

**COME
TO THE
MARRIAGE**

The controversy today is over the same basic concepts as were being disputed by the reformers and papists. The reformers taught that your works were corrupted by original sin and therefore were worthless to satisfy the claims of a holy law. The papists contended that the Holy Spirit working in man made his works fully satisfy the divine law. Therefore the works had merit, but the merit was Christ's merit because Christ produced the works in man.

Chapter 16

THE NATURE OF MAN

Let us first study the papal view of the nature of man. It is important to understand why the Catholic Church claims their works are perfect and therefore of value or meritorious.

"What is original sin? Is it not unjust to hold us guilty for Adam's sin?"

"Original sin is distinguished from actual or personal sin in this: that actual or personal sin is the sin which we *personally with our own free will* commit, whilst original sin is that which our human nature committed *with the will of Adam*, in whom all our human nature was included, and with whom our human nature is united as a branch to a root, as a child to a parent, as men who partake with Adam the same nature which we have derived from him, and as members of the same human family of which Adam was the head. . Henceforth man could do no work capable of meriting the life to come. Henceforth the life to come was out of his reach. . . The child of God became a child of wrath." The Question Box 354, 355

Notice in the above that it is because of original sin that the Catholics teach that works cannot have merit. They recognize that original sin defiles your works and makes them imperfect so that they cannot have merit. But now let us see how the Catholic Church teaches you are cleansed from original sin.

"Is not Baptism a mere external ceremony of initiation into the body of the Christian fellowship?"

No, this is a new doctrine of the Reformation, following logically from the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The Catholic Church teaches that "Baptism is a sacrament which cleanses us from original sin, makes us Christians, children of God, and heirs of heaven" (Catechism of Third Plenary Council, lesson Xii.) It is not a mere outward sign, but a sign (washing of the body with the invocation of the Blessed Trinity) that of itself signifies and confers grace, cleansing from original sin as well as actual sin previously committed, and imprinting on the soul a spiritual and indelible character." Ibid. 359, 360

The Catholic Church believes in original sin but it is removed at baptism. Since baptism is usually preformed during infancy, original sin is cleansed at infancy. If original sin is cleansed at baptism then the Catholic Church would not believe that original sin remained in the converted life. As a result of this cleansing, the Holy Spirit works in man, and he can produce good works. These works have merit because they are produced by the Holy Spirit and are perfect. The works are perfect because they are not corrupted by original sin. But remember, they are not claiming they did the work through natural human means. It is done in the power of Christ, and the merit of the good works is Christ's merit.

What was the reformers understanding of original sin?

"What do you think of the doctrine of total depravity?

"It was the doctrine of Luther and Calvin that human nature because of original sin, became essentially corrupt, so that men could neither think, speak, do, or love anything but evil. "Sin is not an act or a phenomenon of our nature," taught Luther; "it is our very nature, and our whole being itself." "All that you can do begins in sin, remains in sin; it may appear ever so good and pretty; you can do nothing but sin, act as you please. . ."

"The Catholic Church in the Council of Trent condemned this dreadful doctrine of the Reformers, which made God the author of evil." Question Box 329

The quotation from "The Question Box" pg. 359, 360 shows that the reformers did not believe that original sin was removed at baptism. They called baptism an external ceremony. This shows that if they believed in original sin, and it wasn't removed at baptism, then it would remain after conversion. That is why Luther taught we are saved by faith alone. Original sin corrupted the works of the Spirit and therefore they were imperfect and valueless.

The Spirit of Prophecy makes it very plain that Luther clearly understood the doctrine of justification by faith.

"The great doctrine of justification by faith, so clearly taught by Luther, had been almost wholly lost sight of; and the Romish principle of trusting to good works for salvation, had taken its place." GC 253

Let us observe that the Spirit of Prophecy teaches we are sinful and corrupt by nature. That is the same as original sin.

"Adam sinned, and the children of Adam share his guilt and its consequences; but Jesus bore the guilt of Adam, and all the children of Adam that will flee to Christ, the second Adam, may escape the penalty of transgression." ST 5/19/1890

"Parents have a more serious charge than they imagine. The inheritance of children is that of sin. Sin has separated them from God. Jesus gave His life that He might unite the broken links to God. As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death." E.G. White Letter 68, 1899

"They have inherited the defective characters of their parents. . ." CT 192

"We need to understand that imperfection of character is sin." COL 330

"In the human heart there is a natural selfishness and corruption, which can only be overcome by most through discipline and severe restraint: and even then it will require years of patient effort and earnest resistance. God permits us to experience the ills of poverty, and places us in difficult positions, that the defects in our characters may be revealed and their asperities be smoothed away." 4T 496

The sanctuary clearly shows that original sin remains after conversion.

"The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement." PP 357

Our record is a perfect photograph of our character. If the sin stands on record until the final atonement, it means that sin remains in me after confession. The conscious guilt is removed, but the sin remains.

The sin on record still made the sinner guilty. Confession does not remove the guilt from nature. It would remain until the nature is free from sin.

"Important truths concerning the atonement were taught the people by this yearly service. In the sin offerings presented during the year, a substitute had been accepted in the sinner's stead; but the blood of the victim had not made full atonement for the sin. It had only provided a means by which the sin was transferred to the sanctuary. By the offering of blood, the sinner acknowledged the authority of the law, confessed the guilt of his transgression, and expressed his faith in Him who was to take away the sin of the world; but he was not entirely released from the condemnation of the law. On the Day of Atonement the high priest, having taken an offering for the congregation, went into the most holy place with the blood and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat, above the tables of the law. Thus the claims of the law, which demanded the life of the sinner, were satisfied. Then in his character of mediation the priest took the sins upon himself, and leaving the sanctuary, he bore with him the burden of Israel's guilt." PP 355, 356

Carefully observe in the above that the blood had not made a full atonement for the sin. It (the blood) had only provided a means by which the sin was transferred to the sanctuary. The sin that was being transferred here was not the record of sin. That was recorded in the sinner's mind and on the record books when he committed the sin. The sin here being transferred is the guilt. But notice that the blood had not made full atonement.

The blood was carrying the guilt and transferring it to the sanctuary, but it did not make full atonement. There was still guilt. ". . . he was not yet entirely released from the condemnation of the law." Condemnation means guilt. He was still guilty. It was not until the sins were blotted out on the Day of Atonement that the sinner was entirely free from the guilt.

Following in position #1 is what the Catholic Church teaches about what it means to be saved by your merit. Position #2 is what they consider the true doctrine of faith and works. Position #3 is the position of the reformers.

1. Righteousness by works is when man has confidence in his ability to keep the law of God through natural power alone.
2. The Holy Spirit working through the human channel produces a perfect work that is acceptable to God. Since this work is perfect it has value and therefore merit. The merit of this good work is ascribed to Christ and not to the human channel.
3. The Holy Spirit working through the human channel produces a good work. This work is imperfect and therefore has no value or merit. It is defiled because the human channel is corrupt. This work only becomes acceptable in heaven when Christ mixes His merit with it. We are righteous by substitution.

It is important to keep in mind that if the individual chooses position number two he loses the power of the Holy Spirit in his life. Just because he believes that the Holy Spirit is working through him does not mean He is. When a person trusts in his own works, the Holy Spirit does not help him gain victories, because those victories just minister to his pride, and he does not see his need of Christ.

No Christian believes he can keep the law of God through natural power alone. Therefore the two positions to really analyze are position number two and three.

"Let no one take the limited, narrow position that any of the works of man can help in the least possible way to liquidate the debt of his transgression. This is a fatal deception. If you would understand it, you must cease haggling over your pet ideas, and with humble hearts survey the atonement. This matter is so dimly comprehended that thousands upon thousands claiming to be sons of God are children of the wicked one, because they will depend on their own works. God always demanded good works, the law demands it, but because man placed himself in sin where his good works were valueless, Jesus' righteousness alone can avail." 1SM 343

When a person reads statements like the above, it is the Catholic position (#2) that helps him to see what people believe about works. If he believes he is saved by his works he has chosen position number two. It is position number two that has the corrupt channel (original sin) cleansed at conversion, and with the aid of the Holy Spirit he produces a perfect work. This perfect work would be his character. It is during the Christian's

probationary life that he is to strive for perfection. That probationary life ends when he dies or his name comes up in judgment. If he is going to be saved by his own works, then he would believe that his character is perfect when his name comes up in judgment. Remember, the Catholic teaching of works is not saying a person is saved by his works without Christ's help. He believes he is saved by his works when he believes he can with the help of the Holy Spirit fully satisfy the divine law. In a previous study it was pointed out that the character is defective when the name comes up in judgment. The above statement states that, "If you would understand it, you must cease haggling over your pet ideas, and with humble hearts survey the atonement." Let us think about the atonement.

The atonement was symbolized at the altar of burnt offering. That represented Calvary. Christ died for man's sin; He was man's substitute. The daily atonement taught the constant need of an intercessor. Christ character stands in man's place. It is obvious that his works are valueless and without merit or he wouldn't need a substitute. The final atonement shows how God will perfect man and still show him that his works are valueless and without merit.

The yearly atonement of the sanctuary teaches that the final atonement is the final intercessory work of Christ. The final atonement blots out sin. That is when man is no longer a corrupt channel, and his works would be acceptable to Christ without an intercessor. The very term 'final intercession' suggests a work that is needed to make man live without an intercessor. The work that needs to be done is the removal of the corruption, so he is no longer a corrupt channel. It is because man is a corrupt channel that his works are unacceptable, and therefore he needs an intercessor.

What difference does it make to have the corruption removed before the name comes up in judgment or after the name comes up in judgment? The difference is this. The Catholic doctrine of merit states that with the Holy Spirit working in man, he could fully satisfy the divine law. But if man is still a corrupt channel, which he must be because his character is still defective when his name comes up in judgment, then it is obvious that he will not have arrived at a place where he will fully satisfy the divine law. He will not be perfect in character when his name comes up in judgment. If he believes that with the aid of the Holy Spirit he will arrive at perfection of character before the judgment, he believes the Catholic view of works. But since he still has a defective character at the judgment, his works of a lifetime, be it long or short, are of no value and without merit. When perfection is placed at the final atonement, and the corruption is removed after a person's name comes up in judgment, then that makes it very clear that man cannot achieve righteousness by his own works (character). If he is not righteous until after the judgment, he can claim no glory for himself.

Christ gives righteousness as a free gift at the final atonement. The study on the latter rain shows that the latter rain comes at the time of the blotting out of sin and fills us with righteousness. God is making it very clear that all the glory goes to Him.

"What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself." TM 456

The third angel's message of justification by faith points to the most holy place where Jesus is making His final atonement. Here we can see that our work of character is valueless. God gives man perfection as a free gift. That is doing for man that which he had not power to do for himself. There is no room for pride in God's method of saving man.