

What is Sin?

P1. Introduction.

When asking about the definition of sin, one might say with the Bible, "sin is the transgression of the law." This definition seems simple. But if we ask which law is being referred to, all sorts of complications arise.

P2. Indeed, some Christians believe that Christians are not required to submit to the law of Moses, while others believe that the law must still be entirely applied. There are also those who have defined a different law than the law of Moses, adding many commandments that were nowhere to be found. Each goes his own way, but observing each category, it seems either no one knows the law they have set for themselves, or no one follows the law they have set for themselves.

P3. Indeed, those who believe that Christians are not subject to the law of Moses continue to conform to a good number of prescriptions given in the law of Moses. For example, not tattooing, not consulting astrologers, not sleeping with one's uncle or aunt, and many other laws.

P4. For those who claim that the law of Moses must be fully observed, it seems they have forgotten some of the provisions of this law. For instance, the following provision: "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her" (Deuteronomy 25:5).

P5. This can be considered a provision of great importance, as several people died for not wanting to apply it (see the Bible, the one who defiled himself...). One could also mention other provisions (such as stoning a young girl who was not a virgin at marriage).

P6. As for the category of those who have found a way to add elements to the law, they are generally people who, not content with not respecting any law, prefer to add commandments to accuse those who respect the law of not respecting the commandments added by them. These are also those who want to convince themselves and others that all men are sinners and sin several times a day. We debated this question in another treatise.

P7. In any case, the essential question that arises is, "To which law are Christians subject?" In other words, what defines sin for a Christian?

P8. On a completely different level, it is necessary to define the context and scope of each law. Indeed, when reading the Ten Commandments, a law such as "Thou shalt not kill" can initially be noted as having neither restriction nor context: "Thou shalt not kill."

P9. Does it mean not to kill chickens, goats, ducks, and humans or not to kill humans? Everyone can tell me that this law only applies to humans, and those who try to say otherwise will be seen as twisted minds.

P10. The important element here is that this law calls us to define the context and scope of each law. Indeed, the one who said "thou shalt not kill" also recommended "stoning the young

girl who arrives at marriage not a virgin" or "the adulterous woman." He thus several times asked to kill, after having said without restriction "thou shalt not kill."

P11. It therefore clearly appears that although there seems to be no explicit restriction on this law at its statement, there are indeed restrictions concerning it. If this is the case for this law, what about the other laws? Isn't it worth asking if each law has a specific context and scope attached to it?

P12. Jesus Christ, addressing the Pharisees, accused them of not understanding the law and the prophets. He asked regarding the Sabbath who could leave a loved one in a pit on the Sabbath day because of the nature of that day. He recalled how David in necessity took bread that was not permitted for him to take, and it was counted as righteousness to him. This is subject to reflection. How can a transgression of the law be counted as righteousness? Cited by Jesus Christ himself?

P13. When reading the Ten Commandments, it is written "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Reading the biblical text, we notice that the midwives who refused to kill all the firstborn Jewish boys lied by saying that the Jewish women were very robust and gave birth before they arrived. They were blessed for this lie. It is worth stopping here and asking the question: "Was this lie a sin?" I leave it to each one to think about the adequate answer.

P14. If we also consider the case of Abraham who misled the king by saying that his wife was his sister to save his life, one can always be surprised that it was the king that God threatened rather than Abraham. Had Abraham sinned?

P15. The analysis of these situations and many others leads us to what seems an obvious conclusion, namely that a thorough reading and wise interpretation of the law are necessary to truly define what sin is. The answer to this question comes from Jesus Christ himself.

P16. Indeed, the Lord defines two commandments which he declares to be the most important:
"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" and
"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

P17. According to the Lord, the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments. This is true. Moreover, it is important to understand that the entire law was given with one purpose: to uphold these two commandments. Thus, every commandment, every ordinance, must be perceived, interpreted, and applied with this objective in mind.

P18. Therefore, the evaluation of any act must not be devoid of the perception of the motive and intention behind the performance of that act. If they are in line with these two commandments, they are in line with the law; otherwise, it is a sin.

P19. Seen this way, one might consider the question of a better understanding of what sin is as resolved. It is not. Indeed, it becomes necessary to tackle the problems of life case by case to understand in each instance what sin is.

P20. Following this logic, we will start with the sin of conviction and the sin in thought, then we will address the law in general and some provisions in particular.

P21. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). This statement by the Apostle Paul introduces the question of the sin by conviction. Why would sin be a matter of conviction even though there is a law?

The answer is that the interpretation of biblical texts is not always the same for everyone and that there are those who in their lives adopt behaviors while being convinced that these behaviors are in line with God's will.

P22. It is true that some of these behaviors are obviously condemnable, but many cannot easily lead to a clear-cut position (observing days, the law, provisions concerning animals to eat, etc.). In such cases, anyone who adopts a position and practices it without conviction commits a sin. This is true, not only because the Apostle Paul stated it, but because it violates the first and greatest commandment.

P23. Indeed, if we recognize that God is the lawgiver, we also recognize that every sin is primarily an offense against God. If we choose to offend the one we are to love above all, then we commit a sin.

P24. When I am not convinced that an act is in accordance with God's will, I acknowledge by that very fact that I am taking the risk of sinning by committing that act. If, aware of this risk, I choose to commit it, I take the risk of offending God by prioritizing something else. I thus transgress the law that makes God the priority in my life.

P25. It must be recognized here that in some cases, we do not have enough elements to be convinced that one of the choices available to us corresponds indeed to God's will. At that moment, we must operate according to the logic of the lesser risk. Faced with an uncertain decision, I choose the option I am certain does not represent an offense to God. And if such an option did not exist? I believe this case is rare enough for each person to seek and find one. Let us also note this verse which goes in the same direction, teaching us that sin is tied to the notion of good:

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

P26. Another form of sin that should catch our attention is sin in thought. What is this sin? Is it simply having a bad thought?

I think our enemy the devil would not fail to make suggestions contrary to God's will and make us believe these thoughts come from us. The level of suggestion is the level at which the thought is conceived. It is up to us to validate or reject this thought.

P27. If it occurs to me to go out with my neighbor's wife, that is only a suggestion. If I immediately reject this suggestion because of its non-conformity to the two main commandments, I escape the sin in thought. If, on the other hand, I validate it, cherish it, and nurture the hope of going out with my neighbor's wife, then I commit adultery with her in my heart.

P28. The lesson from all this is that bad suggestions can be raised to the level of my thought, but they will only become sin from the moment when, instead of rejecting them, I have entertained and validated them.

P30. "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Today, this statement deserves more than ever to be studied meticulously.

As I said at the beginning, it is too easy to assert that the law does not apply to Christians

while keeping some of its precepts, or to say that Christians are subject to the law while only respecting some of its prescriptions.

P31. It is just as dangerous to fall into a Christian "Pharisaism" which would consist in firmly and unshakeably conforming to the commandments, even in a context where it is manifest that one of the two greatest commandments would be violated. For example, imagine a man you know being pursued by robbers. He comes to take refuge in your home. One of the robbers knocks on the door and asks if such a man has stopped by your place.

P32. The "Pharisaic" Christian will either say "yes" or choose not to respond, even at the risk of his own life. A non-"Pharisaic" Christian will simply say no, thus bearing false witness and saving a man's life. Which of the two has sinned? Human justice will certainly condemn the first for not protecting the life of another human being, and it will praise the second for prioritizing the greater good in a difficult situation.

Assistance to a Person in Danger or Complicity in Murder **Would it be any** different for divine justice? Cf: P12, P13, P14.

P33. I think not. Christians should read carefully about what happened in the time of the Old Testament. What techniques were used by the peoples at war, how individuals were killed or massacred. This will help everyone better understand God's will.

P33bis. This is also the case with the famous example of someone who is supposed to announce a death to a person with a heart condition. Should they tell the truth immediately at the risk of causing a heart attack, or should they tell falsehoods to lead the person to discover the truth more gently and at a more opportune time? For many Christians, the truth should be told immediately. For others, it should be told while praying for God to prepare the person's heart. This solution seems correct.

But if we keep in mind that God does not always answer our prayers in the timeframe and circumstances we want, we know that He may not answer this prayer. We know this because we generally have not reached that level of faith that provokes an instant response from God to our prayers.

The one who chooses to lie to preserve the life of the person to whom they announce the news does not sin. They do not sin against their neighbor since they act out of love, nor do they sin against God since they do not rely on other gods.

P34. Christian Pharisaism has done much harm to the church. We must really meditate on the meaning of the laws and their scope. What does "You shall not kill" mean when we know that the one who gave this commandment also ordered killing? Christian reflection should not be limited today to knowing which laws apply or not to us, but also to clearly defining the meaning and scope of each law to which we believe we are subject.

P35. Regarding the laws to which we remain subject, a priori, one could say that any provision of the law that has not been explicitly abolished is still valid. This position would allow us to discover that there are quite a few provisions not explicitly abolished to which we do not conform. We could also try to identify what pertained to the customs of the people of Israel. Given the change in era and context, these customs certainly do not apply to us.

P36. We could just as well be content to follow the following advice from the apostles: "*It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.*" Acts 15:28-29.

P37. If this does not suffice, it will surely be necessary to go through the various ordinances of the law and commandments case by case, to determine the conduct to be followed in a motivated manner. The poor definition of the law and sin has made so-called Christian environments among the most sinful and hypocritical on earth. Men have been burdened with yokes or burdens they could not bear. Many have concluded that it is impossible to live without sin (which they were also taught), and have entered into genuine hypocrisy and certain sin.

P38. By examining the various teachings of the church case by case, we will surely discover that many of them are not always God's teachings, but simply result from men's poor understanding. But to conduct such an examination, we must undergo a profound questioning of some false foundations of the Christian Faith.

P39. While we are told in the Bible, "Keep sound wisdom and discretion; So they will be life to your soul and grace to your neck" (Proverbs 3:21-22), and again that those to whom the apostles preached examined the scriptures daily to see if what they were told was true (Acts 17:11), many Christians have believed that the foundation of faith was precisely the renunciation of wisdom and reflection. Having chosen to become **Christians**, they have become **fools**, confusing **Christianity** with **foolishness**. God has called us to Christianity, not foolishness. The Bible invites us to live "*sensibly, righteously, and godly*" (Titus 2:12).

P40. As I said, we must meticulously examine the laws, ordinances, and all the teachings we receive from the church. Before giving you my analysis and viewpoint on several of these teachings, including the Trinity, polygamy, tithing, the Sabbath, and fornication, I invite you first to share the reflection on the attitude of wisdom and reflection that we must adopt towards God.