

Question

Hello:

I am currently working on a personal project about the nature of Sin. I am the artist and co-author of a religious, contemporary graphic novel focusing heavily on Sin. I want to include more than just the Christian viewpoint, though that will be the main focus, so am contacting experts of various different religions in order to gain a better understanding of the world view of Sin. I was hoping you could give me a rundown of Sin and your understanding of it, anything you have to offer me is helpful and much appreciated, I am open to absolutely any information concerning the subject, and I thank you in advance.

Alyssa Mogil

Answer

Hi!

Alyssa, you are quite welcome. I will be more than happy to make an attempt at answering this. It is an involved subject. I will do as much as I can to simplify it, without detracting from the seriousness of it.

I would like to start by looking at the etymology of the word. By itself, the word is not ugly. It will need a context to make it so. The problem is, due to popular usage, the evil context is always added to it, having forgotten its root.

Originally, sin was an archery term, and it came from the competitive nature of the Greeks. Remember, please, Greece is the home of the Olympics. Its literal meaning was "missing the mark." Picture, if you will, a "bull's-eye" on an archery target. That is the mark, which one would strive to hit; it is perfection. It can be missed in any direction. You can aim too high, low, or to either side. You can also "think" you aimed correctly, and not have done so. Results are what counts. Intentions mean nothing when it relates to sin. For example, you might have been told that the wind is blowing more strongly than it really is. Let's say it is supposed to be a crosswind from the right. You would aim more to the right to try compensating for it. With the wind being false, your aim would be false, and you would miss to the right. On the other hand, you may have not been told to compensate for gravity; that it doesn't make any difference. Your aim would thus be incorrect, and you would miss the mark on the low side, or sin.

I will return to the archery analogy in a moment as it relates to religion. However, there are more recent uses of the word, in other languages. You must remember, Biblically, all languages have their roots at Babel (the story is in Genesis 11:1-9). It is a safe assumption that many words have common origins within the different languages. It is even more common among the simpler words. One who does word studies will see this more easily than normal.

In English, the word "sincere" is not a compound word. In Latin, it is two words. "Sine Cere" (pronounced, "see'-nay say'-ray") originally meant "without wax." In the marketplace, merchants would often wax furniture to hide the imperfections. In fact, this was the normal practice. Those with better quality did not need this. They were said to be "sine cere," or sincere. There was nothing to hide. While this was initially applied only to the furniture, it was eventually applied to the merchants, as well. The furniture was not hidden; therefore, the people did not want to hide it. It was applied to persons, and therefore, personalities.

Let's turn to a modern language: Spanish. If I go to a Mexican restaurant, and I want no ice in my beverage, I ask for it "sin hielo" (with the silent "h" it is pronounced, "seen yay'-low"), that is, without ice.

So, we see, even in modern usage, "sin" remains close to its original meaning, "without," or outside of the mark, having missed it.

Let's now turn to Biblical references to sin. I want to look closely at its origins there, for it will explain a lot.

Genesis 1:10, "And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good."

The same thought is carried in the twelfth, eighteenth, and twenty-first verses.

According to the first chapter of Genesis, all life, which God created, was perfect. Why do I say this? I wish to include an excerpt from Adam Clarke's "Commentary on the Bible." Concerning the word "good," he writes:

"Gen 1:10 - ...And God saw that it was good - This is the judgment which God pronounced on his own works. They were beautiful and perfect in their kind, for such is the import of the word "tob" (pronounced, toe'-beh). They were in weight and measure perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

All life was perfect: none of it could miss the mark on its own. With this thought in mind, look at the thirty-first verse.

Genesis 1:31, "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

All of life was "good." All of life was perfect. Yet, man was not just good/perfect, man was very good/very perfect. It is not in the nature of humanity to sin! Sin is not natural. There is really no "sin nature!" There is a false doctrine out there, promulgated by one of the popes in antiquity, carried over into Protestantism by Martin Luther, and made popular by John Calvin, that sin is inherited from the father. Well, this is not using logic (logos = words in the Greek). The Greek word for "father" is "pater" (pronounced, pat-ayr'). It has no other meaning than "creator." If sin is inherited from the father, then Adam's sin was inherited from his father/creator, God. If that is not the case, then Adam's father/creator was Satan. The doctrine was created out of whole cloth, with no basis in fact. It is a superstition used by the idolatrous religions that believe in karma. Like many, many other things, it was incorporated into what was falsely believed to be Christianity.

Remember, I said the word "sin" by itself has no ugly meaning. Religiously is where it begins to pick up a negative context.....

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[Peter: The response goes on at length to discuss 'obedience to the Word' as the way to stop sinning, but you get the gist of what the term "sin" originally meant. There are many references to this definition when you Google it. It's even mentioned in Wikipedia as one of the recognized definitions of the word "sin".]