



Introduction

- Doctrine of Sin = Hamartiology
- *Hamartia* is the primary Greek word for sin.
- We must stick to Scripture when understanding sin because only God can define sin.¹ A study of sin is also a study of God.
- Sin is whatever is opposed to God's will, as that will reflects God's holy character and as that will is expressed by God's commands. Sin is fundamentally opposed to nature and reason, and it is ultimately opposed to God.²

Theories of Sin

Dualistic Theory

Sin is associated with matter. Spirit is good, and matter is evil.

Limitation of Existence Theory

Sin is just a limitation of existence. All existence is good, but the lack of existence is not good. Since man is limited and finite, he is evil.

Opposition Theory

Sin is a necessary reaction to what is good.

Schleiermacher's Theory

Schleiermacher was a German philosopher and theologian that lived in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Sin is the imperfection that arises because the higher principle of God-consciousness does not rule the lower principles of self-consciousness and world-consciousness.

Sensual Nature Theory

The sensual nature of man is the seat and origin of sin where sensual nature is referring to sexual desire.

Selfishness Theory

All sin is selfishness, but we cannot say that all sin is selfishness for several reasons.

1. There is unselfish sin.
2. There can be selfish virtue – Ephesians 5:29.
3. There can be no conception of sin apart from God.

¹ Iain D. Campbell, *The Doctrine of Sin* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1999), 13.

² Thomas H. McCall, *Against God and Nature: The Doctrine of Sin* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 21.



Characteristics of Sin

1. Sin is a specific evil.
2. Sin always has reference to the law of God.
3. Sin includes guilt and pollution.
4. Sin is centered in the will of man, but the effects of sin extend to the intellect, emotions, and body.

Biblical Terms for Sin

Old Testament

1. *Hatta* is Hebrew word that is the most general term used for sin. It is usually translated as *sin*. It's basic meaning is to deviate, to miss the mark.
2. *Awon* is typically translated as *iniquity* or *guilt*. It connotes twistedness, and the primary idea is one of perversion. So we have what is straight, upright, well-formed, and healthy contrasted with what is morally misshapen, crippled, broken, misleading, and crooked – Isaiah 59:1-7.
3. A similar Hebrew term is *awel* and is often translated *wickedness*, *injustice*, or *unrighteousness*. Here we have twistedness or perversion with great force – Deuteronomy 32:4.
4. The Hebrew word *pasa* is directly volitional because it speaks of rebellion. Some synonyms are *marad*, which has political overtones, and *bagad*, which refers to personal treachery – Isaiah 1:2.
5. The Hebrew word *resa* points to the wickedness and guilt of sin. So sinning is committing acts of wrongdoing and being pronounced guilty for those acts.
6. The Hebrew word *ra* is a general term for evil. It is used for natural evil and moral evil – 1 Kings 16:18-19, 1 Samuel 2:22-23.

New Testament

1. *Hamartia* – usually translated as sin and is the word most used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *hatta*, so it carries the same meaning of “missing the mark.” The word is only used with the moral ideas of rebellion, corruption, and so on.
2. *Anomia* – means “against law.” 1 John 3:4.



3. *Parabasis* and *parabaino* – carry the idea of transgression, overstepping proper boundaries. Hebrews 2:1-3.
4. *Paraptoma* is similar to *parabasis* because it also refers to the crossing of God ordained boundaries, but it is a stronger term. Galatians 6:1.
5. *Adikia* – often used to translate the Hebrew word *awon* in the Septuagint, which refers to twistedness or perversion, and is usually translated as *iniquity*. 1 Corinthians 6:1.
6. *Asebeia* – carries the idea of godlessness. Romans 1:18; 29-31.

Conclusion

Geerhardus Vos says, “To give a complete definition of sin, we will have to say that it is nonconformity to God’s law in status, disposition, and action.”³

- We are born under God’s judgment because we are born in Adam. That is status.
- We hate God and his law. That is disposition.
- We therefore act sinfully in thought, word, and deed. That is action.

The tendency of fundamentalism is to reduce sin to sinful acts and behaviors, while liberalism reduces sin to evil social structures that impede the realization of the ethical kingdom. In contrast to both forms of reductionism, the biblical understand of sin is far deeper in its analysis. Sin is first of all a *condition* that is simultaneously judicial and moral, legal and relational. Accordingly, we sin because we are sinners rather than vice versa. Standing before God as transgressors in Adam, we exhibit our guilt and corruption in actual thoughts and actions. – Michael Horton⁴

Our understanding of sin leads to our understanding of redemption.⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Course Bibliography

Beeke, Joel R. *Fighting Satan*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015.

Beeke, Joel R. and Pederson, Randall J. *Meet the Puritans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006.

Beeke, Joel R. and Smalley, Paul M. *Reformed Systematic Theology, Volume 2: Man and Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.

Blocher, Henri. *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle*. 1997. Reprint, Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009.

³ Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *Anthropology*, ed. and trans. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 25.

⁴ Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 427 (emphasis original).

⁵ Michael Horton, *Pilgrim Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 151.



-
- Brooks, Thomas. *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*. 1652. Reprint. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2019.
- Campbell, Iain D. *The Doctrine of Sin*. Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1999.
- Carson, D. A. *The God Who Is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010.
- Christensen, Scott. *What About Evil?: A Defense of God's Sovereign Glory*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020.
- Ferguson, Sinclair. *Devoted to God*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2016.
- Godfrey, W. Robert. *Saving the Reformation: The Pastoral Theology of the Canons of Dort*. Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2019.
- Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans*. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1981.
- Horton, Michael. *Pilgrim Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Horton, Michael. *The Christian Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Hughes, R. Kent. "Satan in the Garden." In *Our Ancient Foe*, edited by Ronald L. Kohl. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2019.
- Luther, Martin. *The Bondage of the Will*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.
- McCall, Thomas H. *Against God and Nature: The Doctrine of Sin*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019.
- Piper, John. *Providence*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.
- Reeves, Stan. *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith in Modern English*. Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2017.
- Reymond, Robert L. *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998.
- Sproul, R.C. *The Holiness of God*. 2nd ed. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 1998.
- Trueman, Carl R. *Grace Alone – Salvation as a Gift of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017.
- Venning, Ralph. *The Sinfulness of Sin*. 1669. Reprint. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2016.
- Vos, Geerhardus. *Reformed Dogmatics*. Vol. 2, *Anthropology*. Edited and Translated by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Message of Ezekiel*. The Bible Speaks Today. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.