



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

## Addressing The Issues: 1 John 2:1,2

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Bob Lewis / 267-278-1992 / Bob.Lewis@capitolcom.org

*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.<sup>2</sup> He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.<sup>3</sup> And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.<sup>4</sup> Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,<sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:<sup>6</sup> whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1Jo 2:1-6 ESV)*

John now shifts from speaking in the third person plural, "We", to first person, singular, in the case of possession, "my". This "...probably highlights both the level of endearment and the writer's position of superiority/authority within the relationship..."<sup>1</sup>

Obviously, John has a deep, personal and pastoral concern for those who elected to remain within the community of The Faith. They have been through the trauma of division and John is concerned to address any lingering impact in their minds.

He addresses them as "my little children". By this time, John is advanced in years and could address them as "little children", both in terms of physical chronology (for the most part), and in terms of their experience within the household of The Faith.

John begins by exhorting them "not to sin", the assumption being, they are pre-disposed to sin.

Why? Is not "man" basically good? John, on his part, seems persuaded of their inherent proclivity toward sin.

Interestingly, John does not spend any time defining what he means by "sin", assuming his audience

intuitively knows the definition. How would you define "sin"?

Can we assume such a definition of "sin" today? Is "sin" even a part of the everyday language of our culture? What has happened, and How? Have we not seen in the past decades a major abandonment or cultural redefinition of the concept?

Here, in this Legislature, though the word "sin" is not used, the category of both "prescription" and "proscription" is employed, the assumption being: the populace needs this. Therefore, when a member of the body politic does not comply with a prescription or proscription, that member violates/transgresses/ or, using the now abandoned term "sins" in respect to the "authority" over them.

One might legitimately inquire, "Where did that assumption originate?" That is, the body politic needs such an authority?

Interestingly, the Law does not accept the excuse of "ignorance" as a defense. Nor does the God of the Universe. In Grace, God has emblazoned the fundamental knowledge of this requirement/standard on every individual psyche entering history.

### **Nature of Sin**

John assumes the "nature" originated in the plan of God who created all things by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:8).

### **Sin's entrance.**

Scripture teaches the unique creation of mankind in the image of God. (Gen. 1:27, 28).

Shortly thereafter, this image was marred or defaced when the first two violated the only proscription they

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had in eating the forbidden fruit. This action is subsequently labeled The Sin (Romans 5:12). As the man and woman had children, the offspring were born in their marred image (Gen. 5:3), this being the origin of the sin nature. From here on, humanity enters the scene with this nature (Isaiah 48:8; Psalm 58:3; and Ephesians 2:1, 2 & 4:18).

This nature manifests itself from birth and is reinforced and strengthened as each individual grows.

But, God, in mercy, made provision when he implanted on the psyche of every individual entering human history the outline of a moral code (Romans 2:14, 15).

This manifests itself in the moral restraint most folk exercise such that they are never as morally corrupt as they could be or might be. A certain percentage are unwilling to respond to this inner compass and become the incorrigibles of society.

This being what I might call John's given: he encourages his little children to "not sin". The fact he knows they will sin in the future is evident in the Greek construction of his sentence.

### **Provision for Sin**

John draws their attention to the provision for their sins. The provision is the person of Jesus Christ, the righteous. The word John uses here can be translated "helper", "intercessor", and in a courtroom context, "advocate", which seems to be the translator's preferred word over the past few hundred years. This is also the word Jesus used with the Twelve the last evening he was with them when he promised he would send someone to be with them as his replacement. The word picture is of one who stoops down to assist, much as in the case of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10).

The manner of this unusual helper as it pertains to one having sinned is also unique. The word John uses here is "hilasmos", rendered, usually, as propitiation. This term is also special in that it carries two aspects as it pertains to Jesus' role as the one who steps down to assist.

One aspect of the "hilasmos" is that of appeasing the one offended. God has been offended by the sin and needs to be appeased. (Why this concept troubles some people is surprising to me since we also entertain the same demand/need, right?).

The other aspect of the word "hilasmos" is that of rendering friendly. The scriptures say God is angry with the wicked every day (Psalm 7:11). This anger needs to be appeased, that is God needs to see a just retribution for the offense and, as a result, God is then rendered friendly toward the one who had offended by sinning.

Jesus's unique role is therefore two-fold: 1) He is the one stooping down to act as intercessor and/or advocate and, 2) he is the one being offered as the payment for the offence.

Jesus is both Propitiator and Propitiation.

Calling to mind the Old Testament sacrificial system, Jesus is acting as both Priest and Sacrifice. Remembering the words of John the Baptizer who called Jesus "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world", we see, again, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Inasmuch, as those who caused the separation and/or division sought to undermine the uniqueness and centrality of Jesus, John will devote a great part of this letter focusing attention on Jesus the Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> I, II, III John, Culy. Baker, 2004, pg21