

### ***3:8 To Destroy the Works of the Devil***

#### **ONE WHO COMMITS SIN.**

ORIGEN: Insofar as we commit sins, we have not yet put off the generation of the devil, even if we are thought to believe in Jesus. Everyone who is not of the devil does not commit sin. COMMENTARY ON JOHN 20.103-4.<sup>31</sup>

#### **THE DEVIL HAS SINNED FROM THE BEGINNING.**

DIDYMUS THE BLIND: Since the devil was first and foremost sent into the world in order to lead people astray, that is where his name comes from. <sup>32</sup> Thus anyone who sins can be called a devil. Sin is not inherent in the human race, since if it were it could not have been eradicated by a sinless human being. But this is exactly what happened when the Son of God appeared in human flesh, and so sin must be regarded as accidental to human nature, not as intrinsic to human nature. COMMENTARY ON 1 JOHN. <sup>33</sup>

#### **FIRST TO SIN.**

CHRYSOSTOM: Because the devil was the first to be locked into sin, everyone who now sins acts according to his bidding. For the devil rules in the sinner by a mass of evil thoughts, as in the case of Judas. Someone might say that the devil is present in sinners even before they sin because they have made room for him. The answer to this is that committing sin and making room for the devil amount to one and the same thing—sin. CATENA.<sup>34</sup>

#### **AS OFTEN AS WE SIN.**

ANDREAS: As often as we sin, we are born of the devil. But we are of God once again, as often as we pursue virtue. CATENA.<sup>35</sup>

### ***3:9 No One Born of God Commits Sin***

#### **RECEIVING BAD SEED.**

ORIGEN: When we are persuaded by the devil to sin, we receive his seed. But when we go on to complete the work which he urged, then he has begotten us, for through sin we are born to him as children. SERMONS ON EXODUS 8.<sup>37</sup>

### **BORN OF GOD.**

DIDYMUS THE BLIND: Heretics, <sup>38</sup> who are deceived in everything by everything, like to object that any birth which is produced by the creator of this world is automatically sinful, whereas any birth which comes from the God of the New Testament is not so. They base this idea on the supposition that sinners and the righteous must have different creators, but this notion is based on a misunderstanding of the teaching of Scripture. The Bible does not say that whoever is born of God is sinless but that such a person will not sin as long as he walks according to the way of righteousness. If he turns aside from that he will sin, and indeed those who do sin have turned away from their Creator. The ability not to sin is guaranteed by the presence of God's seed in us. This seed is either his power or the spirit of adoption, which cannot sin. COMMENTARY ON 1 JOHN.<sup>39</sup>

### **LUST EXTINGUISHED IN THE NEXT LIFE.**

AUGUSTINE: If our circumstances are such that we make some progress in this life by the grace of the Savior, when lust declines and love increases, it is in the next life that we reach perfection, when lust is finally extinguished and love is made perfect. That saying, that whoever is born of God does not sin, is undoubtedly meant to apply to that pure love which alone does not sin. The love in us which is increasing and being perfected also belongs to the new birth from God, but as long as lust continues to exist in us it fights against the law of our mind. As a result, the one who is born of God and who does not obey his own lusts can say that it is no longer he who sins but the sin which dwells in him. <sup>40</sup> LETTERS 177.<sup>41</sup>

### **SIN IS UNDONE BY LOVE.**

AUGUSTINE: How can we avoid sin? By keeping the commandment of Christ. And what is that commandment? It is that we should love. Love, and sin is undone. TEN HOMILIES ON 1 JOHN 5.2.<sup>42</sup>

### **RETAINING GRACE.**

SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH: John did not say this with respect to the existence of sin in our lives, as if our nature were covered with impassibility. Rather he means that insofar as someone who is born of God retains the grace of his new birth he cannot sin in the way he behaves. And the reason for this is that God's seed dwells in him. What is this seed of God which dwells in believers? What else but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, by which we have been born again? This presence never leaves us. CATENA.<sup>43</sup>

## **TWO MEANINGS OF “BORN OF GOD.”**

MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR: If someone who is born of God does not sin, how is it that we who have been born of water and the Spirit, and thus of God, do in fact commit sins? The answer is that the phrase “born of God” has two different meanings. According to the first of these, God has given the grace of sonship with all power to those who have been born again. According to the second, the God who has thus given birth is working in us to bring us to perfection. By faith we are born again in principle, but God still has to get to work on us in order to refashion us according to his likeness. CATENA.<sup>44</sup>

## **THE SEED DWELLS IN BELIEVERS.**

ANDREAS: The divine seed is Christ, who dwells in believers and makes them become sons of God. Likewise, when it is said that in Abraham’s seed all the nations will be blessed, this too is a reference to Christ. John says that the Spirit is the seed which we receive through the blessing of our mind. For he dwells in us, making the mind of sin no longer welcome. CATENA.<sup>45</sup>

## ***3:10 Children of God and Children of the Devil***

### **BY THIS IT MAY BE SEEN.**

DIDYMUS THE BLIND: Since a person who walks in righteousness is born of God, it follows that someone who is so born will love his brothers. Someone who lacks righteousness because he does not practice it, but instead hates his brother, is not born of God. COMMENTARY ON 1 JOHN.<sup>48</sup>

### **CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL.**

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: The chief author of sin is the devil, the begetter of all sin. Before him, no one sinned. Nor did he sin because he was by nature prone to sin (since in that case the responsibility for his sin would lie with his Creator). Rather, being created good he became a devil by his own free choice, receiving that name from his willed action. Though he was originally an archangel, he became a slanderer (diabolos), because of his slandering. CATECHETICAL LECTURES 2.4.<sup>49</sup>

### **NOT OF GOD.**

ANDREAS: Love is the mark of sinlessness, and hate is the mark of sin. Since the person who walks in righteousness is born of God, it follows that someone who is so born will love the brothers, whereas

someone who does not have this new birth will not do so. Rather he who hates his brother is not of God.  
CATENA.<sup>50</sup>

### **3:11 *The Message You Have Heard***

### **3:12 *Cain's Wickedness***

**NOT LIKE CAIN.**

DIDYMUS THE BLIND: We have had the commandment to love one another from the beginning, so that we should not fall into evil as Cain did, who murdered his brother. COMMENTARY ON 1 JOHN.<sup>55</sup>

**HE MURDERED HIS BROTHER.**

ANDREAS: Cain became unrighteous and turned into the very first person who killed a member of his family, thereby teaching human nature the way of murder. CATENA.<sup>56</sup>