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## Confession of Faith

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# THE DEVELOPMENT OF SIN IN THE PREDILUVIAN WORLD

by Peter Vander Schaaf

## I. Introduction

### A. Why study the development of sin?

We are assured in Holy Scripture that the people of God are more than conquerors in Christ. This means not simply that we have the victory over sin, the Devil, and all his forces, but also that all these must serve the salvation of Christ's Church. This is because Christ is from eternity the only begotten Son of God. God's people, the Church, are from eternity fellow heirs with Christ in the New Heavens and the New Earth. Therefore God so orders all of history that all things, sin and the devil included, work together to bring about the salvation of the Church of Christ. All things work together to bring Christ and His people into their inheritance.

It often does not seem this way. It often seems as though the Devil and sin reign supreme with nothing at all to oppose them. During these times the

Church seems small and insignificant. The Word of God is laughed at and scorned as foolishness. But however it may seem, God is always supreme in His creation. God always has Christ and His Church first in His eternal counsel. He always holds sin and Satan in subjection to them.

Why then study a part of the world's history from the point of view of the development of sin? There are a couple of good reasons. First, the study of what man has done in God's creation is the study of sin as it is manifested in man's deeds and thoughts. It is important for the child of God to understand how sin manifests itself as natural man develops worldly culture, as he tries to put God out of his mind in order to serve the creature instead of the Creator. Second, it is essential that the child of God understand how sin is used by God to save His people. Sin, as it manifests itself in the world and in God's people themselves, forces the

child of God to depend completely on his Heavenly Father. The elect sinner is led to depend on God for his salvation and for his material, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. Furthermore, sin brings down the just judgment of God on the ungodly. By means of this judgment, the unregenerate world is destroyed and the Church of Christ delivered.

#### B. Why study the prediluvian world?

The era that began with the creation of Adam and ended with the flood was the first age of man. In it, the pattern was set for the rest of history. God manifests His covenant faithfulness for His people over against the sinful world that develops its civilization to high levels of knowledge and power in hatred of God and of His Church. The world will develop in sin to the point where the cup of iniquity is full, and God's people cannot survive without deliverance. This deliverance comes in the form of God's righteous judgment which destroys the wicked and brings salvation for the righteous.

### II. Important characteristics of the development of sin before the flood

#### A. Sin developed very rapidly.

In the first generation from Adam, the line of the serpent manifested itself in Cain who killed his righteous brother Abel. This was not simply a family feud that involved murder, but was the beginning of the war between the seed of Satan and the Seed of the woman. In Cain the line of sin first lifted its proud fist against God and revealed its hatred for the sons of God. This rebellion culminated in only five generations in the brazen and proud Lamech, who praised himself for the greatness of his sin.

The proud and rebellious line of the serpent needed only about 1660 years, seven generations, to develop to the point where God could allow it to sin no more. During that time it reached the depths of

lawlessness, violence, pride, and hatred for the Word of God preached by such saints as Enoch and Noah.

A few reasons could be given for this rapid development of sin. The basic reason is reprobation. God decreed in eternity that the wicked should be so. Along with this, God gave the wicked over to a reprobate mind as they rejected the Word of God preached to them. This was true of Cain, of Lamech, a contemporary of righteous Enoch, and of the contemporaries of Noah who refused to heed the preacher of righteousness, and so died in the flood.

There were also several natural causes. 1) The longevity of prediluvian man allowed him over 900 years to develop his talents and the natural bent of his nature. 2) The creativity and productivity that characterized Cain's line allowed men to increase in knowledge and thereby increase their capacity to sin. 3) The rapid increase in population in the later years of this period. (Gen. 6:1) The bent of man's nature to sin seems to vent itself more openly among large numbers. 4) The amalgamation of the nominal church with the world. (Gen. 6:2) The sons of God gave up their witness against the lawlessness of men. They noticed that the daughters of men were carnally beautiful, and so joined the rebellion of the line of Cain. This most certainly brought the prediluvian world to the point at which its cup of iniquity was full.

"...the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair: and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." (Gen. 6:2-3)

B. The seed of the serpent developed organically in the line of Cain. This line was characterized by willing and conscious pride, hatred of God, rebellion, violence,

and lawlessness.

Chapters 4 and 5 of Genesis show the lines of Cain and Seth up to the time of the flood. These two lines represented and embodied the thesis and antithesis, the seed of Satan and the seed of the woman, the wicked and the righteous, the war that could only be won on the cross. There could be no communion between the two lines because they were opposed to each other by the very principles that motivated them.

The sins that characterized Cain's line began with Cain himself. Cain showed his pride in his disdain for the sacrifice that the Lord had taught to Adam and Eve—the sacrifice of the lamb's blood by which atonement was made. He substituted his own sacrifice, an offering of the works of his own hands, and thereby tried to make himself acceptable to God on the basis of his own merit. He revealed his rebellion and lawlessness by refusing to repent of his sin and by killing Abel. Cain hated God because He would not accept him as just on his own merits. He hated Abel because he saw in Abel that righteousness which he could not earn himself.

The wickedness of Cain's line increased steadily and was epitomized in Lamech, who exalted himself because he was able to perform much greater sin than Cain. By the time of the flood the children of men were marrying and giving in marriage in complete disregard of God and His law. They refused to heed God's Word as it was preached by Noah, and it is probable that they violently persecuted the people of God (Heb. 11:15). Cain and his line did not accidentally slip into sin. They willfully rebelled against God and sought to put Him out of their thoughts.

C. The line of Cain developed worldly culture. This culture represented the attempt of the world to gain security and peace in this life, to establish a kingdom of this world.

Cain and his line spurned the Kingdom of God and the peace which comes in communion with God in Christ. They sought instead to gain for themselves security, wealth, and the physical comforts of this life, and thereby to escape the curse of God for their sin.

Cain was cursed by God so that the earth would not yield to him its increase. He was to be a fugitive and vagabond on the earth. In defiance of this curse, Cain built a city in the land of Nod. (That is, the land of wandering. Implied in the name was the wandering, the lack of peace for the person who had rebelled against God.) Just as cities today represent the military and economic power of man, so Cain's city represented his attempt to gain security, to increase his power, to establish himself permanently over against God. That this last point is true is seen in the fact that Cain named his city after his son Enoch. Cain wanted to establish the name of his line, the name of his generations, forever.

The creative and productive genius of Cain's line was epitomized in the three sons of Lamech. These were Jabal, Jubal and Tubal-cain. Jabal, as "the father of those who dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle," was the natural and spiritual father of those who seek the riches of this world. As cattle represented wealth in ancient times, Jabal was the father of those who are rich according to the world. Jubal, "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ," was the father of artists, those who express in music, painting, etc. the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Tubal-cain, the instructor of every artificer of brass and iron," represented man's inventive genius, the ability of man to develop and subject the powers of nature to his own purpose. Together, the sons of Lamech represent the highest level of achievement for natural man. In Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-cain natural man subjugates and orders creation to make for himself a material heaven on earth. In

such an earthly kingdom man hopes to vent the desires of his depraved nature, and thereby achieve happiness and peace outside of Christ.

Genesis 4 and 6 give us a clear picture of the culture that the line of the serpent had developed by the time of the flood. This culture was characterized by a yearning for the material things of this world (Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-cain). It exalted violence, pride, and rebellion against God (Lamech). It glorified carnal sensuality. (The names of Lamech's wives and daughter suggest physical attraction. Adah means "the adorned." Zillah means "the shady" referring to the eyes, or the color of the skin or of the hair. Naamah means "the pleasant" or "lovely.") It encouraged the profligate, carnal existence that takes no thought of God (Gen. 6:5).

The line of Seth was everything that the line of Cain was not. It was characterized by godliness and faith. It included the pilgrims and strangers upon the earth who looked for a heavenly kingdom, the city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The line of Seth did not produce the inventive geniuses that Cain's line did. The saints of God were not stupid, but it was true then as it is now that the great, the powerful, the "giants on the earth" were not found within the Church of Christ. The Church looked for its peace and comfort not in the material things of this life but in the Father of mercies.

D. Sin developed to the point at which it appeared that it would have the victory. At that point God revealed His faithfulness by sending judgment on the wicked for their sin. By means of this judgement the people of God were delivered.

The prediluvian world reached the point at which its cup of iniquity was full. This means that the world of that era could sin no more. God would no longer strive with that world. That means that He would no longer send His Word to it,

demanding repentance. The people of God could not continue in that world. God had so ordered events that, from a natural point of view, the Church had reached impossible straits.

God sent the flood to punish the wicked world for its sin and to deliver His people. God's Church was, then, saved through judgment which reveals God's just wrath with the ungodly but also His covenant faithfulness for His people.

III. Conclusion - Sin served God's purpose, which He has in Christ, to save His Church and glorify Himself.

Over against the sin of Cain and the seed of the serpent, God revealed Himself as the Holy One. In His Word preached by His saints and in His just judgment, the Lord showed Himself to be a righteous God who could not tolerate iniquity.

God used sin to teach the Church to depend on Him for its deliverance. As sin developed in the prediluvian world, the enticements of the flesh must have become increasingly strong for the true sons of God. Because of persecution the very lives of the believers were threatened. The people of God had to learn that they depended on God alone for their salvation, for their spiritual deliverance, and even for their continued earthly existence. Sin would have destroyed the Church had not God sent His gracious deliverance in the form of the flood. Sin, then, was used by God to give occasion for the exercise of His just judgment and the manifestation of His covenant faithfulness toward His people.

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