bodily appetites and to weaknesses and limitations.
4. What are the sources of man's moral and spiritual knowledge?
5. How does Conner define "the sin unto death"?
6. What is Conner's understanding of depravity?

Seminar Discussion

1. What is the difference in the meaning of the Biblical words for sin, transgression, iniquity, ungodliness, and unrighteousness?
2. How did Jesus' concept of sin differ from that of the Pharisees?
3. Contrast and compare Paul's and John's views of sin.
4. Distinguish between "sins of the spirit" and "sins of the flesh."
5. How are pride, self-interest, and instincts both parts of God's plan and the bases of the sinful nature?
6. What does David's sin with Bathsheba reveal about sin?
7. How did sin originate?
8. Is Satan or man primarily responsible for sin?