pounding away year after year with its constant battering away on the theme of sin...it works only to show that the whole mass of mankind is sinful, sinful—guilty— and unacceptable to God.

Leucitus was a variety of vocabulary regarding sin, especially in reporting the Day of Atonement, to make sure that 'all bases are covered.' It is 'wickedness,' 'rebellion' and 'sins' (Lev.16.21 NIV) or 'transgressions,' 'transgressions' and 'sin' (NRSV). These varied terms show sin to be complex. Sin is wilful rebellion against a legitimate authority, political or parental. From this perspective, it is the commission of a legal offence and a break of relationships. But it also included other types of wrongdoing. At the same time, it is about a perversion of our human nature and a straying from the path, consciously or not. The context also makes it clear that sin is moral and spiritual pollution that defiles those who commit it and the community to which they belong. Sin is more than mere disobedience, though it is not less than that.

Several other features of Leucitus' understanding of sin are relevant for our society. It refuses to accept that sin is a private matter, of no concern to anyone except the one who commits it. Sin profoundly and inevitably affects the whole community. We aren't isolated individuals but people in relation and therefore what we do matters to others. The chapters calling people to live holy lives (17—25) are premised on that. For example, chapter 18 and 19 – the one destined and the other admired (in parts) today – both have the same objective that lies not only in encouraging holiness before God but also in creating strong, healthy and stable societies where the social capital is high.

Its approach to sickness and the way to become clean again (ch 13—15) may well provide a basis, through analogy, for seeing sin as sickness though not in any simple way. Maybe, at this point, contemporary society has a true, if partial, insight.

Leucitus also recognises that the way to restrain sin is not to provide a comprehensive set of legal statutes...but to set before God's people the vision of the sort of society they should be.
Wesley was deeply concerned about how the doctrine of original sin was being marginalised.

The Fall of Adam, all men and women are represented: ‘In and through their first parents all Adam’s posterity died in a spiritual sense and they remain forever under the condemnation of God’s wrath and despair over Sin and Sinners’ till the second Adam makes them alive. By this one man sin entered into the world and passed upon all. And through the infection which they derive from him, all men, are, and ever were, by nature entirely alienated from the life of God, without hope, without God in the world.

John Taylor asserted that it was inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture to say that because of Adam’s sin all of us have been put in the hands of the devil. Surely God, in all his dispensations, has been working to deliver us from the devil! Wesley read Taylor’s argument as a specimen of Enlightenment optimism about human nature that ignored the plain teaching of Scripture. ‘What can be made clear from the Scriptures is this: That from Adam sin passed upon all men, that hereby all men, being by nature dead in sin, cannot of themselves resist the devil and that, consequently, all who will not accept help from God are taken captive by Satan at his will.’

John Wesley was convinced that Taylor’s rejection of the doctrine of original sin held by the Christian Church from New Testament times resulted in his corollary rejection of the biblical doctrine of grace. Taylor described the new birth and regeneration as merely the ‘gaining those habits of virtue which make us children of God’. Wesley exploded that if this is what regeneration is, then Paul should not have written, ‘You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus’ (Gal 3.26), but ‘You are all the children of God by gaining habits of virtue.’ Wesley’s doctrine of regeneration was built on the foundation of universal sin: he saw regeneration as a radical transformation of our fineness by God’s almighty grace. ‘According to the whole tenor of Scripture the being born again does really signify the being inwardly changed by the almighty operation of the Spirit of God, changed from sin to holiness, renewed in the image of Him who created you. And why must we be so changed? Because without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and because without this change, all our endeavours after holiness are ineffectual.’

Two years after his *Doctrine of Original Sin* was published, Wesley wrote a personal letter to Taylor. His style was polite and courteous but he pulled no punches when he lamented and spent the greater part of his life as a theologian: ‘It is Christianity or heathenism! for, take away the scriptural doctrine of Redemption or justification and, of that New Birth, the beginning of sanctification, (or which amounts to the same) explain them as you do, suitable to your doctrine of Original Sin, and what is Christianity better than heathenism? wherein, save in rectifying some of our notions, has the religion of St. Paul any pre-eminence over that of Socrates or Epicurus? Either I or you mistake the whole of Christianity from the beginning to the end! Either my scheme or yours is as contrary to the scriptural as the Koran is. Is it mine, or yours? You have gone through all England and made numerous converts. I attack it from end to end. Let all England judge whether it can be defended or not.

In taking time to refute John Taylor’s book, John Wesley was attempting to answer one of the most erudite and popular Socinian publications of the eighteenth century. His knowledge of Scripture and his ability with the biblical languages were well demonstrated in these pages, as his close acquaintance with the classics, the Church Fathers and the English Puritans. But the real reason for Wesley’s long reply to Taylor was his conviction that Taylor’s denial of the doctrine of original sin threatened the whole gospel message. He warned against this danger in his 1759 sermon, *Original Sin*: ‘All who deny this, call it original sin, or by any other title, are but Hebrists still in the fundamental point which differentiates Hebrists from Socinians … Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is the void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? Allow this and you are so far from being a Christian. Deny it and you are but a Hebrist still … O beware of all those teachers of lies who would palm this upon you for Christianity. Keep to the plain, old faith, “once delivered to the saints,” and delivered by the Spirit of God to our hearts. Know your disease! Know your cure! You were born in sin: Therefore “ye must be born again,” born of God.’
Conference of 'Methodist' preachers in 1744, it was significant that they engaged in a discussion on the doctrine of Original Sin. The controversy that developed in 1744 represented the understanding of human sinfulness that John Wesley firmly held and defended for the rest of his life. Question. In what sense is Adam's sin imputed to all mankind? Answer. In Adam all die; that is, (1) Our bodies then became mortal. (2) Our souls died; that is, were disannointed from God. Then, (3) We are all born with a sinful, devilish nature. By reason wherefore, (4) We are children of wrath, liable to death eternal. (Romans 5:18; Eph. 2:3.)

Ten years after John Wesley began his itinerant preaching ministry across the British Isles, he encountered Socinian first-hand. In his Journal for Sunday, August 28, 1748, he recorded a preaching visit to Shackleton in Lancashire: 'Abundance of people were gathered before six, many of whom were disciples of Dr. Taylor's, laughing at original sin and, consequently, at the whole frame of scriptural Christianity. Oh, what a providence it is which has brought us here also among these silver-tongued Antichristians. Surely few, at a least, will recover out of the snare and know Jesus Christ as their wisdom and righteousness.'

Three years later he was back in Shackerley and recorded: 'Being now in the very midst of Mr. Taylor's disciples, I enlarged much more than I am accustomed to do on the doctrine of original sin, and determined, if God would give me a few years to live, publicly to answer his new gospel.' Two more examples of Wesley's fear of the destructive influences of Dr. John Taylor's doctrine can be cited. Preaching in Belfast on April 6, 1769, Wesley related: 'I stood in the street and strongly declared, 'All have sinned and are come short of the glory of God.' But this many of them had no ears to hear, being faithless followers of Dr. Taylor.'

Wesley's answer was to quote from Genesis 3, 1 Corinthians 15:22, and Romans 5:12. In Adam all die,' by the first man came both natural and spiritual death, by 'this one man sin entered into the world ... and death passed upon all men in that all have sinned.' John Wesley argued that it was unjust of God to punish other because of Adam's sin. The only consequence of Adam's sin that affected the human race was physical death. Wesley replied that since Adam's poverty was punished with death therefore all men were justly punishable. By 'punishment' Wesley said he meant 'suffering consequent upon sin.' All mankind suffer consequent upon Adam's sin, and Adam sinned, his poverty suffer and that in consequence of his sin.' Along lines similar to the arguments for original sin found in the writings of Augustine, Luther and Calvin, Wesley saw Adam as the federal head of the race. In the

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