

political power (1603), it severely persecuted Christians because they pledged allegiance to God rather than to Shogun. It also isolated the country to prevent Christian influence.

As soon as Japan reopened after 250 years of seclusion (1854), Protestant Christian missionaries arrived and were initially successful. In 1868, the Tokugawa Shogunate was overthrown and the Meiji imperial government was established. This government introduced several Western social, educational, political and military structures, including monarchy. The leaders of the government argued that Christianity was too individualistic for the Japanese Empire and Buddhism too weak to solidify the country. They chose Shintoism to play the role which Christianity had played in European monarchies. This was the origin of state Shintoism in Japan. A rescript read daily in schools between 1889 and 1945 declared that Japan was 'the nation of the *kami*'. When nationalists and militarists thus utilized state Shintoism to enhance Japanese nationalism, Christians were again faced with the choice between worshipping God or the emperor, as were the Christians in the early Roman Empire. The defeat of the Japanese Empire in 1945 was seen as the failure of the *kamikaze* ('divine wind') to protect the country. This caused a serious loss of face for the *kami*, and weakened Shinto for a time.

The 20th-century interdenominational mission also began with some success, but today Japanese Christians see attempts to reinstate Shinto as the state religion as threatening. They feel that any check on Japan's economic empire might mean a return to militarism sanctioned by Shinto as a nationalist patriotic movement.

Most Christian services in Japan begin with reference to seasons or weather, which may be either desirable contextualization* in recognition of the true creator or syncretism with Shinto! The Christian concepts of sin and cleansing are difficult to understand if one holds Buddhist preconceptions, but the Shinto ideas of defilement and ritual cleansing (perhaps explaining why the Japanese bathe far more frequently than other humans) provide a helpful way of illustrating how the Bible thinks of sin and cleansing. Outward cleansing of the body is meant to be accompanied by a cleansing of the heart.

Little theological cross-fertilization has

taken place between Christianity and Shinto. The anti-Buddhist Shinto restorationist, Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843), was partly influenced by a Christian understanding of God, and some Christian elements have been incorporated into sect Shinto. An extreme 'Japanese Christianity' has only rarely been advocated. K. Kitamori's (b. 1916) *Theology of the Pain of God* (1946; ET, Richmond, VA, 1965) is a deliberate theological attempt to speak to Japanese culture.

Another writer whose theology has sought to be explicitly sensitive to Japanese tradition and experience, particularly after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, is Kosuke Koyama, notably in *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai: A Pilgrimage in Theology* (London, 1984).

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SIBBES, RICHARD, see PURITAN THEOLOGY.

SICKNESS, see HEALING.

SIN. Scripture employs a variety of words to speak of sin, with meanings ranging from 'the missing of a mark or goal' or 'the breach of relationship' to 'ungodliness', 'perversion' or 'rebellion'. Yet the common theme of every biblical expression of the nature of sin is the central idea that sin is a state of our being that separates us from the holy God; biblically, sin is ultimately sin against God.

According to Augustine* sin ought not to be considered in positive terms, but negatively, as a privation of the good. He defined the essence of sin as concupiscence (*concupiscentia*), a word used to translate the biblical words for desire and understood by Augustine as the perverted self-love which is the opposite

of love for God. But to define sin as selfishness surely fails to do justice to its seriousness in biblical terms as being primarily against God. Calvin* argued that sin ought not merely to be conceived of as a privation of good but as a total corruption of man's being; desire itself is sin which defiles every part of man's nature, but the root of this corruption is not merely self-love but disobedience inspired by pride. At first glance Barth's* definition of sin as 'nothingness', an 'impossible possibility', may appear to be similar to Augustine's idea of a 'privation of the good', but Barth is not speaking merely of 'privation'. 'Nothingness' is not 'nothing'; it is that contradiction of God's positive will and that breach of his covenant which can exist only under the contradiction which is his judgment. Thus sin is the human pride which is the contradiction of God's humbling of himself in Christ; it is the human sloth that is the contradiction of God's desire to exalt man in Christ; it is the human falsehood that is the contradiction of God's pledge to man in Christ.

If the narrative of Gn. 3 is to be interpreted not only as the historical account of Adam's* sin, but also as an account of the origin of sin, then the sin of Adam must be recognized as the primary biblical definition of the essence of sin – i.e. a grasping for spiritual and moral autonomy rooted in unbelief and rebellion. It may have become common to think of an inner disposition towards sin as being passed on through society and its structures, through the influence of parents, environment or education. Yet such an analysis fails to give sufficient seriousness to the sinful state of humanity as the Bible depicts it. Traditionally the church has accounted for this inner disposition by reference to the concept of original sin as a means of defining the manner in which the sin of Adam affects all human beings. On the basis of Ps. 51:5, Augustine defined original sin as inherited sin; he considered that the fallen nature of Adam was transmitted biologically through sexual procreation. Although Anselm* considered original sin to be original in each individual rather than in reference to the origin of the race, he also understood this original guilt and pollution to be passed from father to child; all were germinally present in Adam and therefore actually sinned in Adam. The weakness of this approach is that if all are guilty of Adam's sin through this organic

connection, are they not also guilty of the subsequent sins of all their ancestors? For Calvin and Barth, Ps. 51:5 is not to be interpreted as a reference to this inherited sin, but as a recognition that from the very first the psalmist is conscious of his own sin and corruption: 'From his very conception he carries the confession of his own perversity' (Calvin, *Institutes*, II.i.5).

Both Luther* and Calvin understood original sin not as an external constraint but as the internal necessity which is rooted in the perversity of human nature; yet while Calvin speaks of 'a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature' (*Institutes*, II.i.8), he relates original sin not so much to heredity as to an ordinance of God, a judgment of God passed on all mankind whereby Adam's sin is imputed to all in the same manner as Christ's righteousness is now imputed to all believers. This notion was subsequently developed by Beza* and enshrined in the Westminster Confession in terms by which Adam is recognized not merely as the natural head of the human race but also as its federal representative (federalism); all are born corrupt because they are representatively incorporate in the sin and guilt of Adam. It is this representative incorporation that is the root of each person's inherent disposition to sin, a federal relationship that all confirm by their own sinful acts: a person is not a sinner because he sins, he sins because he is a sinner.

Thomas Aquinas* had argued that for a person to be held guilty of sin it was necessary for him to be a rational being; and that therefore the fall* could not have involved the loss of human reason, which Aquinas identified as the image of God* in which man and woman were created, but rather must have involved the loss of that supernatural endowment (*donum superadditum*) which enabled a person's reason to be subject to God. According to the Reformers, however, the fall resulted in the corruption of human nature in its entirety. Reason and every aspect of his being have become totally depraved as a consequence of Adam's sin. This doctrine of total depravity is not intended to imply that fallen humanity is incapable of good works, but rather that there is no aspect of human being that is unaffected by sin: there is no 'relic or core or goodness which persists in man in spite of his sin' (Barth, *CD* IV.1, p. 493). Since even good human actions may

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See also:

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spring from mixed motives, human religion, ethics, art and creativity have all become occasions for his unbelief and pride.

While a person may certainly be conscious of immoral acts and false motives, the reality of man's sinful state can never be perceived merely by self-knowledge. The totality and inclusiveness of Adam's sin and the consequent depravity of all is an issue that is only truly made known in the cross: 'In that He takes our place it is decided what our place is' (Barth, *CD IV.1*, p. 240). The cross of Christ and the condemnation of human sin that it represents reveals the objectivity and total depravity of our sinful state just as it reveals the utter inadequacy of existentialist* reductions of our sin in terms of 'unauthentic existence', anxiety or despair.

See also: ANTHROPOLOGY.

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SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST. The belief in the sinlessness of Christ appears in all the major witnesses of the NT (Paul, 2 Cor. 5:21; John, 1 Jn. 3:5; Peter, 1 Pet. 3:18; the writer to the Hebrews, Heb. 4:15). Its theological significance is primarily soteriological. Christ must be sinless in order to achieve the redemption of the sinful human race (see the discussion in Heb. 7:23–28 concerning the nature of Christ as high priest; cf. Offices of Christ*).

Given its wide biblical base and critical function in NT theology, it is not surprising that this doctrine was universally affirmed in the patristic church. Unfortunately, it underwent developments which, although intending to heighten the doctrine, in fact contradicted its biblical foundations and undermined its theological significance. This occurred in two stages. First, primarily through Augustine,* the discussion shifted from the extraordinary faithfulness of Jesus in resisting temptation (stressed in the temptation narratives and Hebrews), to the metaphysical conditions necessary for Christ to be sinless from birth.

Thus, the virgin birth* was given in Augustine the significance of breaking the bond of sexually transmitted original sin.* The force of that argument, however, led to further discussions about the status of Jesus' mother and the development of the doctrine of her immaculate conception (see Mary*).

The second development was the shift from affirming the fact that Christ *did* not sin to affirming that he *could* not sin. This was an extension of Augustinian ideas, and it shows how far the tradition had departed from the NT. Not only did this belief result in some theologians (e.g. Basil*) asserting that Christ did not take on a human nature identical to ours but only one which was analogous, but it also demanded that some account be given of how Christ's 'impossible' temptations could be meritorious.

In modern theology the idea of the sinlessness of Christ has taken a number of interesting turns. Classic liberal theology, while denying that Jesus was incapable of sinning, if anything placed a greater emphasis on the fact that Christ did not sin. In the followers of A. Ritschl,* the sinlessness of Christ becomes the one proof of his divine status, made all the more significant since the other signs of his divinity – his virgin birth, miracles, and resurrection – were called into question.

But it is in radical theologies that the underlying religious significance of the sinlessness of Christ is most clearly revealed. J. A. T. Robinson's* and G. W. H. Lampe's (1912–80) fear of docetism* required them to reject any element of traditional Christology* which would separate Jesus from the rest of humanity, yet they both affirmed his sinlessness. While this might appear utterly incongruous in the light of the fact that sinfulness is a universal human characteristic, their belief has a fundamental logic. So long as Jesus is regarded as worthy of religious devotion, it is psychologically impossible to attribute sin to him, even if the rest of one's theology would seem to demand it.

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SLAVERY, a social institution justifying the involuntary servitude of individuals