DEFINING SIN PROCESS: A COMPARISON OF PHILOSOPHICAL, SPIRITUAL, AND CHRISTIAN CONCEPTS OF SIN AND TEMPTATION

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Since The Fall, all living souls contend in the soulical and the spiritual war; the battle between sin and righteousness in the flesh.[1] Simultaneously, selfish temptations epidemically infect the postmodern world.[2] These two battle dynamics create conventional and biological conflicts on multiple fronts. In this complex conflagration, a need to understand the enemy's arsenal and tactics cannot be overstated. In the history of this conflict, the Ancient, Reform, and Free Churches have accentuated avoidance of all sin.[3] With the Decalogue as its example the church emphasized the legalism of sin's *product*. The substantive nature of sin's product is more easily taught and managed than that of sin's less tangible *process*.[4]

However, the legal aspect of the *sin product* and developmental nature of the *sin process* are integral to defining and avoiding

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[1] Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1998), 180.

[2] Nelly Villafuerte, "Enthroning One's Self, "*Manila Bulletin*, 13 June 2004 [newspaper online]; available from http://www.mb.com.ph/issues/2004/06/13/OPED 200406131; Internet; accessed 10 October 2006.

[3] Alistair Mcfadyen, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust, and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.

[4] Paul Ramsey observes, "Christian groups have frequently turned the New Testament into a new Law, the Sermon on the Mount into a new Decalogue. Primarily because need for instructing the younger generation is always urgent, Christian morality repeatedly takes form as a new legalism in which every one must be trained" (Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950], 47).

commission of sin. Consequently, the conditions by which temptation germinates, matures, and ultimately grows into sin merit study.

Failure to meet an absolute standard is often interpreted to be sin, i.e., missing the mark.[5] Albeit, studying the mark cannot, in itself, produce success in hitting it. Conversely, the etiology of failure is vital to developing success. Inadequate study of the failure process produces a nebulous definition of *sin* and its antitheses *the mark*.[6]

What is the nature of the transition from temptation to sin? Is all human failure to hit the mark sin? If not, what degree of failure qualifies for the sin determination? In other words, is there an identifiable process toward the *sin product*? If temptation is a transition and not sin (Jas 1:14-15), understanding the transition toward sin is imperative for holy living. In James' first chapter the *temptation-sin transition* is summarized in debatable language. A comparative study of the temptation of the sinless Christ further illumines James' language into a concrete principle. This principle is validated within Christian experience.[7] Knowledge of the *sin process* is integral to all definitions of sin.

The universal nature of sin demands a comprehensive philosophical and religious overview of sin's historical definitions and implications.[8] Understanding man's propensity over time to emphasize *sin product* over *sin process* adds import to this article.

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[5]F. R. Tennant, *The Concept of Sin* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1912), 16.

[6]Ann Howard writes, "Study failure. We usually try to forecast success; given the poor track record of top executives, we should study failure instead. The information gathered is likely to be more meaningful, quantifiable, and useful in the long run" ("Chapter 10 Identifying, Assessing, and Selecting Senior Leaders," in *The Nature of Organizational Leadership: Understanding the Performance Imperatives Confronting Today's Leaders*, ed. Stephen J. Zaccaro and Richard J. Klimoski [San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001], 341).

[7]St. Theophan the Recluse, "Concerning Temptation and Sin, translated by C. Theodorou," *Orthodox Messenger* (May/June 1998); accessed 17 October 2006; available online, http://www.home.it.net.au/~jgrapsas/pages/sin.htm; Internet.

[8]Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 490.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SIN

Ancient Philosophers and Sin

Scripture, theology, and literature portray the sin struggle in philosophical and metaphorical terms of dark vs. light, flesh vs. spirit, good vs. evil, wholeness vs. imperfection ad infinitum. [9] Early philosophy (Plato) attempts to manage the sin problem by astute observation and acute definition of the character of life-conduct and wisdom in its disposition.[10] Although a sin may be simply defined as a wrong, wrong cannot be defined exclusive of absolute standards (right). Accordingly, there is no hope that varied philosophies of sin address the same topic.

In the above, sin is defined in metaphoric parallels or conceptualizations. However, if sin (moral wrong) is a response to an absolute standard (moral right), that response incurs accountability to the standard. Accountability cannot be achieved metaphorically, neither are human concepts of morally hygienic enough to be spiritually circumspect (Pr 21:2). Accordingly, to eschew sin is unattainable unless a tangible definition of both the *sin process* and *sin product* are extant.

When Aristotle spoke of sin, the absolute standard was not a set of edicts or rules. For him philosophy itself and the tradition of the ancient philosophers were supreme.[11] About the time of the close of the Old Testament account, Greek tragedian, Euripides, depicted sin as inescapable. His concept of sin was a biblical parallel to inherent sin, passed through the loins of men; passed on from father to son.[12] He

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[9] Wendy Barker, *Lunacy of Light: Emily Dickinson and the Experience of Metaphor* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 181.

[10] George Trumbull Ladd, *Introduction to Philosophy: An Inquiry after a Rational System of Scientific Principles in Their Relation to Ultimate Reality* [book on-line] (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1903, accessed 8 December 2006), 10; http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=6338656; Internet.

[11] In the face of Athenian backlash against his patron, Alexander the Great, Aristotle fled the city, allegedly remarking, "I will not let Athens sin against philosophy twice." He referred to the trial and death of Socrates under a similar circumstance. Christian D. Von Dehsen, ed., *Philosophers and Religious Leaders* (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1999), 13.

[12] Euripides (c. 485-406 B.C.), Phrixus, fragment 970: "The gods visit the sins of the fathers upon the children."

portrayed sin as the essence of the human tragedy. Euripides' observed the ubiquitous characteristic of sin across the cultures of the ancient world. Whereas ancient philosophy often agreed on sin's presence and inescapable affect, it did not easily agree on its nature. [13]

Modern Philosophers and Sin

While the ancients seemed content with their commentary on observations of humanity, modern philosophers have taken sin definitions to expanding extremes. Tubingen endeavored to minimize sin's impact by creating a sin reality that was continuously diminishing in the universality of God's absolute sinlessness. [14] Spinoza went farther, attempting to deny sin's existence, equating *good* vs. *evil* to *victor* vs. *vanquished* and validating the *might equals right* axiom.[15] At minimum, Spinoza and other modern philosophers have acknowledged the importance of a philosophical and theological characterization of both the *sin process* and *sin product*.

Post Modern Influences and Sin

The postmodern philosopher may be less consciousness of any need for a substantive definition of sin. Whereas most moderns addressed sin as a matter to wrestle with, the postmodern environ has difficulty approaching the issue. A postmodern aversion to absolute values renders the question of human sin mute. In the postmodern world, theologies mutate to philosophies, empty of absolutes. A recent compilation of thirteen essays in postfoundationalist theology was devoid of articles even intimating anything about sin.[16] The work's emphasis on the *interpretive community* apparently sacrificed the individual knowing of God and the sin-righteousness dynamic that occurs at the personal, non-corporate level. Where the sin problem is not central to theology, a definition of *sin process* or *product* is unnecessary.

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[13]Ladd, 372.

[14]Charles D. D. Hodge, Systematic Theology, vol. 2 (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1871), 133.

[15]Ibid.

[16] J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen, *Essays in Postfoundationlist Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997).

A PROFILE OF SIN IN WORLD RELIGIONS

Buddhism and Sin

Sin is not understood in the sense of breaking codified commands or laws but a disruption of the flow of life (chi). Payment for such disruption is actually part of the life flow in the form of karma (cause and effect).[17] Again, where sin is not clearly defined, there is no definition of *sin process*.

Hinduism and Sin

Because Hinduism is somewhat eclectic in recognizing moral and spiritual value in other faiths, the concept of sinning moves beyond simple life-flow disruption. To sin (*papa*) is either a disruption of karma or the breaking of religious laws. Great theological emphasis is given to achieving *Moksha* (transcendence of disputed definition) by allowing the natural good *Purusha* (universal self) to shine through the individual. The *Mantra* is understood as simultaneous penitence and cleansing, clearing the way for *Moksha*. Again, development toward light is emphasized over any progression to darkness or *sin process*.[18]

Islam and Sin

Without consideration for the multiple differing sects within Islam, it can be said that Islam is the juris antithesis of Buddhism, demanding strict obedience to the highly-codified Koran.[19] Hindu and Buddhist views regard as sin internal and affective. Although the Five Pillars of Islam--confession, prayer, giving, fasting, and pilgrimage--are to a degree internal, sin is an act not a state of being for the Muslim.[20] Not surprisingly, repentance and justification through pious externals is

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[17] In most primers on Buddhism the concept of sin is totally absent. Positive emphasis of self actualization and development replaces the negative concept of sin (Damien Keown, *Buddhism A Very Short Introduction* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996], iii].

[18] R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 32.

[19] Geoffrey Parrinder, *World Religions*, 2nd ed. (New York: Newness Books, 1983), 471.

[20] James A. Beverly, *Understanding Islam* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2001), 3.

emphasized over dealing with internal causatives. The sin act itself is of utmost import, and any Islamic lack of internalization renders the *sin process* less significant.

The major causative in Islam is Satan. He is a universal tempter, ubiquitously present in some form.[21] Avoidance or destruction of Satan's mortal agents is a major factor in control of the sin process. Again, this emphasizes the external over internal. Although there are several classifications of sin, only the "Seven Noxious Things" have eternal consequence. The importance of these 7 major sins cannot be overstated. By keeping free from these, the adherent insures an eternity in paradise, despite other sins. Clearly, outward acts guarantee paradise.[22] In the Muslim *sin product* orientation, *process* is relatively insignificant.

Judaism and Sin

In Hebrew thought, from Creation forward, sin is equated to breaking of the commands of God. God's refusal of Cain's sacrifice was indicative of his desire for man to relate to him inwardly. However, the Decalogue on Mt. Sinai became the central factor and icon of that relationship. That association was a codified one. The Ten Commandments were not only law. They were a physical representation of the God-man union. In the words of the *Shema*, the Hebrews should have understood God's commands to be external and internal, not merely written on gates and doorposts but also between the eyes and upon the hearts (Dt 6:1-9). Unlike Islam's seven classifications and their external orientation, Hebrew sin was accountable to the internal process toward sin. This is reflected in the Hebrew Scripture's usage of several words for sin. Each word refers to a specific series of sins and each sin's motive. In part, sin offerings were categorized according to the heart or consciousness of the perpetrator.[23] The internalization principle is clearly stated in the

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[21] C. George Fry and James R. King, *Islam: A Survey of the Muslim* Faith (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1980), 69.

[22] Phil Parshall, *Understanding Muslim Teachings and Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 32.

[23] *Pesha* (*פשע pesha',peh'shah*) means an intentional sin, deliberate defiant disobedience of God. *Avon* (*avon, aw-vone*) is sin of lust or emotional rage or explosion, but not done to defy God. *Cheit* (*חֵטְא chate*) refers to an unintentional sin.

fulfilled first century Jewish church. Paul paraphrases the language of David and the prophets, calling for the law to be written on the tables of the believer's heart (2Co 3:3).

ANCIENT CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS ON SIN

Didache (c. 70-160)

This catechism of the ancient church was divided into four sections. The first six chapters contained The Two Ways: The Way of Life and The Way of Death. The remainder summarized early church rituals and purifications, and the final section was a brief eschatology. Chapter Five, introduced of The Way of Death:

> 1. But the way of death is this. First of all it is evil and full of curse; murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, witchcrafts, sorceries, robberies, false-witnessing, hypocrisies, double-heartedness, deceit, pride, wickedness, self-will, covetousness, filthy-talking, jealousy, presumption, haughtiness, boastfulness. 2. Persecutors of the good, hating truth, loving a lie, not knowing the reward of righteousness, not cleaving to that which is good nor to righteous judgment, watchful not for that which is good but for that which is evil; far from whom is meekness and endurance, loving vanity, seeking after reward, not pitying the poor, not toiling with him who is vexed with toil, not knowing Him that made them, murderers of children, destroyers of the handiwork of God, turning away from the needy, vexing the afflicted, advocates of the rich, lawless judges of the poor, wholly sinful.

Noteworthy is the fact that the Didache, a well-circulated influence on early theology, establishes a pattern for defining sin by its product rather than its process. Conceptualization of the *sin process* is diminished in deference to specific *sin product*.

Justin Martyr (100-165)

Justin Martyr's theology is a detailed articulation of the struggle between good and evil. His writings are replete with references to sin. For Justin, sin is a presumed known. Consequently, he concerns his writing with sin's eradication not its interpretation. About this, his theology is clear. Sin is overcome by repentance, a change of heart, and

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Closely related to the N.T. *harmarto*, to miss the mark (Peloubet's *Bible Dictionary*, 1947 ed., "Sin.")

a move forward into sinless life according to God's commandments. He divides sin into categories of prior and post repentance. The bulk of Justin's writings, *The First and Second Apologies*, as well as fragments of Justin's other works, may presuppose that sin's definition is a universal known.[24]

Irenaeus (130-202)

Irenaeus understood sin as an addendum in God's plan. Christ would have been sent whether man sinned or not. This does not diminish the role sin plays in his theology. Sin determines Christ's role as Savior and the second man Adam, undoing the sin of the world jointly, and individually.

In his major work, *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus focused his on the refutation of the Marcionites' heresy. That doctrine deemed God capable of sin authorship. At the end of his Chapter XVII Irenaeus cites the *sin product* almost a dozen times in as many sentences without any conceptualization of *sin process*. Irenaeus catalogs sin using the phrase, "sin of." With this phrase he enumerates the sins of disobedience, unbelief, fornication, and the general sin of every description.[25] These informal categorizations are examples and simple literary appositives but cannot function as definitions of sin.

Tertullian (155-230)

Tertullian was a born disputant who was practical but not theologically profound. He is remembered for his denouncement of the Gnostic inspired systems of Marcion (dualism) and Praxeas ("una Personae, una Substatia"). He also rebutted the ancient philosophers. Tertullian pronounced Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle *the patriarchal forefathers of all heretics* (*De anima*, iii.). For Tertullian, the soul was not preexistent, as Plato asserted, nor subject to reincarnation, as the Pythagoreans believed. Each soul was a new product, proceeding

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[24]Leslie Barnard, *St. Justin Martyr: The First and Second* Apologies (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997)

[25]*The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. Roberts, Alexander and James Donaldson, vol. 1 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885, accessed 13 October 2006), 499; http://www.questia.com/PM. qst? a=o&d=72137886; Internet.

equally with the body from the parents (*De anima*, xxvii.). This Traducian position held the explanation for the soul's sinfulness (*De anima*, xxxix). The soul is born in bondage to Satan but has origins of good (*De anima*, xli.), and when awakened by baptismal renouncement of sin, it regains its natural Christian posture and calls upon God (*Apol.*, xvii). Similar to his predecessors, Tertullian spends little time on the nature of the commission of sin or the process from temptation to sin. He concentrates on the origins within human heredity. In the tradition of ancient philosophy and early church dogma, Tertullian attempts to quantify sin by categorizing types of sin, including those sins that should not be forgiven, as his theology became increasingly Montanist.[26]

Origen (185-254)

Origen was also heavily influenced by the classic Greek philosophers. His esoteric doctrine of sin found center in man's inability to attain sinlessness, though he may remain sinless by the power of the Holy Spirit after conversion. Most of his work was not helpful toward a definition of the connection between *sin process* and *sin product.*

In a recent work on Origen, Joseph Trigg presented almost 300 pages of translated manuscripts. Within those pages, less than 50 references were translated as "sin." Uses of the word were limited to scriptural quotes, philosophic or theological systems, and non-specific or general references to individual sin. In the entire work, there is one reference connected to specific sin. That sin was physical fornication.[27] Arguably, Origen evidenced a continuing assumption among theologians that sin was a universal known. Therefore, the *sin process* needed no treatment in the construction of theology.

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[26]Tertullian divides sin into three classes: There are first the terrible crimes of idolatry, blasphemy, homicide, adultery, fornication, false witness, fraud (Adv. Marc., IV, ix). In "De Pud," he substitutes apostasy for false witness and adds unnatural vice). As a Montanist Tertullian calls these irremissible. Between these and mere venial sins there are modica or media (De Pud, I), less grave but yet serious sins, which he enumerates (De Pud," xix): "Sins of daily committal, to which we are all subject; available from http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14520c.htm; internet; accessed October 15, 2006.

[27]Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London: Routledge, 1998), 117.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

Augustine's writings on sin were largely in response to contemporary theological dilemmas more than an independent theological position. Response between theologians was the hallmark of early church theology. For Augustine, sin was not a created thing at all, but sin was *"privatio boni,"* a *"taking away of good,"* and *uncreation* rather than *creation*.[28] However, in his disputations and particularly his confessions, he made note of this vacuum of good largely as it impacted two independent influences. First, the battle against Pelagianism that denied inherent sin thereby empowering man to make righteous choice without divine aid. Second was his private struggle with lust. A great volume of his work reflects his personal struggle. Consequently, in his confessions he makes profound observations on the subject of sin and sinning. Augustine recognized man's total inability to live righteously apart from divine intervention.[29]

In early Christian thinking, spiritual growth was linked to revelation.[30] According to progressive revelation, any spiritual maturity yielded greater understanding of sin and the sinning process. Yet, most of the theological fathers like Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, and Augustine discuss sin's nature in metaphysical terms of original, imparted, imputed, and individual sin. Sin is largely defined by its product, e.g., lust, fornication, murder, idolatry, and more. These enumerated definitions reflect the bulk of Scripture's treatment of sin and that of the church's earliest governing document, *The Didache*.

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[28]Sin is defined as a lack of good by Augustine. When someone abandons the highest good for a lower good, he/she is sinning. A lower good is any good that is not God (*Confessions*, Book 2.5.11).

[29]Much of Augustine's Confessions reads like the Davidic psalm of mourning over sin (Psalm 51). He was personally conscious of the twin active roles of sin and deliverance while in the flesh. He writes, "To abstain from sin when one can no longer sin is to be forsaken by sin, not to forsake it."

[30]Just as in the soul's advance in the spiritual life it comes to understand the mysteries of theology in a deeper way than it did at earlier stages, so also it comes to have a deeper grasp of the nature of sin, so that actions which at the beginning were not regarded as sinful come to be seen in their true light (Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: Studies in Justin, Clement, and Origen* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984], 91).

The Later Church and Definition of Sin

Continuing through Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, and John Wesley yields little difference in the emphasis of regarding *sin product* over *sin process*. Aquinas offered a clear definition of sin in his *Treatise on Law*.[31] Again, his definition was directly connected to an act (albeit negative) rather than a concept or process. Luther is remembered as an earthy theologian who was bold and often without tact, a blunt preacher of truth who also struggled with carnality.[32] He struggled with the meaning of sin from his early monastic days until his death.[33] Like Aquinas but in a less esoteric manner, Luther understood sin as the direct antithesis to acts of righteousness and an ever-present escort of the earth-bound.

Saint Theophan's (1815-1894) and 6 Stages of Temptation

Saint Theophan the Recluse was a Russian Orthodox priest widely known for his original writings, translations, and editorials on spiritual life. One of his major emphases was prayer without ceasing. As with Puritan believers, Theophan's prayer-filled journey may have led to a heightened discernment of the presence of sin in everyday life. In his work *Temptation and Sin*, Theophan addresses the "progress" (or process) from temptation to sin.[34] Theophan postulated that there are at least six stages of progression (more accurately regression) from temptation to sin.

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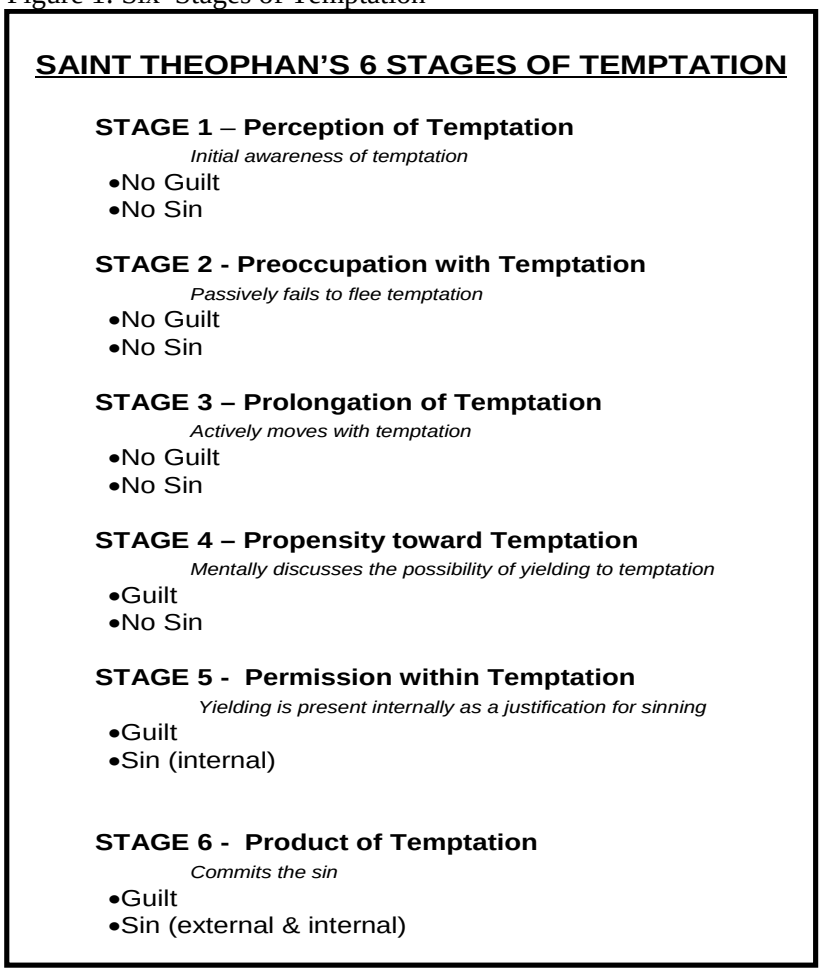
[31]Further, every sin is opposed to some virtuous act. If therefore all acts of virtue are prescribed by the natural law, it seems to follow that all sins are against nature: whereas this applies to certain special sins (Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Law: Summa Theologica, Questions 90-97* [Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 1996], 62).

[32]"Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong, but let your trust in Christ be stronger, and rejoice in Christ who is the victor over sin, death, and the world. We will commit sins while we are here, for this life is not a place where justice resides" (Luther from exile at Wartburg Castle).

[33]"There are two kinds of Christian righteousness, just as man's sin is of two kinds" (John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, 1st ed. book on-line [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961, accessed 16 October 2006], 86); available online, http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=3489828; Internet.

[34]St. Theophan the Recluse, "Concerning Temptation and Sin, translated by C. Theodorou," Orthodox Messenger, (May/June 1998, accessed 17 October 2006); available online, http://www.home.it.net.au/~jgrapsas/pages/sin.htm; Internet.

Figure 1: Six Stages of Temptation



Theophan relied heavily on observed data, certainly his own history. In Dostoevsky's Russia, existential, contemplative thought was a competitive value to theology. Theophan's experiential theology of temptation was proffered without benefit of scriptural support. However, it is not to be assumed that his short treatise indicated lack of reverence or understanding of the Word of God. Perhaps, Theophan was responding to some of Dostoevsky's literary-political-theological work

on temptation. Theophan occasionally attempt to theologically supplement Dostoevsky's analogical literature.[35] Whatever the reason for the absence of biblical underwriting, it is not for want of scriptural support. Substantial scriptural support exists to delineate a delineable progression from temptation to sin, biblically.

BIBLICAL MOVEMENT FROM TEMPTATION TOWARD SIN

James 1:12-15 in light of Theophan's Stages of Temptation

Although it is obvious that James describes distinctions between temptation and sin in the opening of his letter, it is not clear exactly what the boarders of those distinctions are. James says,

> 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.
> 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (*NKJV*)

The phrase "each one" is indicative of the personal nature of temptation. Temptation is not objective, but subject to the hearts of the tempted. Temptation for one is not tempting to another.[36] Therefore, delineation of sin and temptation must be conceptual (not objective) in order to apply universally.

According to the above verse, temptation only occurs when the minimum factors of *lust* and *drawing away* are simultaneously present. Both desire and movement toward that desire combine to make early temptation. Neither lust alone nor movement toward temptation alone can constitute temptation. This is not Theophan's Stage 1, *Perception of Temptation.* It occurs prior to James' first-level temptation. In his Stage 1, there is no lust or movement present; only an intellectual or

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[35]"Saint Theophan the Recluse, a Russian Orthodox monk and contemporary of Dostoyevsky's, considered Eros (from The Brothers Karamazov) neutral energy, referring to it as "zeal." The energy Dmitry calls Sodom, Theophan believed, needs to be transformed into a more subtle energy," Mark Richard Barna, "Dostoyevsky and Holy Russia," *World and I*, September 1998.

[36]Fausset, A. R., A.M. "Commentary on James 1," in *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bibl*e; http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/Jamieson FaussetBrown/jfb.cgi?book=jas&chapter=001>. 1871.

spiritual awareness of what could become temptation. Therefore, a want, desire, lust, or need may be cognitively acknowledged at this stage without engaging temptation.

Theophan's Stage 2 more closely relates to James' first-level temptation, *lust + movement.* However, it does not complete the duo. James uses the word ejxevlkw (drawn away), connoting a sense persuasion over time. The word is in the first century angler's vocabulary and can be used to depict the patient seduction of a fisherman coaxing prey to a trap, net, or lure. Such persuasion requires time. In Stage 2, *Preoccupation with Temptation*, the human prey is fascinated with the bait. Lust is present, and the tempter awaits movement. For Theophan, Stage 2 is not sin. Similarly, in James' first-level temptation, sin is not yet conceived.

The change for Stage 3, *Prolongation of Temptation,* is subtle but reflects the inevitable result of a passive relationship with temptation. The human prey moves from being simply passively fascinated to actively animated. In Stage 3, if the temptation moves away, the human prey moves toward it. Because both movement and lust are present, Theophan's Stage 3 fully completes James' first-level temptation, *"drawn away by his own desires"* (Jas 1:14).

At Stage 4, *Propensity toward Temptation*, conversation with the temptation is likely. This is James' second-level temptation, identified with the term "enticed." The word deleavzw, translated enticed, finds root in a Greek term for deception. Since delivering beguiling words to Eve, Satan has used the deceiving rationale of words against his victims. Satan speaks in the first person to attribute ownership of his schemes to human thought.[37] As the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10), Satan's half-truths and lies are his weapon of choice against his most important and formidable foes (Ge 3:5, Mt 4:3). For both James and Theophan this *lust+movement+enticement* stage is only temptation. Yet, the temptation is so perceptively complete that Theophan predicts accompanying guilt. The fertility of temptation is complete, but sin has not yet conceived.

Stage 5, *Permission within Temptation*, is the first occurrence of sinful behavior. For James, this third-level temptation is the womb of conception, the transitional level where temptation matures to sin. For

[37]Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* (Eugene, OR: Harvest, 1993), 142.

Theophan, it is this point where permission is given by the one tempted (by self) to sin, if there is opportunity. However, if the opportunity is not present, the intent to sin is still in place. Externally thwarted sin simply becomes internalized and sin abides.

Stage 6, *Product of Temptation*, is final-stage, external sin. With no external constraints to restrict the commission of sin, Stage 5 naturally devolves to external sin.

JESUS, JAMES, AND THEOPHAN AND TEMPTATION

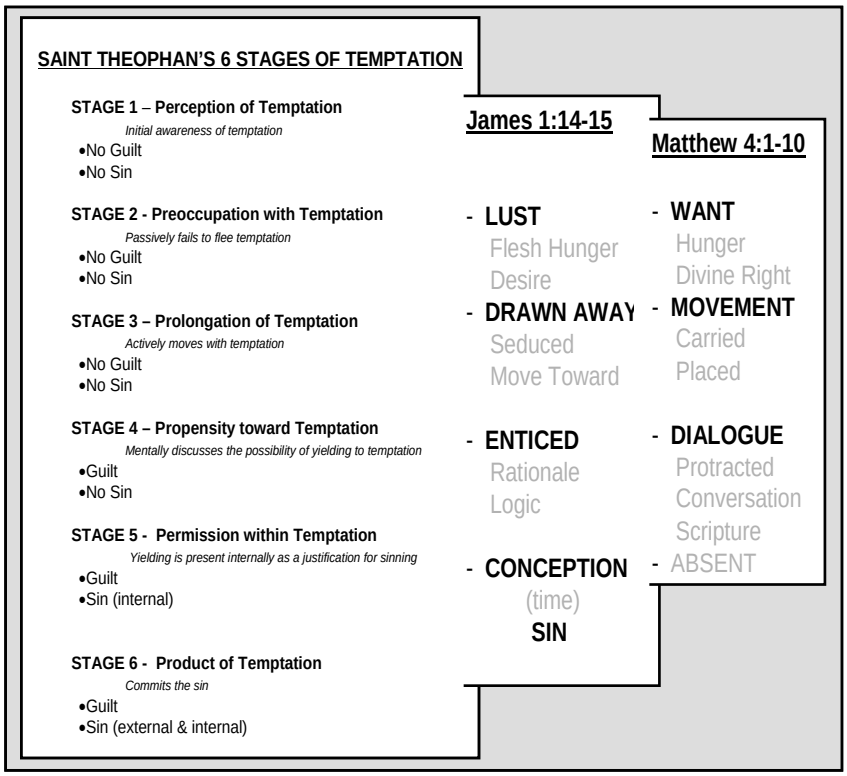
Aligning Christ's Wilderness Temptation with James and Theophan

James' fishing language (lure, draw, entice) is logically a reflection of vocabulary in the first century Galilean farming-fishing community.[38] Community fishing was largely accomplished with netting, according to biblical reference (Mt 4, Mk 1, Lk 5, Jn 21). However, James' fishing language points to a line-and-bait trolling technique of some sort. The word `deleavzw` defines James' second-level temptation (conversing with enticement or mouthing the bait). In one way `deleavzw` orients to the holiness of Christ. The root of `deleavzw` (`dovlob`) is variously translated as deceit or guile. Of course, the promise of a meal in the fishing bait is pure deceit, and `dovlob` is the exact word that Peter (the fisherman) uses to aid description of Christ's sinless nature. "Who did no sin, neither was guile (`dovlob`) found in his mouth" (1Pe 2:22). During Christ's incarnation, Satan trolled the earth with countless temptations, but Jesus was never hooked by the `dovlob`. In Christ's wilderness temptation, the Savior is found looking at the bait, hungering after it, moving toward it, interacting with the bait and the evil fisherman (Satan). However, the bait, the enticement, the `dovlob` was never found in the mouth of Jesus. The hook was never set. In the depth of Christ's encounters with temptations, he never took the bait! Below is

[38]"The peasant farmers around Lake Kinneret (Galilee) had less land immediately available for small family plots - maintained in addition to the regular farming practices. Instead, the lake offered opportunities for fishing and limited participation in the industries associated with the fishing industry that would not have been available to peasants living outside of the lake region" (Milton Moreland, "The Galilean Response to Earliest Christianity," in *Religion and Society in Roman Palestine: Old Questions, New Approaches*, ed. Douglas R. Edwards [New York: Routledge, 2004], 41).

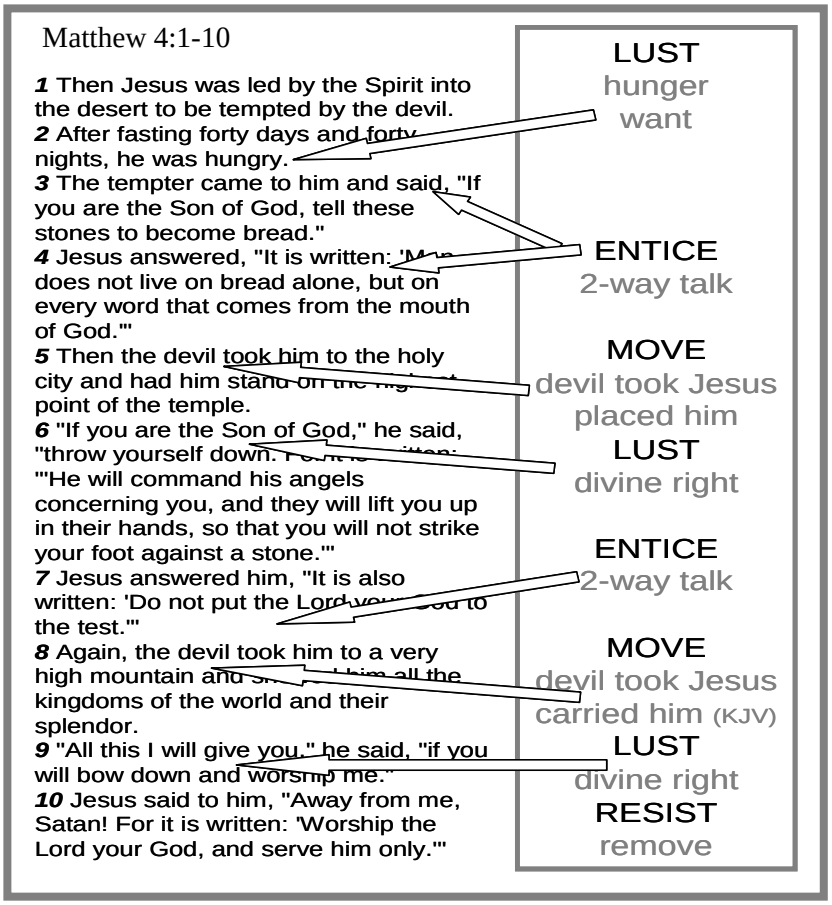
an alignment of Theophan's Stages of Temptation, James' theology of sin, and temptation, and Christ in the wilderness.

Figure 2: Theophan's Stages of Temptation Alignment



Christ's temptation (Mt 4, Mk 1, Lk 4) is arguably the major archetype of James' theology of temptation and sin (the *sin process*). Jesus' series of encounters with the devil (without sinning) served to clarify James' *lust-move-entice* definition of temptation and his *conceive-sin-death* characterization of sin, revealing both *sin process* and *sin product* in the representation. The *sin process* model is not linear, in that the temptation components of lust enticement movement and enticement are transposable. However, all components preceding conception are visible in Christ's temptation and appear in the following order.

Figure 3: Components Preceding Conception of Sin



For the above figure, lust must be defined without negative connotation or attribution of evil. Out of several New Testament words translated "lust," James chooses `ejpiqumiva` in his delineation of temptation. Paul uses `ejjpiqumevw` to remind Timothy that desire (`ejjpiqumevw`) for the office of a bishop is `ejjpiqumevw` after an honorable work (1Ti 3:1). Accordingly, the term most often translated (negatively) lust is not routinely evil or sinful. Jesus was tempted completely, as any human. He possessed a hunger; want, need, or fleshly lust for bread. That desire is part of the human make up.

Albeit fleshly, hunger is not a sin, and Jesus did not sin by being hungry or lusting for something to eat. Neither would it be sinful for Jesus to desire (ejjpiqumevw) the office of his rightful inheritance. Jesus has a divine right as Creator to be lifted as authority over all the earth (Isa 66:1). Similar to Paul's encouragement to Timothy, ejjpiqumevw was an appropriate and holy response to the temptations before him. In all Jesus' temptations, he did not sin (Heb 4:15).

In the above rationale, the borders of the *sin process* are exposed. That process includes lust, enticement, and movement with or toward the tempter. These components were not sinful in Christ's wilderness temptation, else Christ sinned, but he did not sin.

Figure 3 shows an alignment of Christ's wilderness temptation, James' temptation-sin principle, and Theophan's experiential observations on temptation and sin. The relationship between Christ's example, James' theology and Theophan's observations demonstrate a commonality. This common structure is biblically appropriate for ministry and theology constructs.

CONCLUSION

The foundations of ancient philosophy, world religions, and Christianity demonstrate man's propensity to discuss sin as a universal known. Often there is an accompanying lack of treatment of the *sin process* (temptation). This accepted wisdom has affected the constructs of theology and ministry since the first century church. A doctrine of sin (*sin product*) is central to most theological systems or church dogmas, but a doctrine of temptation (*sin process*) is usually wanting. Consequently, the *sin process* is sometime as confused with *sin product*. Yet, a distinguishable process toward sin exists in the life of Christ, biblical writings, and theological observations of non-biblical authors. There is a discernable difference between *process* and *product*.

Proportional treatment of both *process* and *product* in theological construct and practical ministry expands the image of God in relational directions. When the sin process is part of the moral decision-making matrix, and divine judgment is reserved for sin product, there is truly no condemnation for those who are struggling with temptation. Literal personal purification becomes feasible when hitting the mark means aiming at a clearly defined target and when the false targets of *sin process* are eliminated.

The *sin process* is simply a *process*. It is neither evil nor good. Jesus used the *sin process* to communicate a truth to the church. That is to say, he demonstrated the borders of sin and temptation. Considering the *sin process*, James' epistle of straw (as Luther coined) cannot be easily considered as works doctrine.[39] *Sin process* is neither righteousness nor unrighteousness. James' chapter one frontloading of *sin process* theology allows him to later say, "Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded*"* (Jas 4:8b). For James this may be less works and more the natural working out of the neutral *sin process*. The faith-works dichotomy tension lessens slightly in light of *sin process* theology, placing the *sin process* struggle directly in the footsteps of a sinless Christ, by using the *lust-entice-move* structure of the temptation.

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[39]James' epistle is not, however, as Luther asserted, "an epistle of straw." It is a noble and practical homily on a text which Jesus himself propounded: "By their fruits you shall know them." It was a strong protest against the tendencies which during the Middle Ages obscured the real essence of Christianity. It is a protest to which Christianity in the present age is listening with results which are most practicable and commendable. At the same time, it is equally important to remember that the epistle of James presents not all but only a part of Christianity," Charles Foster Kent, *The Work and Teachings of the Apostles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 286.

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