

SIN

and its relation to

GOD

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The Apostle of the Reconciliation
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Parable, Miracle, and Sign
The Form of Sound Words
Just and the Justifier
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etc.*

**THE BEREAN PUBLISHING TRUST
52A Wilson Street, LONDON EC2A 2ER**

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ISBN 0 85156 182 9

First published	1927
Reprinted	c. 1970
Reset and reprinted	1999

Sin, and its relation to God

Foreword

A.— Scriptural views of the doctrine of sin influence our understanding of the doctrine of redemption and the purpose of God, and I have been led to accept some very revolutionary teaching concerning the place that sin has in the purpose of God, and as a result of a very profound study of the peculiar character of the Hebrew language, to view the sacrifice of Christ also in a most unorthodox light.

A far-reaching Doctrine

B.— I most heartily endorse your statement concerning the value and far-reaching effects of a scriptural view of sin, and would like to add that an unscriptural view of the same subject leads to most pernicious ideas concerning the offering of Christ and the purpose of God. No one who is at all acquainted with the history of *The Berean Expositor* could accuse those responsible for it of being hide-bound by orthodoxy, but you must, on the other hand, avoid that Athenian spirit of ever running after 'something new'.

A.— Instead of the sanctimonious language that I once felt called upon to use when speaking of the cross of Christ I now enjoy the glorious liberty of being able to say concerning that sacrifice, that it is

THE SIN OF SINS,

and, moreover, that in redemption God settles

SIN BY SIN;

also that the greatest of wrongs, namely, the offering of Christ at Calvary, will right the universe.

B.— Surely you cannot mean what you say!

A.— I sympathise with you in your revulsion of feeling, for I had the same shrinking myself until I understood that this must be accepted if we really bow before the inspired

Word. It really arises out of the fact that the Hebrew word for 'sin' and 'sin offering' is one and the same.

In the inspired language of Scripture there is no other term for sacrifice for sin than the word 'sin' itself, and this is not accidental, but points the path of truth, proving that the offering of a sacrifice involves the nature of a sin or mistake.

B.— Do you mean that the sacrifice of Christ can be looked upon as a sin?

A.— Yes, astounding as the idea may appear, it can be seen to be a sin if we accept without reserve the inspired language of Scripture. Christ did not want to drink the cup set before Him, yet this was God's will. The shame and indignity heaped upon Him during His ministry were not deserved. I acknowledge that men were *awfully wrong* in their treatment of Him. What then shall we say of God Who forsook Him in His deepest need, Who sent fire into His bones, and more than this, *delighted to crush Him* (Isa. 53:10)? There was only one greater wrong in all the universe than that He should be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and that was that His sorest affliction should come from the very heart of His God and Father.

B.— You really mean what you say? that we may place in the same category those whose wicked hands crucified the Son of God, and God Who gave Him up for us all? Men, you say, were 'awfully wrong', but there was one 'greater wrong', namely, the action of God Himself!

The Cross and Sin

A.— Yes, I do mean that. When we learn the lesson of the Hebrew word for 'sin' and 'sin-offering' we can adopt such language as 'God settles sin by sin'. The offering of Calvary is 'the sin of sins', and the principle of redemption may be expressed in the words, 'the greatest of wrongs will right the universe'.

B.— I cannot find words to express my utter abhorrence and repudiation of what you have brought forward, and based too upon a most unscholarly abuse of the Hebrew language. The very concordance ...

A.— I rather guessed you would be advising me to ‘search and see’, and I can assure you that I have not accepted this statement without verifying it by the concordance.

B.— My own published studies of the Scriptures testify to the profound regard I have for the value of the concordance, but the best of gifts may be abused, and become a shibboleth. With the hope that God may give you repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that you may be enabled to throw off this snare of the devil, I will go into this matter with you.

A.— I am sure that is very gracious of you, particularly as that which you consider to be the snare of the devil has come to me with all the power of light and liberty!

B.— Your position is that the Hebrew word for ‘sin’ and ‘sin-offering’ being the same, necessitates the belief that in the sacrifice of Christ we have ‘the sin of sins’, and ‘the greatest of wrongs’! We will, with your consent, *use the concordance*, and I would suggest a few examples before turning to the Hebrew word for ‘sin’. Will you read Deuteronomy 15:6?

A Concordant Test

A.— (*Reads*).— ‘Thou shalt *lend* unto many nations, but thou shalt not *borrow*’.

B.— If I were to attempt to prove to you that ‘lend’ and ‘borrow’ were exactly the same, what would you think of me?

A.— I should think that you were well on the way to financial failure.

B.— It would be interesting to know what the Hebrew word for ‘lend’ is.

A.— (*Turning to concordance*).— The Hebrew word is *abat*.

B.— I wonder what the Hebrew word for ‘borrow’ is.

A.— (*Again turning to concordance*). — It is *abat*, as well!

B.— What! The same word for both ‘lend’ and ‘borrow’? You have not hesitated to call the offering of Christ the ‘sin of sins’ upon the evidence of the concordance, yet you refuse to consider that if I *borrow* £1 from you it is exactly the same as if I *lent* you £1 instead.

A.— But this is farcical!

B.— I know it is, but can I not persuade you if I very solemnly remark that ‘in the inspired language of Scripture there is no other term, and that this is not accidental, but points the path of truth’?

A.— I am afraid you could not.

B.— Let us have another example. Genesis 1:1 reads: ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth’. Will you tell me what the Hebrew word for ‘create’ may be?

A.— It is *bara*.

B.— Is there any other Hebrew word translated ‘create’?

A.— No, every occurrence of the word ‘create’ in the Old Testament is a translation of this one word.

B.— Will you now read Joshua 17:18?

A.— (*Reads*).— ‘It is a wood and thou shalt *cut it down*’.

B.— What is the Hebrew word for ‘*cut it down*’?

A.— It is *bara*, the very same word that is translated to ‘create’.

B.— What then do you propose? that in every reference to creation we shall read ‘cut down’?

'God *cut down* the heaven and the earth'?

'God *cut down* man in His own image'?

'I will destroy man whom I have *cut down*'?

A.— This is sheer nonsense!

B.— Well, perhaps we had better revise Joshua 17:18 and read, 'It is a wood and thou shalt *create it*'.

A.— I am afraid you are trifling with me.

B.— To be candid with you, I am seeking to put into practice Proverbs 26:5, which you may consult at your leisure. Let us proceed. Lamentations 3:40 reads:

'Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD'.

What is the Hebrew word for 'search'?

A.— It is *chaphas*.

B.— In 2 Chronicles 35:22 we read that the king 'disguised himself'. This you will find is exactly the same word as that translated 'search'. I take it that seeing that this is the language of inspiration, you will forthwith praise the Pharisee and the hypocrite, and call upon repentant sinners to 'disguise' their ways, and turn again unto the Lord, resting assured that basing their action upon the language of inspiration, and being directed to the pathway of truth by the Hebrew words themselves, that God Himself will never pierce their disguise, or better still, has planned that it shall of itself be a sufficient covering for sin.

A.— I am afraid you are not only trifling with me, and paying a very small compliment to my intelligence, but you are saying things which if acted upon would make shipwreck of faith.

B.— Precisely, my friend! for that is what I believe has been done to your intelligence, and threatens your faith, by the teaching you have accepted concerning the Hebrew word for sin.

A.— Let us come to that. These contradictory statements have rather unsettled me.

The Test Applied

B.— When Joseph said, ‘How can I do this great wickedness, and *sin* against God?’ (Gen. 39:9), the Hebrew word used for sin is *chata*, and the fact that he calls this sin ‘wickedness’ leaves us with no doubt as to its meaning. When the priests, in 2 Chronicles 29:24, killed the goats and ‘*made reconciliation* with their blood upon the altar’, exactly the same word is used. Now you may be foolish enough to allow someone to say, ‘*Therefore* the offering partakes of the nature of sin’; but you will not allow them to *act* upon this principle should they attempt to do so with the words ‘lend’ and ‘borrow’. In the light of the examples already considered, are we not compelled to say that these Hebrew words must represent two ideas instead of one?

LEND	and	BORROW.
CREATE	and	CUT DOWN.
SEARCH	and	DISGUISE.
SIN	and	MAKE RECONCILIATION.

In each case the truth is that instead of being identical the second word is exactly opposite.

A.— This is very puzzling; what is the explanation?

Distinguishing Things that Differ

B.— You say this superficial fact is puzzling and ask for the explanation, and yet without evidently the ability or the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue to test these rash statements, you swallow these libels upon the God of all grace.

A.— I must confess that I know nothing of Hebrew; what I did was to verify the statement that ‘sin’ and ‘sin offering’ were the same in the Hebrew. I now perceive that the revolutionary doctrines I embraced may not rest upon such a solid basis as I had imagined.

B.— It is hardly a fitting time to attempt to initiate you into the composition of the Hebrew verb, but you will appreciate something of its peculiarity when you know that every Hebrew verb may have three forms: simple, intensive, and causative. They are known as *kal*, *piel*, *hiphil* — why, I cannot here explain. They all have an active voice, and may each have a corresponding passive and reflexive. Hence the scheme of the Hebrew verb is:

	Active.	Passive.	Reflexive.
Simple.	Kal.	—	Niphal.
Intensive.	Piel.	Pual.	Hithpael.
Causative.	Hiphil.	Hophal.	—

In this scheme two forms are wanting. They are made up by employing one of the existing forms, but this need not trouble us just now.

I believe you possess Young's *Analytical Concordance*, and if so you will find that Dr. Young draws particular attention to the need for distinguishing these various parts of the verb, saying:

'Only exact parallels to a Hiphil (for instance) are Hiphil meanings, to a Piel, Piel meanings, etc. The verb has generally DIFFERENT MEANINGS, according as it is a Hiphil, or one of the other verb forms'.

To say that 'lend' and 'borrow', or 'sin' and 'sin-offering', are the same is one of those half truths which the poet says are 'ever the blackest of lies'. It is 'The equivocation of the fiend, *that lies like truth*'. The Hebrew word *chattath*, which is translated punishment, purification, sin, sin-offering, and sinner, is a substantive which does not alter its form to correspond with the various forms of the verb. One part of the Hebrew *chata* means 'sin', another part means 'to offer for sin' (Lev 6:26). Consequently the substantive, though in spelling and appearance the same throughout, must be understood to represent both of these different verb forms.

What would you think of a teacher of English grammar who insisted that all words which were similar in spelling

must necessarily be similar in grammatical meaning? While the case is not strictly parallel, it helps to show what an apparently superficial acquaintance some must have with the Hebrew language in this instance to have advanced such preposterous deductions, and incidentally what a number of gullible folks there are still who can be dazzled by an appearance of learning.

A.— I realize that my new-found light turns out to be darkness, and now I feel that the superstructure reared upon this untenable idea must crumble to the ground.

B.— Let us freely face these doctrines, being assured that truth will prevail.

The Testimony of the Septuagint

It may be a help to us in our endeavour to understand the change of meaning that the *Piel* voice of the Hebrew verb *chata* bears if we include the testimony of the Septuagint, the ancient Greek version of the Old Testament which is frequently quoted in the New Testament both by the Lord and by the apostles.

In the majority of cases *chata* is translated by *hamartano* which is the word used in Romans 3:23. That the Septuagint translators recognised the second meaning is evident, for they have used words which have a very opposite meaning to sin, e.g.:

Reference.	Septuagint.	Translation.	Hebrew.
2 Chron. 29:24.	<i>Exilaskomai.</i>	To offer as a propitiation.	<i>Chata.</i>
Ezekiel 44:27.	<i>Hilasmos.</i>	A propitiation.	<i>Chattath.</i>
Ezekiel 43:23.	<i>Exilasmos.</i>	A propitiation.	<i>Chata.</i>
Numbers 8:21.	<i>Hagnizo.</i>	Purify.	<i>Chata.</i>
Numbers 19:19.	<i>Aphagnizo.</i>	Purify.	<i>Chata.</i>
Numbers 8:7.	<i>Hagnismos.</i>	Purification.	<i>Chattath.</i>
Exodus 29:36.	<i>Katharizo.</i>	Cleanse.	<i>Chata.</i>
Psalm 51:7.	<i>Rhantizo.</i>	Sprinkle.	<i>Chata.</i>

A Doctrine of Demons

A.— I have been given to understand that sin has an essential, though transient, part in God's purpose. The following reasons have been advanced:

- (1) God's love can be displayed only where sin has sown the seeds of hate.
- (2) We, His creatures, would never have had imparted to us the delicious sense of God's Fatherly affection apart from sin.
- (3) Sin will eventually change the universe from cold, independent creatures, into a loving family.
- (4) Satan did exactly what God had planned he should do.
- (5) It is only by acknowledging that He created Satan to sin that we can possibly clear Him of its stain.

B.— Will you allow me to place side by side an extract from the writings of one exponent of such beliefs and those of a spiritist?

Universalist

'Since sin must enter this scene and play its part, since it is essential to God's purpose, and absolutely under His control, since it will eventually change the universe from cold, independent creatures into a loving family ... Satan did exactly what God had planned he should do. It is only by acknowledging that He created Satan to sin that we can possibly clear Him from its stain.

'The only scriptural, the only rational, the only true solution lies in the acceptance of God's grand dictum that *all is out of Him, and through Him and for Him.*

'Eventually sin is justified or vindicated. Every sin is transmuted by the sin of sins into an act essential to God's highest glory, and the creatures' greatest good'.

Spiritist

'A *lie* ... holds a lawful place in creation; it is a necessity. Christ and the Devil are both alike.

'For not a path on earth is trod that does not lead the soul to God.

'No matter how bad that path may be, whether it be the path of the liar or the murderer, it is the path of Divine ordination and Divine Destiny'.

Let us now discuss the teaching that emanated from the same source as that we are now examining, which stated that Christ was A God, but not THE God. The next stage in the teaching appears to be that, when He offered Himself without spot to God, that sacrifice must be called 'the sin of sins', and in the third place, instead of using the consistent condemnatory language of Scripture concerning sin, the utmost glories of Divine love and redeeming grace are to be traced, finally, to that sin which is said to be essential to the purpose of God. Finally, to balance the degradation of the Son of God; Satan is exonerated, and is shown to be a much maligned creature whose work is really a blessing in disguise. Can you find anywhere a more damning epitome of anti-Christian doctrine? It comes with all the appearance of veneration for the inspired Word. It looks 'like a lamb', but speaks 'like a dragon'.

You say that God created Satan as such. What Scripture do you advance in proof of this?

A.— We have the plain declaration that 'all things are of God' (Rom. 11:36).

B.— Your teachers then believe that God is the Author of sin.

A.— No, that is strange. I quite thought they did, but I find that they resent the accusation.

B.— You can see that this resentment is a quibble. If 'all' includes sin, and if Satan DID EXACTLY what God planned he should do, you are on the horns of a dilemma, for:

- (1) Sin being in essence disobedience (1 John 3:4), it follows that if Satan 'did exactly' what God planned, he 'obeyed', and consequently Satan never sinned. But Scripture declares that Satan did sin from the beginning; that he was a liar, and a murderer, and a slanderer.
- (2) If on the other hand you admit that Satan did sin, then seeing that you hold that God *created Satan to sin*, then God must be the sinner, the liar, the murderer, the slanderer, the tempter and exciter to disobedience, which is utterly abhorrent even to recite.

The law of Moses reflects the mind of God, and you may read in Exodus 21:28,29 words which will give scriptural direction in fixing responsibility:

'If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned ... But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, *and it hath been testified to his owner*, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and *his owner also shall be put to death*'.

Concerning the creation of man, Scripture says:

'God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions' (Eccles. 7:29),

and the case is parallel with that of Satan.

With your view concerning sin and its relation to God, can you believe that God could ever use such words as those of Genesis 6:5-7:

'And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it REPENTED the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it GRIEVED Him at His heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created ...'.

A.— No, I am afraid I cannot.

B.— Would you not rather expect to read that as sin manifested itself in all its hideousness, so God would rejoice at the way in which that essential element to His full manifestation was progressing; that He would commend Satan for doing his work, nay *His* work, so well, that as this pestilence spread, so the coldness of His creatures would be set aside for the warmth of a united family, and His own distant creatorship be exchanged for that of a loving Father? But what is the fact? God 'repented', God was 'grieved', God said, 'I will destroy'. Sin ends in death. You are transferring the glories of redeeming love that operates *in spite of sin*, in order to glorify this hideous monster.

In connection with the subject of sin, you quoted, I believe, a strong statement concerning 'all things being of God'.

A.— The actual words are:

‘The only scriptural, the only rational, the only true solution lies in the acceptance of God’s grand dictum that *all* is *out of* Him and *through* Him and *for* Him’.

B.— This means that:

SIN	{	finds its <i>cause</i> finds its <i>channel</i> finds its <i>goal</i>	}	IN GOD.
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But Scripture says:

- (1) ‘He that committeth sin is OF THE DEVIL’ (1 John 3:8).
- (2) ‘Whosoever doeth not righteousness is NOT OF GOD’ (1 John 3:10).
- (3) ‘He that is OF GOD heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are NOT OF GOD’ (John 8:47).

You quote, ‘the only scriptural solution’, but you must see that it is anything but scriptural. Further, that it is ‘the only rational solution’, whereas it is most illogical. The all things which are ‘of God’ must of necessity exclude those things which are ‘not of God’, or else sane speech and reasonable argument must cease. Now these things which are ‘not of God’ include sin (‘whosoever doeth not righteousness’) and Satan, for the Devil is placed in antithesis to God in the passages quoted. Spiritist teaching that Christ and Satan are alike finds an advocate in your doctrine. Satan, you say, *did exactly* what God had planned he should do. Scripture declares that Christ *did exactly* what God said He should do. Yet to accomplish the plan of God Christ came to UNDO THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL, and you call your teaching scriptural and rational! When Christ came in the flesh He said, ‘Lo, I come to do Thy will’, and through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the Devil. Yet you say it is scriptural and rational to believe that Satan and sin are ‘of Him, and through Him, and for Him’, Who sent His Son to destroy the one and put away the other.

Further, I find that ‘Satan who was created to sin and did exactly what God had planned that he should do’ is put

into duration for a thousand years, and then, after another act of furthering the will of God, is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone to be tormented day and night unto the ages of ages. Can you call that treatment rational?

A.— No, I must confess that the more we study it together the more absurd and unscriptural it appears.

What is Sin?

B.— Without attempting at the moment a formal definition of sin, it would be a great step forward to know of any passages of Scripture where the words 'Sin is ...' occur. We have the following, the first of which we have had before us already:

'SIN IS iniquity, or lawlessness' (1 John 3:4).

'All unrighteousness IS SIN' (1 John 5:17).

'Whatsoever is not of faith IS SIN' (Rom. 14:23).

Here are three statements, and in each case we find the negative. Sin is the great negation of law, of right, of faith. How then can it be of God?

What is the end of Sin?

The following Scriptures give us the end of sin:

'The wages of sin is DEATH' (Rom. 6:23)

'Sin, when it is *fully consummated* (concordant version) bringeth forth DEATH' (Jas. 1:15).

'By one man sin entered into the world, and DEATH by sin' (Rom. 5:12).

Satan is called by a title which means 'The Slanderer'. A dictionary meaning of slander is:

'A false report maliciously uttered, and tending to injure the reputation of another'.

In Genesis 3:4,5 Satan's slander (or false report), maliciously uttered is:

- (1) Death is not the result of sin.
- (2) Sin is a means of greater blessing.

A part of his statement is true. By sin man did learn good and evil, but he lost power to enjoy and use it, for he became involved in death. Satan could have added many more blessings had he chosen to do so, but they would all have proved as false by the simple fact that sin leads to and ends in DEATH. Had Satan wanted plausible argument ready-made to quiet any qualms in the conscience of Eve, he would have found them in the words:

‘Sin will eventually change the universe from cold, independent creatures, into a loving family circle, and God from a distant Creator into an affectionate Father’.

What is this but to transfer the crown from the Saviour’s brow and place it upon that of sin? Satan’s initial lie is repeated by your teachers, namely, that *death is not the end of sin*. God says it is. That is scriptural and rational. You say and Satan says, No, sin will eventually be justified, vindicated, and found to be the essential element in bringing creation to its goal of glory.

A.— Does it not seem very uncharitable to place godly men and earnest Bible students upon the same level as demons?

B.— I have no word to say concerning the personal character of any teachers, as it is not my concern and may be of no consequence to anyone. Their teaching, made public, and crossing our own, is my concern. The Christ they degrade is my Lord, the slanderer they exonerate is my enemy, the Scripture they misinterpret is my trust, and speak I must. Scripture warns us that the end of this dispensation will be characterized by:

- (1) A departure from the faith.
- (2) The teaching of the doctrines of demons.
- (3) Teachers turning the ears of their hearers from the truth unto myths.
- (4) Ministers of Satan (whose personal character may be beyond reproach) appearing as ministers of righteousness.
- (5) The lie taught, being so like the truth, would deceive the very elect were it not for Divine protection.

- (6) The false teaching, being a systematized deception, playing at dice with the truth.

These things being so, it behoves us to make no compromise with those whose teaching on sin, Satan and sacrifice are so anti-scriptural and anti-Christian. You know now the attitude which *The Berean Expositor* takes on this subject. While we would seek to live peaceably with all men, and give none offence, yet in this matter it is our considered policy to lose every subscriber and bring our testimony to a close rather than yield one iota of God's truth or parley with the enemy of truth.

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