

V. THE NATURE OF SIN

A. Statements of the Doctrine

1. *The French Confession of Faith* (A.D. 1559), Article 9

"We believe that man was created pure and perfect in the image of God, and that by his own guilt he fell from the grace which he received, and is thus alienated from God, the fountain of justice and of all good, so that his nature is totally corrupt. And being blinded in mind, and depraved in heart, he has lost all integrity, and there is no good in him. And although he can still discern good and evil, we say, notwithstanding, that the light he has becomes darkness when he seeks for God, so that he can in nowise approach him by his intelligence and reason. And although he has a will that incites him to do this or that, yet it is altogether captive to sin, so that he has no other liberty to do right than that which God gives him."

2. *The Heidelberg Catechism* (A.D. 1563), Questions 3-10

Question 3. Whence knowest thou thy misery?

Answer. Out of the Law of God.

Question 4. What does the Law of God require of us?

Answer. This Christ teaches us in sum, Matt. 22: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. -- On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Question 5. Canst thou keep all this perfectly?

Answer. No; for I am by nature prone to hate God and my neighbor.

Question 6. Did God create man thus wicked and perverse?

Answer. No; but God created man good, and after his own image that is, in righteousness and true holiness; that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love him, and live with him in eternal blessedness, to praise and glorify him.

Question 7. Whence, then, comes this depraved nature of man?

Answer. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise, whereby our nature became so corrupt that we are all conceived and born in sin.

Question 8. But are we so far depraved that we are wholly unapt to any good, and prone to all evil?

Answer. Yes; unless we are born again by the Spirit of God.

Question 9. Does not God, then, wrong man by requiring of him in his law that which he can not perform?

Answer. No; for God so made man that he could perform it; but man, through the instigation of the devil, by willful disobedience deprived himself and all his posterity of this power.