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good news for their friends, and they knew that good news was embodied in Jesus Christ. Him they proclaimed.³⁶

I suggest that Michael Green's thesis is confirmed by our examination of the evidence.³⁷

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Sin in John's Gospel

David Tuesday Adamo

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Basically an exegetical inquiry, this article deals with the question of sin as bondage, with Satan as its originator. Interacting with many modern scholars, particularly Bultmann, the author attempts to bring out the concept as one of the main subjects of the Gospel of John.

Editor

Despite the various points of view of many scholars, it appears there are only two basic methods of approaches to Johannine theology. Some scholars consider all the writings of John as one unit.¹ Others make an exception of the Gospel, and try to deal with it as Jesus' theology rather than John's.² If a person sets out in his New Testament theology to lay emphasis on Jesus' teaching as the very 'vocal point from which other apostolic teaching

³⁶ E. M. B. Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, London, 1970, 147f.

³⁷ T. F. Torrance, 'Questioning in Christ', in *Theology in Reconstruction*, London, 1965, 117-127, has suggested that what Jesus did was to raise questions of fundamental importance in the minds of those who heard him and then to force them by his counterquestions to think even more deeply. 'In the last resort it is we who are questioned by the Truth, and it is only as we allow ourselves to be questioned by it that it stands forth before us for our recognition and acknowledgement.' This type of approach operates at a theological level and draws out the fuller significance of the fact that people ask questions of Jesus, and find that in the process they themselves come under questioning. It is not altogether a new approach, for it has often been recognized that in a sense the trial scenes in which Jesus appears as the one on trial are really occasions on which the judges themselves stand under judgment. But where Torrance goes further in theological discussion is when he claims that Jesus identifies himself with people in their questionings: on the cross he calls out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and thus voices on behalf of mankind the most insistent question of all; at the same time it is Jesus who gives the true and final answer to God: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' This cry was answered, and this prayer was ratified by God when he raised from the dead.

On this view the dialogue is not one in which Jesus comes to deeper understanding, but rather one in which the world does so. And yet in a paradoxical fashion Jesus takes mankind's questions upon himself as part of the burden which he has to bear. But, Torrance insists, the questions which Jesus asks are the right questions, questions which are capable of fruitful answers, whereas our human questions are the wrong questions and need to be refined and purified through encounter with Jesus.

¹ C. C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology in the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959) p. 302.

² G. B. Stevens, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917) p. 175.

emanates and evolves', the method of excepting the Gospel, and dealing with it as coming from Jesus himself, can be justified. On the other hand, if the individuality of Johannine thought, style, terminology and method of conceiving the Christian truth is to be emphasized, the method of seeing the whole as a unit is indeed 'natural, useful and preferable'.

Whichever method one follows, it is crystal clear that the author of the Fourth Gospel aims at two broad themes: *God* and *salvation*. Under these two broad headings come other various connected themes: christology, ecclesiology, sacramentalism, eschatology and others. The specific importance that the Fourth Gospel gives to salvation reveals that the author's major concern is the salvation of the world. For this reason, according to the Fourth Gospel, God sends his only begotten Son ([Jn. 3:16](#)). The logos became flesh ([Jn. 1:14](#)). He gave life, suffered, died and rose again from the dead. John exhorts the world to believe in him in order to have salvation.

It seems to me that the author of the Fourth Gospel knows that any soteriological discussion without a description of sin will be incomplete. It will be incomplete because salvation is free from sin and its consequences—death. The Fourth Gospel therefore gives John's [p. 217](#) various concepts of sin. Various principal words for sin are used: *hamartia* ([Jn. 1:29](#), [8:21](#), [24](#)) which has the meaning of hitting the wrong mark; *poneros* ([Jn. 3:19](#), [17:15](#)) with its original meaning of worthlessness; and *adikia* ([Jn. 7:18](#)) which has the original meaning of 'unrighteousness'.³ The Fourth Gospel sees sin as being in total deep darkness. It is a universal phenomenon. The term 'world' is used to mean sinful men ([Jn. 10](#)). Sin, according to John, is synonymous to being in bondage ([Jn. 8:33](#)). Demoniactal possession is sin ([Jn. 7:20](#)). The source of sin is the devil or Satan.

VARIOUS TERMS USED FOR SIN

A. 'Darkness'

The Fourth Gospel uses the word 'darkness' as a definition of sin. In the Fourth Gospel the word 'darkness' is used about eight times and, 'light' about 23 times. In the prologue of John, there is a personification of darkness and light and the two are in constant opposition to one another. While light is synonymous with the Logos, darkness is synonymous with the sinful world or the men for whom the Logos dies. Light is a symbol of goodness, love and spiritual life, but darkness symbolizes all kinds of evil: hate and moral death.⁴ Darkness is also the characteristic and the condition of the sinful world. Darkness is indeed a symbol of the world's isolation from the source of its life. In several places, this symbol is used in the phrases 'walk in darkness' ([8:12](#); [8:35](#)) and 'abide in darkness' ([12:46](#)). To the author of the Fourth Gospel, the real essence of the Gospel is 'God is light', the fact that in him there is nothing like darkness ([Jn. 1:5](#)). It has a practical purpose of showing us that the moral conduct of men proves whether they are having fellowship with him or not ([Jn. 1:6-7](#)).

The above dualistic concept in the Fourth Gospel is an important one. The nature of this Johannine dualism is worth some special attention. Is the nature of this dualism of light and darkness physical, inherent in the human nature consisting of spirit and matter? If not, is it metaphysical, inherent in the essence of the universe? Or is it ethical? If we agree that light is synonymous with the Logos, and darkness sin, or the sinful world for whom the Logos came, then the [p. 218](#) phrase, 'And the light shines in darkness; and the

³ C. C. Ryrie, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

⁴ G. B. Stevens, *Johannine Theology* (Chicago: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904) p. 128.

darkness comprehended it not' ([Jn. 1:5](#)), is a figurative way of saying that Jesus came to his own and his own rejected him ([Jn. 1:11](#)). This is a deliberate rejection of Jesus. It represents a free personal action on the part of men. The nature of this dualism must therefore be ethical rather than metaphysical or physical.

It is important to point out the problems involved and the divergent opinions among scholars concerning the proper translation of the word *katelaben* in [John 1:5](#).⁵ R. E. Brown has discussed at great length various translations by various scholars.⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, the Latin tradition, Lagrange, Macregor and Braun are examples of scholars and translators who translate it 'to grasp, to comprehend'. Dupont, Bultmann and some others translate it 'to welcome, to receive, accept, appreciate'. Some Greek Fathers, Schlatter, Westcott, Boismard and Brown prefer 'to overtake, overcome'.⁷ Moffatt translates it 'to master', in his attempt to reconcile 'understanding' and 'overcoming' with one another.

I think that the translation 'comprehend, grasp, master', in an intellectual sense is inappropriate. The words *ginosko* and *oida* would have been used instead if an intellectual sense were involved. Moreover, such translations exclude the sense of rejection and the deep struggle between the darkness and the light. Looking at the literal meaning of the word *katelaben*, and the world's attitude toward Christ (they rejected him, they thought that they had overcome him by killing him), it seems to me that 'to overcome', or 'to welcome, receive, accept, appreciate', would be more appropriate than 'comprehend' or 'master'.

That the Johannine dualism of light and darkness is ethical is further supported by the ways it is used in the Synoptic Gospels ([Mt. 4:16](#); [10:27](#); [3:19-27](#)).⁸ The contrast is always employed throughout the [p. 219](#) Gospels. The conflict involved morally good actions against morally evil actions:

And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God ([Jn. 3:19-21](#)).

The [1 John 3:4](#) description of sin as 'lawlessness' supports the ethical use of this dualism.

What is the source of this Johannine dualism of light and darkness? Various suggestions have been given by many scholars. Bultmann and Bauer are among the scholars who have suggested that the source of Johannine dualism is Gnosticism. Bultmann went as far as saying that the evangelist was an ex-Gnostic.⁹ In reconstructed Gnosticism, especially in the *Odes of Solomon* and the Mandaean writings, there is a dualism of light and darkness; and this is what led Bultmann and other scholars to this conclusion. Dodd, Braun and E. A. Abbott see the source of this dualism in Hellenistic thinking. E. A.

⁵ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (Garden City: Doubleday Comp. 1966).

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-12.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ It is interesting to see that the Johannine dualism of light and darkness is not foreign to African societies. Among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, light (*imola*) is a symbol of goodness and truth, while darkness (*okunkun*) represents all evil and all kinds of wickedness. Among the Yoruba there is a cult called *Egbe Okunkun* (Society of darkness). To this group all kind of evil and wickedness are attributed. If there is any suspicion of any evil act in a particular city or tribe, the elders of the city will first of all go to this group to enquire. See G. B. Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, p. 132.

⁹ R. E. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. LIV.

Abbott emphasized that the author of the Fourth Gospel borrowed from schools of Greek philosophical thought, mainly from Platonism or Stoicism.¹⁰ Dodd maintained that one of our most direct sources for the background of Johannine thought is Philo of Alexandria along with Rabbinic Judaism and the *Hermetica*.¹¹ Westcott, Glasson, R. H. Smith and Schlatter are among the prominent scholars who lean toward Palestinian Judaism as the source of Johannine dualism. These Palestinian Judaistic sources include the Old Testament and the ideas of Qumran. G. B. Stevens rejects the modern idea that the origin of the concept of light and darkness in the Johannine writings comes from Gnostic or Hellenistic dualism.¹²

Looking at the parallel in the Fourth Gospel to Gnostic and Hellenistic thought concerning the dualism of light and darkness, I am convinced that one should not dogmatically dismiss the notion that there are some influences on the author of the Fourth Gospel. However, it will probably be more appropriate to conclude that even p. 220 though the Fourth Gospel's author might have been aware of Gnostic Hellenistic thought, the principal background for Johannine thought was Palestinian Judaism. This is so because of the overwhelming parallels in the Old Testament writings, the Qumran literature and the Fourth Gospel. Brown has this to say after concluding that both Qumran and the Fourth Gospel have their roots in the Old Testament.

What can be said is that for some features of Johannine thought and vocabulary, the Qumran literature offers a closer parallel than any other contemporary or earlier non-Christian literature, either in Judaism or in the Hellenistic world. And, in fact, for such features Qumran offers a better parallel than even the late post-Johannine Mandaean or Hermetic writings.¹³

'COSMOS'

The Fourth Gospel uses the term 'cosmos' to mean sinful men as opposed to the men of truth, righteousness and Jesus. The word *kosmos* is used 14 times in the Synoptics, 78 times in the Fourth Gospel and 24 times in the Johannine Epistles. It is used three times in the book of Revelation. The total of New Testament usages of the term *kosmos* is 185. Out of these, 105 are Johannine (see Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1, p. 508).

I must also point out that there are three shades of meaning in the Johannine use of the term *kosmos*. It is used to mean the whole created universe apart from its moral qualities. This is the physical universe as created by God. This universe is described in the Old Testament as *samayim* and *eretz* (heaven and earth). But it is in the late Hebrew that the word *otam* comes to mean 'age' and 'world' and therefore becomes the equivalent of the Greek word *kosmos*.¹⁴ The Fourth Gospel is therefore indebted to the Old Testament thought in its use of the term *kosmos* to mean the physical world as created by God. Thus we have in the Fourth Gospel the expressions 'before the foundation of the world' ([17:24](#)), 'before the world was' ([17:5](#)), 'he was in the world and the world was made by him' ([1:10](#)).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. LVII.

¹¹ C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1953) p. 133.

¹² G. B. Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, p. 132.

¹³ R. E. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. LXII–LXIV.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 508.

The term *kosmos* is also used by the Fourth Gospel to mean the free and intelligent action of all rational and moral beings.¹⁵ It means mankind, or society as a whole. If the Old Testament in [Genesis 1:26](#) p. 221 describes man as the very culmination of God's creation, and [Genesis 2](#) places the 'animate creation' at man's service, I think that the Fourth Gospel is right in using the term 'world' this way. When we read that light came to men or to the world, and that men loved darkness more than light ([3:19](#)), the phrase 'the world' refers to both the evil doers and the righteous ones. It refers to the entire human race as created by God in his own image, both male and female.

The third meaning of the term *kosmos* as used by the Fourth Gospel refers to sinful men and their sins. This meaning of 'the world' is the one that is most prevalent in the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles. This is the meaning we are most concerned with here. These sinful men did not only reject Jesus Christ, but opposed and killed him. These men were under the leadership of Satan. Jesus therefore attached a very strong note of hostility to the use of the term *kosmos* in this sense. When Jesus spoke to the Pharisees, he said, 'You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he' ([8:23-24](#)). He further told them, 'My kingdom is not of this world' ([18:36](#)). We read in the Fourth Gospel that the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth because it neither sees him nor knows him ([14:17](#); [17:25](#)). The world hates the disciples, Jesus and God ([15:18-19](#)) because of their wickedness. That is the reason for the condemnation of the world. The Spirit is sent to the world to 'convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment' ([16:8-11](#)). Assuming that the Epistles of John are written by the same author as the Fourth Gospel, we find a clarification of the meaning of the term *kosmos* there. The sons of darkness inhabit the world ([1 Jn. 2:9-10](#)). One is advised not to love the world or the things in it. The very love of the world is the hatred of the Father ([1 Jn. 2:15-17](#)). The world is also in the power of the evil one.

One cannot deny the fact that there is no clear-cut distinction in this use of 'the world' by the Fourth Gospel. In other words, the world as 'physical universe', the world as 'the entire human race' and the world as 'the sinful men' are interwoven. [John 1:10](#) is an example. He was in the world (*mankind*), and the world was made through him (*universe*), yet the world (*sinful men*) knew him not.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SIN

The Johannine description of sin as a power or principle implies that he regards sin as a universal phenomenon. Bultmann sees clearly the Johannine concept of universal sin when he says: P. 222

The universality of sin, i.e. the determination of men by unreality, is therefore not attributed to a mythical cause but simply shows itself to be a fact—a fact by virtue of the light coming. ... Not only because men (by and large) refuse to believe does the universality of sin show itself to be a fact but equally by the circumstance that there are those who came to faith ('But as many as received him' 1:12KJ; 3:12). For faith, as we have seen, is the admission that one has hitherto languished in blindness, has been enmeshed in the 'works' of the devil and has now come over from death into life.¹⁶

¹⁵ G. B. Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, p. 133.

¹⁶ R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. II, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955).

The emphasis the Fourth Gospel lays on the world's need of salvation shows that all men are sinful. Christ comes to take away the sin of the world ([Jn. 1:29](#)). According to the Fourth Gospel, the Spirit comes 'to convict the world of sin' ([Jn. 16:8-9](#)). 'For God so loves the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life' ([Jn. 3:16](#)). The entire world is in moral darkness and death, and God's wrath without redemption ([Jn. 1:5; 2:46; 3:14; 1:16](#)).¹⁷

Is the Fourth Gospel referring to the fall of Adam and Eve? Does it contain any idea that inherited sin was transmitted to the whole world before the darkness came ([Rom. 5:12](#))? Or is it the act of sin that an individual commits?

The doctrine of sin inherited from Adam has been a controversial one since ages. Let us examine some of the different opinions of various people. Athanasius' view of original sin is clear. To him, Adam plunged all human race to corruption, sinfulness and death.¹⁸ The Cappadocians and Antiochenes follow a similar line of thought as Athanasius. They strongly denied any idea that children are free from sin. Pelagius strongly affirmed the position that Adam's sin is not transmitted to children. He regarded newly born children as a completely fresh creation of God and therefore perfect.¹⁹ Tertullian, one of the African theologians of the time, accepted the Pelagian line of thought. He regarded the baptism of children as a very dangerous act.²⁰ Cyprian differed from his master Tertullian. He never delayed the baptism of newly-born children for he thought that children p. 223 contacted sin from their birth. Augustine of Hippo, in old Roman North Africa, derives his idea of inherited sin in the entire human race from [Psalm 51:5](#) and [Romans 5:12](#). He therefore anathematized Pelagius for his teaching against the existence of an inherited sinfulness from the fall. Origen of Alexandria did not hold back the idea that it was through one man that sin entered the world, even Adam, in whom all have sinned.

In the views of modern scholars, there is some rejection of this idea of original sin. Professor John S. Pobee opposes the doctrine vehemently.²¹ He argues that the doctrine of inherited sin is based on a mistranslation of the word *eph o* in [Romans 5:12](#). He maintains that the word *eph o* should be translated 'because' instead of 'through'. The words of the Apocalypse of Baruch put it right, according to Dr. Pobee: 'Adam is therefore not the cause, save only of his own soul, but each one of us has been the Adam of his own soul' (LIV:19).

That other New Testament passages unanimously agree with the Johannine universal concept of sin is unquestionable. Jews and Gentiles, religious people and non-religious people, Christians and non-Christians have sinned and have missed the mark (see [Rom. 3:23; 3:9-10](#)).²² For any one to claim sinlessness is to be blind to the truth ([1 Jn. 1-8](#)), for sin is indeed an undeniable fact of existence.

¹⁷ G. B. Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, p. 138.

¹⁸ H. Cunliffe-Jones, *A History of Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh) p. 157.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

²¹ J. S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), pp. 113-14.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 112. The doctrine of universality of sin is not only taught by the Fourth Gospel and supported by the other biblical passages; African traditional theology supported it too. The Yoruba tribe of Nigeria and Gas of Ghana are exceptional in affirming the universality of sin. The Yoruba people usually say that *enia ko feni re're*. It literally means that no one wants good for another person. This is a very deep expression of human wickedness because of the recognizable inbuilt wicked nature in man. The Gas of Ghana usually say *Ghomo adesa, Ghomo adesa ni*: 'Oh man! The deeds of man'. This is an affirmation of the Ghanaian people

Concerning the idea of original sin, it seems as if Johannine theology of sin implies it, though it is not directly stated. 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it' ([Jn. 1:5](#)). This means that the darkness was already in the world, and all men were already in that darkness before the coming of the light to shine in it. Rudolf Bultmann puts it in a better way when he discusses Johannine theology of universality of sin: 'It is clear: before the light's coming all were blind. "The blind" are such as knew of their blindness or know [p. 224](#) of it now that the light encounters them'. In short: before the light's coming the whole world is in darkness, in death. But by the light's coming the question is put to man whether he chooses to remain in darkness, in death.²³ At the same time, we must remember that the Fourth Gospel clearly recognizes the sin as an individual act and an individual is also responsible for the consequences of his own sin. It is a deliberate act of rejecting Christ who came for the sole purpose of saving the world. The word *hamartia* in [John 9:2-3](#) means an act of sin. The phrase 'to commit sin' ([8:34](#)) refers to an act of sin. This Johannine universal sin fits into the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus' own disciples who followed him, who were under Jesus' protection, whom we would have probably regarded as good men, were told to pray for the forgiveness of their sins and deliverance from evil ([Lk. 11:4](#); [Mt. 6:12-15](#)). However, we should not derive any dogmatic doctrine of 'original sin' and universalism of sin from the Gospel of John even though it is implied there.

SATAN AS THE SOURCE OF SIN

The Fourth Gospel connects sin with certain demoniacal agencies. While the Synoptic Gospels mentioned demoniacal possession in relation to physical and mental trouble, the Fourth Gospel mentioned the possession of a demon only in connection with the multitude's charges against Jesus ([7:20](#); [10:20](#); [8:48](#)). After Jesus had opened the eyes of the man born blind, the Pharisees accused him of sinfulness and falsehood. They called him a sinner and a demon. Looking at this, it seems as if the Fourth Gospel is saying that to be demon possessed is to be a sinner, a wicked man and a mad man.²⁴ Jesus is regarded as someone not from God by the Jews because he has a demon.

The Fourth Gospel does not describe a sinner simply as someone who has a demon; the *source* of sin is given. The devil or Satan is the originator. He is the person behind all sinful and wicked acts. Special reference must be made to Judas Iscariot. The wicked act of betraying one's master is regarded as an act of the devil. Jesus, speaking concerning Judas the betrayer, said, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?' ([Jn. 6:70](#)). According to the Fourth Gospel, to sin is to be a devil (*diabolos*). There are several passages where human sinfulness is directly ascribed to Satan or the devil. [Jn. 13:2](#) [p. 225](#) says that the act of betraying one's master is put into Judas' heart by the devil. When the Jews opposed Jesus, accused him of falsehood, tried to kill him, and yet claim Abraham and God as their father, Jesus bluntly denounced them. He said:

This is not what Abraham did ... if God were your Father you would love me ... you are of your father the devil and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When

that the human being is unreliable by definition, and by nature is expected to cause harm to society and others. This phrase is always uttered whenever any one causes trouble or harm to another person.

²³ Bultmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

²⁴ Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, p. 139.

he lies, he speaks according to his own nature for he is a liar and the father of lies ([Jn. 8:40, 42, 44](#)).

This idea of being sons of the devil, which appears only in this passage in the entire Gospel, also appears in the First Epistle. 'He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning.... By this it may be seen who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil' (*ta tekna tou diabolou*).

The passage in [Jn. 8:44](#) demands particular attention. Scholars have various interpretations of this passage. The ideas of the devil being a murderer and a liar from the beginning have not been agreed upon generally. J. Ramon Diaz²⁵ holds that the notion of the devil as a murderer from the beginning is a reference to the murder of Abel by Cain in Genesis. He argues strongly that in the Palestinian Targum of [Genesis 5:3](#) Cain was not mentioned specifically as the son of Abraham, but of Eve: 'Eve had borne Cain who was not like him [Adam]'. Diaz therefore concluded that Jesus was right in saying that Abraham was not the father of the Jews because they belonged to Cain, the son of the devil. Stevens rejects the idea that the statement 'a murderer and liar' is a reference to Cain, because there was no mention of the instigation of Satan in the story of the murder of Abel by Cain. Stevens thinks that [Genesis 3](#) is more probable because Satan is represented under the figure of a serpent.²⁶ The phrase *ap arches* will therefore mean 'from the beginning of the human race'. Reuss interprets *ap arches* to mean that Satan is eternal.²⁷ I personally think that the origin of Satan cannot be determined here.

Brown admits the possibility of an allusion to both Cain and the fall of Adam and Eve. In a brilliant analysis he sees a possibility of referring to a wider spectrum of Old Testament passages. It is attractive that his [p. 226](#) position allows flexibility, and settles many controversies. Below are his exact words:

In emphasizing the essential nature of the devil as a sinner, a murderer, and a liar, Jesus is speaking in the tradition of the O.T. period which traces all sin and death to the devil's work described in the early chapters of Genesis. Wisdom ii.24 says: 'By the envy of the devil death entered the world'; Sir xxv.24 says: 'Sin began with a woman [Eve], and because of her we all die'.... the specific charge of lying is to be connected with Satan's deception of Eve, and the charge of murder to the story of Cain. It is possible that in the latter instance the charge is even wider, and that as in the Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach the penalty of death brought by the first sin is meant.²⁸

Bultmann sees this Johannine dualism 'of God' and 'of the devil' as of Gnostic origin. He says: 'The language of his dualism is that of Gnosticism. In particular the division of mankind into two groups—those who are of God or 'of the devil', 'of the truth' or 'of the world', from above or below.'²⁹

Brown sees a similar dualism 'at Qumran where the spirit of truth is opposed to the spirit of perversion'.³⁰

²⁵ J. R. Diaz, *Novum Testamentum*, 1963, pp. 79–80.

²⁶ Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, p. 141.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²⁸ R. E. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

²⁹ Bultmann, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

³⁰ R. E. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

SIN AS A STATE OF BONDAGE

The Fourth Gospel describes sin as a state of bondage ([Jn. 8:33–36](#)). Jesus spoke to the Pharisees in this conception of sin and promised them freedom because he sees them as being in bondage. Unfortunately, the Pharisees did not understand him. They answered Jesus ignorantly that as children of Abraham they were not in bondage. But Jesus continues, ‘Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin’ ([Jn. 8:34](#)). That is, sin by its very nature is slavery. It makes one lose his citizenship, freedom and divine destiny. To be in darkness is to be in bondage. To be in bondage is to be a sinner and a devil. Bondage to sin is bondage to the devil. The truth is the one that brings freedom from the bondage of sin and darkness. The truth (Logos) brings freedom from the world.

Bultmann sees again this Johannine dualism of freedom and bondage as having its source in Gnostic thought. He says: ‘John’s concepts, light and darkness, truth and falsehood, freedom and bondage, life [p. 227](#) and death, come from Gnostic dualism, but they take on their specific Johannine meaning only in their relation to the idea of creation’.³¹

In Johannine theology, it seems as if the Fourth Gospel recognizes one type of sin as the most grievous sin and unforgiveable ([Jn. 1:10, 11; 3:16–19](#)). This particular sin is the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ. This is the type of sin that was called *hamartia pros thanatos* in [1 John 5:16–17](#). The emphasis that the Fourth Gospel gives to this sin, and to the condemnation of those who are guilty of it, is great. It is as if the Fourth Gospel is saying, if you reject Christ you are a liar; you belong to the devil; you are guilty of all sins of which there is no remedy and no other way. Can this sin of rejecting Christ be the same as the one referred to in the Synoptic Gospels ([Mt. 12:31; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 12:10](#)) as the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? I find it difficult to conceive of any other sin that is unforgiveable apart from the one to which the Fourth Gospel is referring. This is probably the sin to be retained by the disciples in [Jn. 20:23](#) because it has been retained in heaven. There is no other saviour, there is no other sacrifice for such sin ([Heb. 10:26](#)).

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Original Sin: A Fresh Approach

David Parker

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In present theological debates, particularly with the conciliar movement, the nature of sin has been figuring prominently—by way of human predicament, social sin, structural sin, which are closely related to the classical expression of ‘original sin’, thus making the fresh approach to the latter in this article most relevant for our time. Tracing the doctrine to its historical roots in both Reformed and Arminian theologies and considering some current

³¹ Bultmann, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 17.