

E. Exclusions from the Doctrine

A number of attempts to define sin have included erroneous ideas and concepts. Some attempts to cut to the heart of sin and to define its essence have either included some aspects that should be excluded or excluded some aspects that should be included. Some of these erroneous attempts to define sin or its essence include the following.

1. Sin is not a physical substance or quality

Sin is not some sort of 'stuff' or a thing that exists in itself. It is not something in the blood or in the genes. It is not something physical or chemical or biological that stains the physical heart or makes it a different color.

If sin were a physical substance, then certain implications could be drawn:

(1) The fallen angels and Satan, who have no physical substance, would be sinless.

(2) The disembodied spirits/souls of the wicked dead, languishing in Hades, would be sinless.

(3) To destroy or weaken the physical body would be to destroy and weaken sin; and physical death would then bring deliverance from sin for all mankind.

2. Sin is not an unavoidable consequence of limitation or finiteness

This view, proposed by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (A.D. 1646-1716) states that creatures are finite and limited, and that sin is an unavoidable consequence of this limitation.

It virtually makes God the Author of sin, since He created the creature as finite, with all of his limitations. The creature's sin thus becomes unavoidable. The view makes sin a misfortune and destroys moral responsibility.

3. Sin is not an illusion resulting from man's inadequate knowledge

This view, proposed by Benedict (Baruch) Spinoza (A.D. 1632-1671) places the cause of our sin consciousness in our failure to see things from the correct viewpoint. If we had God's viewpoint, sin would be nonexistent.

But according to Scripture, sin is not nonexistent for God. Because of sin, God's wrath rests on the disobedient. Jesus Christ came into the world and went to the cross to deliver us from our sins. In addition, the more we learn of and know God, the greater (not lesser) our sin-consciousness becomes!