could all men sin, *before the law*? This is  
now explained.— **For up to (the time of)  
the law** (equivalent to “*from Adam to  
Moses*,” ver. 14), **there was sin in the  
world** (‘men sinned,’ see Gen. vi. 5–13;  
committed actual sin: not, men were *accounted* sinners because of Adam’s sin: the Apostle reminds us of the *historical fact*,  
that *there was sin in the world* during  
this period): **but sin is not reckoned** (as  
transgression) **where the law is not**.  
This word **imputed** has given rise to much  
dispute. Very many Commentators explain it of *consciousness of sin by the sinner himself*, as in ch. vii. 7: but (1) this is not  
the natural sense of the word, which implies TWO parties, one of whom sets down  
something to the account of the other: (2)  
this interpretation would bring in a new  
and irrelevant element,—for the Apostle is  
not speaking in this chapter at all of *subjective human consciousness*, but throughout of *objective truths with regard to the  
divine dealings*: and (3) it would be altogether inconsistent with the declarations  
of ch. ii. 15,—where the consciousness of sin  
on the part of those who had not the law  
is distinctly asserted.—I am persuaded that  
the right sense is **imputed**, ‘*set down as  
transgression*,—‘put in formal account,”  
*by God*. In the ease of those who had  
not the written law, sin is not formally  
reckoned as *transgression*, set over against  
the command: but in a certain sense, as  
distinctly proved ch. ii. 9–16, it is *reckoned* and they are condemned for it. Nor is there any inconsistency in this view.  
Other passages of Paul’s writings support  
and elucidate it. He states the object of  
the law to be, ch. vii. 13, t*hat sin may by  
the commandment become exceeding sinful*.  
The revelation of the law *exaggerated*,  
brought into prominent and formal manifestation, the sinfulness of sin, which *was  
before culpable and punishable*, but in a  
less degree. With this view also agree  
Acts xvii. 30; ch. ii. 12; and iii. 25, in so  
far as they state an analogous case. The  
objection to taking the words *relatively*,  
‘*is not fully reckoned*,’ will hardly be  
urged by those who bear in mind the Apostle’s habit of constantly *stating relative truths as positive*, omitting the qualifying particles: see, for example, ch. vii. 7,  
where with the words “sin,” and “*I had not known*,” both, we must supply qualifications (see notes there).

**14.**] **Nevertheless** (notwithstanding the last  
assertion, that sin is not fully reckoned  
where the law is not) **death reigned** (was a  
power to which all succumbed) **from Adam  
to Moses** (the period included is the  
same as that marked out by the words  
*until the law* above: i.e. although the full  
imputation of sin did not take place between Adam and Moses, *the universality  
of death is a proof that all sinned*,—for  
death is the consequence of sin:—in  
confirmation of ver. 12), **even** (notwithstanding the different degrees of sin and  
guilt out of, and under, the law) **over  
them that sinned not after the likeness  
of the** TRANSGRESSION **of Adam** (the  
emphasis lies on **transgression**, as distinguished from *sin*. They all *sinned*:  
had not, like Adam, *transgressed* a positive  
revealed command. There is no reference  
here, as some Commentators have supposed, to the ease of *children* and *idiots*,—nor (as others) *to those who lived pious  
lives*. The aim is to prove, that the seed  
of sin planted in the race by the one man  
Adam, has sprung up and borne fruit in  
all, so as to bring them under death;—  
death temporal, and spiritual;—of these,  
some have sinned without the law, i.e. *not  
as Adam did, and as those after Moses  
did*: and though sin is not formally reckoned against them, death, the consequence  
of sin, reigned, as matter of historical fact,  
over them also. It is most important to  
the clear understanding of this weighty  
passage to bear in mind, that the first  
member of the comparison, as far as it  
*extends*, is this: ‘As by Adam’s transgression, of which we are by descent inheritors, we have become (not by imputation  
merely, but by propensity) *sinners*, and  
have thus incurred *death*, so &c.’.....see below), **who is a type of him that  
is to come** (or, and perhaps better, **of  
the future Adam**, the second Adam, viz.