

NAMES FOR SIN.

A STRIKING peculiarity of the vocabulary of Scripture is the variety of words for sin. In the New Testament these names are numerous, and in the Old Testament they are bewilderingly numerous. There is a good reason for this variety: it denotes that the subject is a many-sided one, and that the nature of sin is so complicated that it cannot be easily described. A study of some of the more significant of these terms, therefore, ought to be one way of bringing home the impression that sin is "exceeding sinful."

1. Perhaps the commonest word for sin in both the Old Testament and the New is one that signifies *missing the mark* (ΝΩΠ, ἀμαρτάνω). As a slinger, when he threw a stone, or a warrior, when he hurled a javelin, might miss the object at which he aimed, so the language of the Bible suggests that in sinning we are missing our object; that is to say, there is a right and perfect mode of spending every moment and performing every action, but, when we are sinning, we are wasting our time and spoiling our opportunity. The application of this idea is more obvious if we think not of a single act, but of a lifetime of sin. A sinful life misses the mark; it is a failure. Every son of Adam is born to a high and noble destiny; God has sent him into the world to fill a certain sphere and to accomplish a certain work. But he who lives in sin misses his destiny; and he will miss the prize which ought to have been its reward.

A name for sin, expressive of almost the same idea, signifies *declining from the way*, or falling out of the way (על, παράπτωμα). Life is conceived as a straight, clearly prescribed path, such as Bunyan saw in his vision; and every sin is a stepping aside or falling out of the way. Here again, however, the idea becomes clearer when we think not of a single sin, but of a course of sin. Thus our Lord

Himself spoke of the path of the sinner: "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life; but wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction."

2. Another term frequently employed for sin denotes *the overleaping of a boundary* (*παράβασις*.) We express this idea ourselves, in English, when we speak of sins as transgressions or trespasses.

To miss the mark is a sign of lack of skill, and to stumble or stray out of the way is the act of a child; so that the first name for sin designates it as something weak and childish. But to clear a barrier at a leap or to push it down is rather the work of excessive and uncontrolled strength; and therefore this designates a totally different aspect of sin. There are sins of weakness, which we commit through ignorance and inexperience, and with a miserable feeling that we have missed the mark; but there are also presumptuous sins, into which we are hurried by the violence of passion and the stubbornness of self-will; and we burst every barrier that stands in our way.

The barriers are the laws of God. These are revealed in conscience and in the Word of God. They meet us here and they meet us there, and they say, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther. They fence in certain regions from intrusion. But the wild lusts and passions of our nature desire to enter these enclosed places. We seem to hear airs of entrancing music coming from within; fruits which look pleasant to the eye hang over the walls; and by hook or by crook we must enter.

One of the strongest names in the New Testament for sin is *lawlessness* (*ἀνομία*). This does not mean that the sinner has escaped from the law; for this no man can do. But it means that he is acting as if no law existed, and that all the sacred places, which were meant to be kept virgin and intact, are trampled and profaned by the brutish hoofs of passion.

3. No word for sin is more significant than one which literally signifies the *breaking of a covenant* (עֲשָׂה). In ancient times tribes were allied to one another by covenant: they marched together against their common enemies; but if, on such an occasion, one of them deserted its ally in face of the enemy and broke the covenant, this was rightly considered one of the greatest of wrongs. It is from such an incident that this name for sin is derived. Naturally we are in covenant with God; we belong to Him; He has made us for Himself, and He expects us to spend our life in His love and fellowship. But many forget God and live as if he did not exist. Some go further: they remember that He exists, but they do not love Him; they would banish Him from their thoughts if they could, because He is the Being from whom they seem to themselves to have most to fear. Thus they almost hate Him and wish that He did not exist. Perhaps they go further still: they persuade themselves that there is no God, and argue against the Divine existence; but the wish is father to the thought.

This may be considered the gravest of all views of sin, because it brings out the fact that sin is directed against God Himself. It is a personal transaction between man and God. The law is an abstraction; and the sense that we have broken it may leave us cold. But, when we realise that sin touches God—that it is a breaking away from His friendship and an insult to His honour—that every sin we commit abides in God's memory, and grieves Him at His heart—we are brought face to face with Him with whom we have to do.

The three names already mentioned describe sin in relation to objects outside ourselves; the three that follow indicate its effects upon the sinner.

4. The fourth name designates sin as *disharmony* or *disorder* (שֹׁאָה, רֵשַׁע). The different powers of human nature

were intended by the Creator to co-exist in friendly co-operation ; but sin transmutes them into forces ranged on opposing sides and fighting among themselves. " The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." Every one is aware of the existence in himself of a nobler self, which aspires, and a baser self, which grovels. These are in continual conflict. Even the heathen have felt this disharmony, describing human nature as a chariot drawn by two steeds, the one of which is white and good-tempered, and would pull straight forward in the upward path, while the other is black in colour and evil in temper, and is continually breaking over the traces. But the apostle Paul has given the classical account of this struggle in Romans vii., in terms to the truth of which every human heart bears witness: " For that which I do I allow not ; for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that do I." " For I delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man : but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Oh wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? "

5. A fifth name for sin, akin to the last, is *folly* (אִיִּל, etc.). The idea that sin is folly runs through the whole of both the Old Testament and the New.

The truth of this representation is easily demonstrated. The aim of all sin is to secure happiness. But God has clearly made known where and how true happiness is to be found. Not only has He declared it ; but in the very constitution of the world and of human nature He has appointed it. In the structure of the creation the lines are laid down on which life must move if it is to attain true success and permanent well-being. Now, sin is a deliberate contradiction of this divine decree. It is founded on the belief that we may go right in the teeth of this divine appointment, and yet be happy. Is not this folly ? Only

if God be a liar can such hopes be fulfilled, or if He is unable to carry out what He has threatened.

This may be why sin is often called in Scripture *a lie* (ἡ ψεῦδος, etc.). It is a delusion. It promises happiness, when it means to inflict misery; it promises freedom, when it is bringing us into bondage; it promises glory, whilst it is sinking us into degradation. It is a kind of madness; and, therefore, our Lord said in the parable that the prodigal returned to his father "when he came to himself."

6. It is no great step to the sixth word, which signifies *misfortune* or *calamity* (ἄγος, κακόν). When the glamour of sin is in the eyes of the prodigal and, intoxicated with its fumes, he is madly pursuing his way, little does he dream that what he is so blindly in love with is his enemy; yet it is only a question of time when the fact will be brought home even to his apprehension.

There are sins the course of which has been expressly designed by Providence to prove that sin is calamity; because they bring their own punishment in the eyes of all. Drunkenness is an example: the drunkard cannot conceal his sin; it soon tells even on his person; it wastes his substance; it impoverishes his home; it brings him to a premature and a dishonoured grave. More or less this is true of all sins of the flesh. Even civil society sees to it that some sins are turned into sufferings. The fraudulent operator rides for a time on the tide of success; he flaunts his wealth in the eyes of the world, and lives on the fat of the land; but at last sin rounds upon him; he is found out, and falls into the clutches of justice, when he becomes an example and a proverb.

But these glaring results of some sins are intended to demonstrate what will be the ultimate issues of all. However hidden a sin may be, one immediate result of it is inevitable: it deteriorates the character; it eats away the substance of manhood or womanhood, and makes the good

we might do impossible. And ultimately everything will be exposed; the judgment-seat of God has to be faced by every mortal; and every sin unconfessed and unforgiven will there fall under the immeasurable retribution of eternity.

JAMES STALKER.

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE LAST VERSES OF
MARK.

1. BY PROFESSOR TH. ZAHN.
2. BY DR. A. RESCH.

THE following article contains a translation, made at the request of the Editor, of the criticisms passed by two distinguished German scholars, Dr. A. Resch, and Professor Theodor Zahn, upon an article which appeared in this journal in October, 1893, entitled: "Aristion, the Author of the Last Twelve Verses of Mark." Professor Zahn is well known for his history of the canon, and for many other solid contributions to our knowledge of early Christian literature. His judgments have therefore a peculiar weight in regard to such a problem. Dr. Resch has given his theory to the world in the form of an appendix to his recent volume, entitled: "Aussercanonische Paralleltex-te." Professor Harnack also contributed an article upon the significance of the notice in the *Etschmiadzin Evangeliar*, brought to light by me in the above-mentioned number of the EXPOSITOR, to the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* for November, 1893. In his notice Prof. Harnack inclines to the view that the last twelve verses are due to Aristion, and that the Armenian notice discovered is to be taken in that sense. I have refrained from quoting his article at length, because it is little more than a recapitulation of my article in the EXPOSITOR. In the *Nuova Anthologia* also for January, 1894, there appeared a learned and sympathetic criticism of the matter, entitled: "Una Nuova Scoperta Biblica," from the pen of Professor Chiapelli, of the University of Naples. I have, however, confined myself to the two criticisms of Prof. Zahn and of Dr. Resch, because of the interesting hypotheses which they both of them raise in conjunction with my discovery, and of the very different conclusions which they derive from it. In a subsequent article I hope I may