

# Theology 2 – Man (The Doctrine of Man)



## CLASSIFICATION OF ACTUAL SINS

- Classification of Actual Sins
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## The Purpose of Classifying Actual Sin

The purpose of classifying actual sins is to point out more definitely and to describe more clearly the numerous transgressions to which the believer is subject, Job 9:2-3. It urges us to consider the **manifold temptations** by which **Satan**, the **world** and our **own flesh** are bent on seducing us into vice and shame, **Mat. 26:41; I Cor. 10:12**, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit by daily repentance and to perfect holiness in the fear of God, **2 Cor. 7:1; Heb 12:1-2**.

**Exposition of Truth:** All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

## Classification of Actual Sins

- Holy scripture does distinguish between sins, I John 5:16; James 4:17; John 19:11.
- Correction and instruction in righteousness 2 Tim 3:16
- Depict by express word, I Cor. 5:9-11
- By example, 2 Sam. 11:4, 24; Matt. 26:48,
- the uncountable transgression Ps. 19:12-13.

## Involuntary Sins

1. Involuntary sins are acts committed without sure knowledge or without a deliberate purpose of the will, Luke 22:55-62.
2. These are sins accordingly divided into sins of ignorance and of infirmity.
  - a. Sins of infirmity we speak of only to Christian because unbelievers are already dead in their trespasses and sin and captive in the power of Satan, Eph. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:26. They are misled by the devil, John 8:44.
  - b. As sins of infirmity or involuntary sins we must regard as sinful emotion, that is, the inordinate thoughts and desires, which suddenly arise in Christian out of their carnal heart without and against their will, Gal. 5:17, 24.
  - c. Infants: cannot be said to be guilty of deliberate sins, Deut. 1:39; Jonah 4:11. However, they may not be declared free from actual sins, because they are flesh born of the flesh, John 3:6 and as such always in opposition to the divine will, Gal. 5:17; Gen. 8:21; Ps. 51:5.

## Voluntary Sins

1. Voluntarily sins are acts in which man transgress the divine Law by a deliberate volition, contrary to the dictates of conscience, John 13:26-27, 30.
2. Voluntarily sins must be considered not only with respect to the will but also with respect to conscience. We regard voluntary sins also those committed against conscience.
  - a) Against a correct conscience, which is in agreement with the divine Law, Rom. 1:32;
  - b) Against an erring conscience, in which case he sins both when he disregards and follows his misguided conscience, which is at variance with the divine Word. (Rom. 14:14; I Cor. 8:7, 10-12).

An erring conscience therefore leads to sin both when it is obeyed and when it is disobeyed {i.e. the case of a person who is bound by his conscience to worship saints.}
  - c) Against a probable conscience as in that case he either neglects the duty of ascertaining the right course of action, Ps. 119:9, 11 or acts in doubt, Rom. 14:23;
  - d) Against a doubting conscience since in such case he should not act at all, Rom. 14:32.

1. *Sins of commission and of omission.*
2. Sins of commission are positive acts, by which negative precepts of God are violated.
3. Sins of omission consist in the neglect of acts prescribed by affirmative precepts of God (Hollaz).
4. In sins of commission accordingly that is done which God has forbidden, Ex. 20: 13-17; in sins of omission that is omitted which God demands, Jas. 4:17.
5. Sins of omission are not always done intentionally or by an express purpose of the perverted will, yet every omission of that which is good is a sin in the true sense of the term, since man has been created for the very purpose of serving God by always doing that which is good, *i. e.*, commanded by Him. Matt. 28:20; Ezek. 37:24.

## Sins against God, neighbor, and self

1. *Sins against God, against the neighbor, and against oneself.*
2. Sins against God are those which are directed against the First Table of the Decalog, Matt. 22:37-38; Gen. 39:9.
3. Sins against the neighbor are directed specifically against the Second Table, Matt. 22:39; Lev. 19:17.
4. Sins against oneself are those which, like fornication and impurity in general, defile the body, 1 Cor. 6:18. Nevertheless we must remember that every sin against the neighbor or against oneself is a sin only because it is primarily committed against God, Ps. 51:4; Gen. 39:9.

### *Grievous and less grievous sins.*

- Every transgression of the divine Law is rebellion against God (lawlessness) and therefore damnable, Gal. 3:10. From the viewpoint of damnability therefore we cannot speak of "smaller" and "greater" sins. Still Scripture itself distinguishes degrees in sinning (John 19:11).
- Children before the years of discretion are less culpable than are adults, Deut. 1:39.
- Servants who know the will of the Lord and yet refuse to do it shall be beaten with many stripes, Luke 12:47, while such as sin against Him in ignorance shall receive only few stripes, v. 48. From this it is clear that as there are degrees in sinning, there are degrees also in the eternal punishment which the damned will suffer.
- The most grievous of all sins is unbelief, John 3:18-19; 16:9.

## Grievous and less grievous sins

The classification of sins into sins of the heart, of the mouth, and of the **actual** deed does not always indicate degree, since a sin of the heart (unbelief, implacability, etc.) may be more grievous than a sin of the mouth or of the actual deed (cf. an angry word spoken in haste; an evil deed done without malice, on the spur of the moment). When judging whether one sin is more grievous than another, we must consider

- a) the person sinning;
- b) the impelling cause;
- c) the object involved;
- d) the **Law** violated;
- e) the consequence of the sin.

Nevertheless every sin renders man guilty before God, Rom. 3:19

### 1. *Mortal and venial sins.*

- a. Mortal sins are all sins which actually precipitate the transgressor into a state of wrath, death, and condemnation, so that, if he should die without repentance, his punishment would be eternal death, John 8:21-24; Rom. 8:13.
- b. All sins of unbelievers are mortal sins since unbelievers reject Christ, for whose sake alone God pardons sin, Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Acts 4:12. When we speak of mortal sins of "believers," we mean such sins as grieve the Holy Spirit, Eph. 4:30, and destroy faith (David's murder and adultery, Ps. 32:3-4).
- c. "A mortal sin is that by which the regenerate, overcome by the flesh and not remaining in a regenerate state, transgress the divine Law by a deliberate purpose of the will, contrary to the dictates of conscience, and thereby lose saving faith, reject the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, and cast themselves into a state of wrath, death, and condemnation." (Hollaz.)
- d. Venial sins are the involuntary sins of believers, which, though in themselves deserving eternal death, are forgiven for Christ's sake, in whom the believer trusts and in whose strength he continually repents of his sins, Ps. 19:12-13; 51:9-12.

## Mortal and Venial Sins

1. With mortal sins may be identified the so-called dominant and with venial sins the so-called non-dominant sins. In unbelievers all sins are dominant, since they are dead in trespasses and sins and are in the power of Satan, Eph. 2, 1-3.
2. The blessed state in which sin is no longer dominant in man is found in **believers** only, Rom. 6:12-14. If believers give up the struggle against sin, Gal. 5:16-17, so that it again reigns over them, they have fallen from grace and lost faith, Gal. 5:4; 1 Cor. 5:11.

## Crying Sins

Crying sins are such as invoke God's punishments in a special degree.

Examples of crying sins mentioned in Scripture are the following:

- a) the fratricide committed by Cain, Gen. 4:10;
- b) the sins of the Sodomites, Gen. 18:20;
- c) the oppression of the Israelites by the Egyptians, Ex. 3:9;
- d) the oppression of widows and orphans, Ex. 22:22-23;
- e) the withholding of wages from hired laborers, Jas. 5:4 ;
- f) the persecution of Christians, Rev. 6:9-10. In general, we may describe as crying sins all crimes committed against the helpless (widows, orphans, the poor, the oppressed, etc.), whose cause God Himself must champion and defend, Ex. 3:7-9; 22:21-24; Is. 3:13-15.

### 1. *Pardonable sins and the unpardonable sin.*

- a. A pardonable sin is a sin of which it is possible to repent, while the "unpardonable sin" excludes the possibility of repentance. Since all sins are pardonable except the sin against the Holy Ghost, Matt. 12:31-32; Mark 3:22-30; Luke 12:10, which is the only irremissible sin that Scripture records, this sin requires special consideration.
- b. The classification just given must not be abused in the interest of carnal security and indifference toward sin. Every sin is pardonable only if the sinner in true repentance trusts in the vicarious satisfaction of Christ. It is only from the viewpoint of divine grace that sins are pardonable, not from that of human merit, Rom. 4:5-8.
- c. There is no "guiltless sin" before God, Rom. 3:19; Gal. 3:10.

## Sin Against the Holy Spirit

### *The sin against the Holy Ghost.*

- a. The sin against the Holy Ghost is described in Scripture as "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost," Mark 3, 28. 29. This blasphemy is distinguished from that directed against Christ, Matt. 12, 32, which, as our Savior expressly teaches, is pardonable. As Scripture references to the sin against the Holy Ghost our dogmaticians consider also 1 John 5:16 and Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-27.
- b. The sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable because it is directed, not against the divine person of the Holy Ghost, but against His divine office or His gracious operation upon the human heart. That is the nature, or essence, of this sin.
- c. However, not every resistance against the work of the Holy Ghost comes under the head of this sin; otherwise every person in the world would commit this unpardonable sin, since by nature all men resist the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 2, 14; Rom. 8, 7.

## Sin Against the Holy Spirit

1. The sin against the Holy Ghost is committed only when the Holy Spirit has clearly revealed the divine truth to the sinner and the sinner nevertheless utters blasphemies against it.
2. This sin must not be identified
  - a) with that of final impenitence
  - b) nor, with blasphemy of the divine truth flowing from spiritual blindness, 1 Tim. 1:13,
  - c) nor, with the denial of the divine truth through fear, Luke 22:61-62. The sin against the Holy Ghost consists in the perverse, persistent denial and rejection of the divine truth after the latter has been sufficiently acknowledged and accepted as such, joined with voluntary and atrocious blasphemy. In other words, it is the malicious and blasphemous rejection of the Gospel by a hardened sinner, who through the gracious illumination of the Holy Ghost has been fully convinced of its divine truth.

## Sin Against the Holy Spirit

1. Whether Heb. 6:4-6 and 10:26-27 treat of the sin against the Holy Ghost is an exegetical question, though many scholars believe that these two passages speak of this sin. In Heb. 12:17 the word "repentance" refers to Isaac rather than to Esau, the meaning of the text being that Esau with all his tears could not prevail on his father to change his mind and turn Jacob's blessing to his advantage, Gen. 27:34-38.
2. Only divine grace can preserve us from the sin against the Holy Ghost. If they were left to themselves, all who have come under the gracious operation of the Spirit of God would commit this heinous sin.
3. Those who are in great distress of mind because they fear that they have committed it should take comfort from the fact that this unforgivable sin is committed only by such as maliciously spurn and blasphemously reject the grace of God in Christ Jesus, not, however, by any one who repents of his sins and longs for the forgiveness which the Gospel offers. To him apply such passages as Matt. 11:28; 9:13; John 6:37.

# Thank You

Dr. Douglas C. Stewart

[Stewartdc2@hotmail.com](mailto:Stewartdc2@hotmail.com)

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