



A Christological Reflection on Akan Hamartiology and Reconciliation

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Abstract

Sin is a universal phenomenon observed across all societies, no matter their level of development. Each society prescribes moral conduct that prohibits sin and serves to regulate human behavior. Unfortunately, there is a growing tendency to trivialize sin in contemporary Akan (Ghanaian) society, leading to a proliferation of social vices. The erosion of moral values has resulted in a distortion of right and wrong which further exacerbates societal decay. This situation has generated a fresh scholarly interest in the doctrine of sin and how sinful humanity can be reconciled with the divine. For the Akan society of Ghana, such a discourse needs to explore the relationship between sin in African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity because ATR still significantly influences many Akan/African Christians despite the unprecedented numerical growth of Christianity in Africa in recent decades. Through descriptive and comparative research methods, this study sought to understand the concept of sin—its origins, nature, consequences, and remedies—in both Christianity and Akan Traditional Religion. The paper is divided into three parts. The first part introduces the concept of sin in both Akan and biblical traditions. Following this, the subject of reconciliation in both traditions is explored. Lastly, the paper critiques aspects of the Akan doctrine of sin and provides a Christological direction for addressing the inadequacies of the Akan belief about sin and reconciliation. The paper contributes to African Christian hamartiology and Christology.

Keywords: *Adam; Akan; Atonement, God; Reconciliation; Sin*

Introduction

The Bible has three central themes: God, sin and redemption (reconciliation). The biblical narrative presents God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the ultimate source of all existence and authority (Gen. 1:1-2, 26-28; Heb. 1:3). The concept of sin permeates the message of the Bible, illustrating humanity's rebellion against God's perfect will and the resulting brokenness in the world

(Gen. 3:1-24; Isa. 59:1-2; Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Amidst the despair caused by sin, the Bible offers a message of hope through the theme of redemption (or reconciliation) through his sacrificial death and resurrection (cf. John 3:16; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:8).

The themes of God, sin and redemption also finds expression in other religious, including African Traditional Religion. The expression “African Traditional Religion” refers to the foundational religious beliefs and rituals practiced by African communities prior to the introduction of other religions such as Christianity and Islam. Each African society possesses unique characteristics within their belief systems. However, African Traditional Religion encompasses several shared traditions. In this belief system the concept of the Divine takes various forms, with deities governing the forces of nature and the spiritual realm. Sin is understood in terms of actions that disrupt the natural order or violate societal norms. Redemption involves rituals, sacrifices, and communal acts aimed at restoring harmony and reconciliation.

Though fundamental in Christianity and Akan traditional religious worldview, the concept sin is trivialized these day because of nominalism. This situation has led to an increase in social problems and moral decay. This has sparked scholarly interest in exploring the doctrines of sin and reconciliation to foster spiritual fervor. Particularly, there is a need to examine the relationship between sin as understood in African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity, given the enduring influence of ATR on many Akan Christians. This research, therefore, aimed at exploring the concept of sin—its origins, nature, consequences, and remedy—in both Christianity and Akan traditional religion in order to critique the Akan concept. By reflecting on and critiquing the Akan doctrine of sin and reconciliation from a Christological perspective, the paper sought to correct wrong notions about sin and reconciliation among Akan Christians.

Terminologies for sin

Biblical terminologies

This section outlines some key Hebrew and Greek terms for sin as a way of giving an overview of the biblical concept of sin. The Hebrew term *châṭâ* appears about 293 times in biblical literature with the basic meaning “fall short of” or “miss the mark” (Judg. 20:16; Prov. 8:35ff; Job 5:24), though it can also mean “missing the way or the objective” (Prov. 19:20; 1 Sam. 2:25), guilt (cf. Isa. 29:20-21), an offense against either God (Lev. 4:14) or another person (Gen. 31:36) (Strong, 2009, p.1573; Vine, 2015, p.363-364).

Another word for sin is *rāšā* which derives from the Arabic word meaning “disjointed, ill-regulated, abnormal and wicked.” The word *rāšā* depicts sin as “wickedness” or “guilty” specifically in the sense of departing from the right path (cf. Exod. 9:27; Deut. 25:2; Job 3:17; Isa. 57:20-21; Jer. 5:26) (Vine, 2015, p.364). It is used specifically for murderers (2 Sam. 4:11) and to express the “guilt of death” (Num. 35:31).

The word *ra'*—literally meaning “breaking up” or “ruin” (Norman 2007, p.421)—is another Hebrew term for sin. The shades of the meaning of *ra'* include that which is “bad”, “evil” or sin that is hurtful (1 Sam. 30:22; Esth. 7:6; Job 35:12; cf. Psa. 10:15), calamities or that which is morally wrong (Gen. 3:5; 38:7; Judg. 11:27), evil words (Prov. 15:26), distress (Neh. 2:17), adversity (1 Sam. 10:19; Psa. 94:13; Eccl. 7:14), evil thoughts (Gen. 6:5) and evil actions (Deut. 17:5; Neh. 13:17) (Norman, 2007, p.421; Vine, 2015, p.365). It also refers to something that is unpleasant because of the pain (Gen. 47:9; Exod. 33:4; cf. Gen. 37:2), sorrow (Gen. 44:29; Neh. 2:2), wretchedness (Num. 11:15), affliction it produces (Num. 11:11), something that is defective and not suitable for sacrifice (Lev. 27:10; Deut. 17:1) (Norman, 2007; Vine, 2015).

Another word for sin is *’âvôn* which means “iniquity” with respect to “injustice; unfairness; hostile; adverse” (Vine 2015, p.362). It derives from *âvâh* which means “to be bent, bowed down, twisted, perverted” or “to twist.” In relation to sin, *âvôn* means “perversion of life (a twisting out of the right way), a perversion of truth (a twisting into error), or a perversion of intent (a bending of rectitude into willful disobedience)” (Vine 2015, p.362). In most of its occurrences *âvôn* occurs in parallelism with other sin-related words like *chattâ’âh* (“sin”) and *pesha’* (“transgression”) (1 Sam. 20:1; Job 14:17) (Vine, 2015, p.362).

Another Hebrew word for sin is *âmal* which means “evil; trouble; misfortune; mischief; grievance; wickedness; labor” (Vine, 2015, p.361). The Arabic cognate means “to get tired from hard work” while the Aramaic equivalent means “‘make’ or ‘do,’ with no necessary connotation of burdensome labor” (Vine, 2015, p.362). Generally speaking, *âmal* denotes “either the trouble, and suffering which sin causes the sinner or to the trouble that he [or she] inflicts upon others” (see Jer. 20:18 where it signifies self-inflicted sorrow) (Vine, 2015, p.362).

The word *’âven* depicts sin as “iniquity; vanity; sorrow” (Vine, 2015, p.360). Though scholars do not agree as to its root, there is a general consensus that *’âven* means “the absence of all that has true worth” and hence denotes “moral worthlessness,” as in “the actions of wrongdoing, evil devising, or false speaking” (Vine, 2015, p.360-361). It also implies a “painful burden or difficulty”—that is, “that sin is a toilsome, exhausting load of ‘trouble and sorrow,’ which the offender causes for himself or others” (see Psa. 90:10; Prov. 22:8; Vine, 2015, p.361). In addition, *’âven* may represent a crime or offense which is punishable by law (Mic. 2:1) or deception (Psa. 36:3).

The Greek word *harmatia* is one of the most commonly found words for sin in the New Testament. From it comes the theological expression for the doctrine of sin, hamartiology. *Harmatia* occurs 170 times and means “missing the mark” just like the Hebrew word *châtâ*. The word *harmatia* denotes “failing to meet God’s revealed moral, ethical, and ritual standards” (Renn, 2014, p.907). The New Testament presents sin as “violating God’s laws” in passages such as Matthew 1:21; Mark 1:5; John 8:2ff; 1 Timothy 5:24 and James 2:9. Other Greek terminologies include *paraptōma* which means “trespass” (cf. Matt. 6:14-15); *anomia*, meaning iniquity, lawlessness (Matt. 7:13; 1 John 3:4); *parabasis*, denoting transgression (Rom. 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:14) and *asebeia*, meaning ungodliness (Rom. 5:6; 1 Tim. 1:9).

Based on the different perspectives on sin given by biblical terminologies examined above, different scholars have provided their own definitions of sin. Aquinas (2006) described sin as any word, deed, or desire that goes against the eternal law. Calvin (1960) viewed sin as unfaithfulness to an eternal law, while Arminius (cited in Willey, 1952) defined it as thoughts, words, or actions contrary to God’s law, or the neglect of what God has commanded. Strong (1907) defined sin as a lack of conformity to God’s moral law in action, disposition, or state. McKim (1996) considered sin as the state of being separated from God due to opposition to his purposes; it encompasses disobedience to God’s law, failure to fulfill his will, or outright rebellion, necessitating divine forgiveness. For Langston (2018) sin is any deviation from the moral attributes of God or his law; it has to do with evil thoughts, words, actions, or the failure to do good. Finally, Groenhout (2006) defined sin as the conscious choice of a lesser good over a greater good, made in defiance of God’s loving and wholly good will. Drawing from these scholarly definitions, I define sin as any action or inaction that contradicts God’s purpose and will for the universe.

Akan traditional view about sin

The Akan people are an ethnic group predominantly residing in Ghana and the Ivory Coast in West Africa. They are known for their rich cultural heritage, language, and traditions. They are divided into several subgroups, the most prominent of which are the Bono (who were the first Akan group to

settle in the Gold Coast), Fante, Ashanti, Akuapem, and Akyem. Each subgroup has its own distinct customs, dialects, and cultural practices, but they share a common ancestry and language known as Akan. I selected the Akan community for this work due to their significant presence within Ghana's populace and my personal connection to Akan culture, being of Akan descent myself.

To appreciate the Akan concept of sin, it is important to, first of all, explore their religious traditions. The next section deals with this.

Akan traditional religious belief system

The Akan traditional religious belief system encompasses various spiritual entities, including God, lower divinities, ancestors, and spirit beings, among others. At the apex of the Akan cosmology stands *Nyame* or *Nyankopɔn* (God or the Supreme Being) who is considered the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. God is considered as the holiest Being. It is believed that "God's greatest taboo is evil" (Awulalo and Dopamu 1979, p.217) and so the Akan say *Nyame mpe bɔne* (God hates sin). Beneath *Nyame* are the *abosom* (lower divinities) who are associated with specific natural elements or phenomena such as rivers, forests, or celestial bodies (Peprah 2022).

The Akan also believe in the existence of *nananom nsamanfoɔ* (ancestors), the spirit of the dead living in the realm of the dead (*asamando*). The belief in ancestors is grounded in the Akan understanding of death as a transition from the physical to the spiritual realm, where individuals maintain their identity and relationships. The Akan facilitate the transition of the deceased to *asamando* through elaborate funeral rites. Ancestors are revered as important intermediaries between the living and the divine realm. They are believed to continue to play an active role in the lives of their living descendants, offering guidance, protection, and blessings. They punish people for evil deeds and reward them for their good deeds.

The Akan also hold a rich cosmology that includes the *abosom*, the lower deities or spirits, assist humans on earth (Peprah 2022). These entities are believed to dwell within trees, rocks, bodies of water, and other natural features, imbued with supernatural powers (Peprah 2022). *Abosom* are revered and respected, with rituals and offerings made to honor and appease them, acknowledging their influence over human affairs.

Furthermore, the Akan believe in "*suman*," encompassing totems, magical powers, and charms, which are thought to provide protection, guidance, and assistance in daily life. People put *suman* around their waist or in their pockets to secure protection in times of danger. This belief system emphasizes the interconnectedness between humans, nature, and the divine, where spiritual beings coexist alongside the physical world, shaping Akan religious practices and worldview.

The above cosmology informs the Akan concept of sin. In the following section, I examine key Akan terminologies for the concept of sin.

Akan terminologies for sin

From the Akan perspective, sin may be defined as failure to adhere to the morally correct actions sanctioned by one's object of worship or by the society (Peprah 2022). The Akan delineates the concept of "sin" into four distinct terms: *mfomsoɔ*, *mmarato*, *mmusuo*, and *bɔne* (Agyarko 2009; Peprah 2022). The term "*mfomsoɔ*"—originating from the verb "*fom*" ("to offend")—encompasses errors, wrongdoings, or inadvertent sins. *Mfomsoɔ* denotes actions lacking malicious intent, often arising within interpersonal contexts, and occasionally breaching societal norms.

“*Mmarato*” derives from “*mmara*” (laws) and “*to*” (breach) and denotes breaches of state laws and norms. Unlike *mfomsɔɔ* which is normally unintentional, *mmarato* may be intentional or unintentional and typically affects the corporate community rather than individual. Normally, *mfomsɔɔ* can be dealt with without sacrifices. The Akan hold that unfamiliarity with the law constitutes a legitimate defense for its violation. This principle finds expression in the saying “*hɔhɔɔ nto mmara*” (“a stranger to the law does not breach the law” meaning “a stranger cannot be said to have breached the law” because of he/she is ignorant about the law). Thus, in the Akan context ignorance serves as a mitigating factor in legal culpability.

Another term for sin is “*mmusuo*” derived from “*mmoa*” (animals) and “*su*” (behavior), underscoring its link with animal’s behavior. Christaller (1933, p.323) defines *mmusuo* as “mischief, misfortune, disaster, misery, calamity, and adversity,” describing it as “a thing that causes mischief.” The Akan saying “*mmusuo aba me so*” (“a calamity has befallen me”) signifies that the concept of *mmusuo* encapsulates the notion of adverse circumstances (Christaller 1933). An individual who does something to bring calamity to him/herself is told *woabɔ mmusuo* (“you have brought calamity upon yourself”). The prevailing understanding of *mmusuo* revolves around its portrayal as both a forbidden action (taboo) and a dire state of affairs in both ordinary discourse and scholarly analysis (Agana and Prempeh 2020).

Taboos are social or cultural prohibitions or restrictions against certain actions, behaviors, objects, or discussions that are considered culturally unacceptable, forbidden, or sacred within a particular group or society (Turaki cited in Oyo 2020). Taboos often carry strong social or religious consequences for those who violate them and may be based on moral, religious, or traditional beliefs (Turaki cited in Oyo 2020). When one breaks a taboo, the Akan say the person has done *akyiwadɛɛ* (a detestable thing). Breaking taboos can lead to social ostracism, punishment, or other forms of negative consequences within the community. One who commits *mmusuo* incurs the wrath of deities and needs to perform some rituals to remove the curse or calamity brought upon society by their act. This ritual (*musuyie*, meaning removal of *mmusuo*, calamity) involves offering sin sacrifices (*afɔdɛɛ* or *mpatadɛɛ*), akin to the Old Testament’s sin/guilt offerings (Lev. 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30).

The fourth Akan word for sin is “*bɔne*” which derives from “*bɔno*” (or “*bɔn*”), meaning “stink”. *Bɔne* encompasses evil acts and intentions directed towards others. While *bɔne* may include all forms of sin (Opoku 1978), it carries a distinct meaning focusing on evil plans and acts against fellow human beings. Evil intentions preceding evil acts define *bɔne*, contrasting it with mere thoughts or actions lacking malevolent intent. This intentional sin (also referred to as *amumuyɔ*) underscores the perpetrator’s awareness of wrongdoing yet willingness to proceed with the sinful act. *Mmusuo* is more grievous than *bɔne*.

The foregoing examination of the terminologies of sin from both biblical and Akan worldviews serve as a framework for the following section which compares and contrasts the concepts of sin in these two religious traditions.

A comparative study of the Akan and biblical views on sin

Origin and consequences of sin

In the Genesis account, God made Adam, the first man, from the dust of the earth, and then Eve, the first woman, from Adam’s rib, forming a profound bond between them (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:7, 2:21-22). God then placed them in the lush and paradisiacal Garden of Eden to enjoy perfect communion with him and with each other (2:8, 15) (Langston, 2018). Central to this idyllic setting was the presence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which God commanded Adam not to eat from its fruit (2:16-17). However, the cunning serpent, often associated with Satan (cf. Rev. 12:9), tempted Eve with the allure of

knowledge and autonomy (Gen. 3:1-24). Eve succumbed to the temptation, partook of the forbidden fruit and shared it with Adam, who also ate it to defy God's explicit instruction (3:6). In that moment of disobedience, humanity's innocence was shattered, and sin entered the world. This incident is theologically referred to as the Fall of humanity.

The consequences were profound and far-reaching. Firstly, sin created a divide between humanity and God (Gen. 3:8-10), necessitating reconciliation. God's promise of a Savior, announced as "the seed of the woman" (3:15) offered hope for redemption and foreshadowed the shedding of blood to atone for sin. Secondly, the Fall damaged human-human relationships. Adam's reference to Eve as "the woman you [God] put here with me" (3:12) (after the Fall) rather than his own earlier description "the bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (2:23) signifies the negative impact the Fall had on human-human relationship. Thirdly, the environment was impacted, with labor required for sustenance where abundance once prevailed (3:17-19). Additionally, the Fall led to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden as a symbol of their separation not only from constant communion with God but also from the fuller life originally intended (3:23-24) (Berkhof 2005). Finally, every human (except Jesus Christ) inherited a sinful nature from Adam. Theologians often refer to this inherited sinful nature as "original sin"¹ which means the first sin infected human race and made every human being (with the exception of Christ) inherit a nature that predisposes them to sin (Berkhof 2017). Thus, "original sin" is the inevitable consequence of Adam's sin on all his descendants, resulting in the corruption of human nature and the sprouting of various forms of actual sins throughout human existence (McFarlan 2016; Hodge 1995). From this perspective, sin is a foundational element of human life, not merely a result of subsequent actions (Berkhof 2017).

As previously mentioned, within Akan belief systems, there exists a profound belief in the existence of a divine Creator who is responsible for the creation of all things within the universe, including humanity. According to Akan cosmology, God made the first human beings, a man and a woman, from clay and imbued them with life and consciousness. Concerning the origin of sin, the Akan believe that, in antiquity, God dwelled in the sky, close to the earth. However, an elderly woman pounding *fufu* (a Ghanaian dish made from pounded boiled cassava and plantain/cocoyam) inadvertently disturbed him with her pestle (Williamson 1965). This angered God and prompted his retreat to a higher realm beyond human reach. In an attempt to reach God, people stacked mortars, but tragedy struck when the pile collapsed, leading to their demise (Williamson 1965). This event, according to the Akan, represents humanity's only direct sin against God. Other sins involve offenses against fellow humans or creatures, as God is now geographically distant from humanity and thus not directly affected by human sin (Agyarko 2009).

Even though the Akan do not believe that sins are committed directly against God, they believe that sin against others also impacts God, as sin brings ceremonial impurity, disrupts harmony between the physical and spiritual realms, and renders one unworthy to approach God. The saying "*woabra Nyame*" ("you have suppressed God") is used to tell someone about the gravity of his/her sin against another creature. This expression indicates that suppressing someone equates to sinning against God. That is, since everything originates from God, inflicting unwarranted harm, whether on humans or other forms of life, is regarded as an act of evil (indirectly) against God within Akan beliefs (Opoku 1978). The Akan perceive God as the ultimate and righteous judge of all sins; therefore, they say "*Nyame ntua wo ka*" ("May God punish you") or "*mede m'asem ama Nyame*" ("I have left my case into God's hands").

¹ Grudem (2011) uses the expression "inherited sin", contending that "original sin" is often misconstrued as Adam's sin instead of the sin that is our due to Adam's sin.

The Christian idea that the original sin has made Adam's posterity prone to sin (Psa. 51: 51:5; Rom. 5:12-14) has no place in the Akan worldview. Akan anthropology holds that a person is born morally neutral and the choice they make is what makes them sinner or righteous (Owiredu 2020). Sin, in the Akan worldview, is a deviation from the inherent goodness of humanity, rather than an inherent flaw in human nature itself. Therefore, Mbiti's assertion that "a person is what he is because of what he does, rather than that he does what he does because of what he is" applies to the Akan. Mbiti's view is supported by Sarpong's (cited in Gyekye 1995, p.151) contention that "for the Akan what a man is is less important than what a man does... a person is what he is because of his deeds. He does not perform these deeds because of what he is." The Akan proverb "One is not born with a bad 'head,' but one takes it on earth" also highlights that bad character is not an inborn characteristic but something one acquires one earth (Gyekye 1995, p.151). Therefore, in the Akan religious worldview, no one is, either good or evil outside the context of what they do or omit to do.

Personal and communal dimensions of sin

The Bible portrays sin as a multifaceted phenomenon with both personal and social (corporate) dimensions. There are instances of individual wrongdoing highlighted throughout the biblical narrative, such as David's adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11), and Peter's denial of Jesus (Matt. 26:69-75). The Bible also emphasizes personal responsibility for sin, with individuals called to repentance and accountability before God (1 John 1:8-9). Each person is urged to examine their own heart, actions, and motivations, recognizing their need for forgiveness and redemption. Through personal confession and repentance, individuals can experience reconciliation with God and restoration to a right relationship with him.

At the same time, the Bible also gives evidence of the communal dimension of sin. The narrative of Achan's disobedience (in Josh. 7), for example, reveals how individual transgressions can reverberate throughout the community, resulting in collective consequences. Achan's sin not only led to his own downfall but also brought about defeat and loss for the entire Israelite camp. This highlights the corporate nature of sin and the interconnectedness of personal actions and communal outcomes. Moreover, prophetic writings like those found in Isaiah 1:2-4 and 10:1-4, as well as Jeremiah 5:12, 28-29, emphasize the societal ramifications of sin. These passages condemn the collective sins of Israel and Judah, including systemic injustices, oppression of the weak, and moral decay among the leadership. They underscore how societal corruption and moral degradation stem from the collective disobedience and waywardness of the people and demonstrate the far-reaching impact of sin on the fabric of society.

Similarly, in the Akan worldview sin is perceived as disturbances to the cosmic balance—a disruption or distortion of the divine order. It is not merely breaking the law or disobedience to God but rather a disruption of the harmonious arrangement of the universe (Adeyemo 1979). This is rooted in the Akan communal sense of sin and reconciliation where sin is understood within the context of interconnectedness such that an individual's evil deed disrupts the balance between humans, nature, and the spiritual realm. The Akan emphasize their connection with the supernatural realm, with sin not only affecting present harmony but also impacting the relationship with ancestors and other spiritual beings. Thus, the Akan communal worldview makes sin a concern for the entire community rather than just individuals. Therefore, the emphasis in Akan thought is often on restoring balance and harmony within the community through rituals, reconciliation processes, and communal rites rather than focusing solely on individual spiritual healing.

Metaphorical representations of sin

Sin as disease

In the Bible, sin is often depicted metaphorically as a sickness or spiritual ailment that afflicts humanity. Sin is likened to a wound deep within the core of the sinner, an affliction that carries grave consequences, ultimately leading to death (Gen. 2:16; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23a). Just as a disease ravages the body, sin corrodes the soul and cries out for healing. From the perspective of Isaiah (53:5) the only remedy for this spiritual malady is found in the Suffering Servant who bears our infirmities and by whose wounds we find healing. Jesus's atonement was symbolized in the Old Testament by God providing garments of animal skin to cover Adam and Eve's shame (Gen. 3:21). God also established rituals of atonement (Exod. 30:10; Lev. 10:17; 16:1-28). These acts of atonement foreshadowed the ultimate fulfillment in the promised Messiah, prophesied in Genesis 3:15-16, who would conquer sin and its effects once and for all. Jesus Christ, often referred to as the Great Physician in Christianity, offers spiritual healing and redemption for sinners through his sacrifice on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24). The metaphor of sin as sickness underscores the universal need for spiritual healing and the transformative power of God's grace to restore individuals to wholeness and relationship with him.

The representation of sin as sickness is not absent in the Akan worldview. For example, among the Bono people, when one commits a grievous sin others may say about the person, *ɔyare* ("he/she is sick"). This underscores that the sin committed by the person is rooted in his/her (spiritual) ill-health. While sin is considered as a sign of one's "ill-health", the Akan also believe that sin can make one prone to sicknesses. They believe that certain illnesses stem not from pathogens but as consequences of wrongdoing. According to their belief, "*duabo*" (curse) often manifests as unusual sickness, and recovery may only occur following confession and forgiveness of sins. The contamination of sin can lead to both physical and spiritual sickness, but through reconciliation, the repentant individual can regain health through sincere contrition, confession, and acts of penance.

Sin as stain

The Bible depicts sin in various ways to convey its profound impact on individuals and their relationship with God. One such way is the metaphorical depiction of sin as stain or impurity (cf. Psa. 51:7; Isa. 1:18). This imagery is particularly powerful because it evokes the idea of something deeply ingrained and difficult to remove, much like a stubborn blemish on clothing. The biblical concept of sin as a stain is portrayed poignantly in Psalm 51:7 where the psalmist acknowledges his guilt and the defilement caused by his transgressions and appeals to God for purification with hyssop. The hyssop plant is often used in ceremonial cleansing rituals in ancient Israel. In Isaiah 1:18 the sin-stain is given a color—deep red. This text presents a comparison between the "darkness" of sin and the purity by representing them respectively by scarlet and snow. Snow, with its pristine whiteness, serves as a powerful symbol of purity and innocence. Therefore, by pleading for God's cleansing, the psalmist acknowledges the depth of his sinfulness and the need for divine intervention to remove the stain of guilt and restore him to a state of spiritual cleanliness.

The stain metaphor underlines the pervasive and corrupting influence of sin. Just as a stain spreads and tarnishes the surface it touches, so sin spreads throughout the human heart and soul to defile and distort the image of God within each person. Paul offers a compelling analogy: Just as yeast permeates dough, sin also infiltrates our souls. Sin may start inconspicuously, like a dry grain of yeast, but soon it grows into something larger. It spreads and swells within us, distorting our souls from their intended state (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6-7). Sin, much like yeast in dough, has the potential to grow uncontrollably if left unchecked. When yeast is not properly managed, it can cause dough to rise excessively, leading to

undesirable outcomes. Similarly, sin, when allowed to fester and grow unchecked, can lead to unbridled desires, destructive behaviors, and moral decay.

Similar to the biblical depiction, sin in Akan context is often symbolized as a stain (*fi*) or filthy/ugly (*tantane*) (Peprah and Amoah 2022). Thus, sin has an aesthetic dimension which is reflected in the Bono-Twi saying *ne subane nye fe* or *ne subane ɔɔtane* (his/her character is ugly). When the Bono people say “*waagu ne ho fi*” (he/she has stained him/herself”) to describe the one who has committed sin, they give an aesthetic depiction of sin and morality. This stain is not only visible to the individual but is believed to be discernible to the spiritual realm, including ancestors and deities. The stain associated with sin makes the sinner’s soul dirty and ugly while righteousness renders one’s soul clean and beautiful (Peprah and Amoah 2022; Opuni- Frimpong 2012). Thus, the pollution associated with sin affects the inner and immaterial part of the person, the soul. For this reason, when one sins (by breaking a taboo), a ritual—referred to as *kradwaree* (soul washing)—is performed to cleanse the person’s soul in addition to other rituals all of which constitute the *musuyie*. The *kradwaree* rite is meant to wash the soul from the pollution caused by sin.

Like the biblical concept, the Akan perception of sin as stain also underlines its pervasive nature. Sin, much like yeast in a batch of dough, has a remarkable ability to spread and influence every aspect of one’s life. It often begins with seemingly insignificant actions or thoughts but can quickly permeate and affect one’s behavior, relationships, and environment. This notion is expressed by the proverb “*nkatee baako see nkatee aduasa*” (“one bad groundnut (can) spoil(s) thirty groundnuts”). This proverb draws on the Akan practice of eating roasted or fried groundnuts. When one eats groundnuts, the person puts a number of the nuts in the mouth and chews. In the event that one groundnut is spoiled (rotten and/or has a bad taste), its bad taste dominates the taste of the entire nuts being chewed. Sin is compared to that one bad nut whose bad taste pervades that of the entire nuts. The saying “*nkatee baako see nkatee aduasa*” is, therefore, used to advise people against bad company and to highlight the importance of surrounding oneself with positive influences for moral and spiritual well-being.

Sin as unpleasant smell

The Bible conveys the idea of the repulsiveness of sin. One notable example is found in Proverbs 13:5 (NIV): “The righteous hate what is false, but the wicked make themselves a stench and bring shame on themselves.” This verse illustrates the stark contrast between righteousness and wickedness and the latter as emitting a foul odor that repels and brings disgrace. The comparison underscores how immoral actions, characteristic of the wicked, bring shame and dishonor, permeating like a foul odor and driving others away. Sin, like a stink, pollutes and corrupts, making it intolerable to those who uphold righteousness. In 2 Corinthians 2:15-16, Paul describes believers as being like a pleasing aroma to God, while those who reject the message of Christ are like a foul smell of death. Here, Paul not only emphasizes the spiritual consequences of sin but also portrays it as something repugnant and offensive to God. The imagery of sin as a stench serves as a powerful metaphor for its corrupting influence and the need for repentance and redemption.

Similarly, the Akan metaphorically describe sin with olfactory symbolism (Owiredu 2020). In Akan culture, morally wrong actions are considered to emit a spiritual “stench” that permeates both individuals and their surroundings. The words *bɔno* (to stink) and *bɔne* (bad) underscores the traditional understanding of sin as unpleasant smell. One may say *ne subane bɔno* (his/her character stinks) to signify that a person has a bad character. The evolution of the term *bon* from stench to evil gave rise to new words such as *adebɔne* (a bad thing), *adwemmɔne* (wicked mind/intentions), *anibɔne* (evil/bad eye) and *subanbɔne* (bad character).

Immorality is likened to an unpleasant odor that permeates the senses (nostrils) (Owiredu 2020). Sin is expressed through such images as death, decay, and corruption. Therefore, the Akan use corpse-related terminologies to define sin. For example, they refer to sin as something that *apɔ* (is rotten) and so one may say *ne subane apɔ* (his/her character is rotten) to indicate that the person has a bad character. This links well with the state of rottenness of a dead animal. Owiredu (2020) explains the root of the term *mmusuo* which is a variant to the explanation given earlier. He argues that *mmusuo* originally to the clay pot that was used to collect the fluid that drained from a corpse as part of preservation process (Owiredu 2020). The Akan depict sin as the “horrendous effect of breaking the pot containing the stinking corpse fluid” and so they may say *woabɔ mmusuo* (“you have broken the container of the corpse fluid”) (Owiredu 2020, p.75). This symbolism extends to societal repercussions, where individuals who commit such sins are often subjected to execution or banishment. Their expulsion from the community serves not only as a punishment but also as a symbolic gesture to rid the society of the foul presence associated with sin. Thus, the Akan's use of corpse-related terminologies underscores the gravity of sin and its detrimental impact on both individual character and communal well-being. In this framework, the release of repulsive, nauseating odors serves as a metaphor for evil deeds, negative character traits, and offensive behavior.

How can sin be dealt with according to the Akan and biblical worldviews? The next section deals with this issue.

Forgiveness and reconciliation

This section presents the steps and requirement for forgiveness and reconciliation in both Akan and biblical worldviews.

Acceptance of guilt and repentance

Since sin breaks the human-divine relationship, Christianity emphasizes the necessity of salvation or spiritual renewal to restore the broken relationship between humans and God. According to Christian theology, the first step toward forgiveness and reconciliation (with God) is recognizing and acknowledging one's own sinfulness and need for salvation (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8-9). This involves acknowledging personal wrongdoing, disobedience to God's commands, and the separation it creates between oneself and God. The Holy Spirit of God illuminates the sinner to come to terms with his/her sin and to acknowledge how bad his/her situation is before the holy God. From the Greek word *metanoia*, “repentance” literally means “afterthought,” meaning “a change of mind about some idea or attitude previously held to be true” (Warford 2009, p.34). The change accompanying repentance has both emotional and intellectual dimensions—“it is a shift in perception that is related to a corresponding change of heart, and it assumes a change in behavior as well” (Warford 2009, p. 34). Repentance must be accompanied by a strong determination to walk “with God in a new direction and with a new sense of being in the world” (Warford 2009, p.34).

Similarly, acceptance of guilt (*fodie*) and repentance (*ahonu*) constitute the first step toward forgiveness and reconciliation in Akan traditional religious worldview (Peprah 2022). The one seeking forgiveness ought to be remorseful about the sin committed; this is articulated through phrases like “*maanu me ho*” (“I have repented of my sin”). The acknowledgement of one's sin (guilt) and the subsequent repentance must originate from the one's conscience (*ahonim/tibua*). The Bono people say *ne tibo bu no fɔ* (“his/her conscience condemns him/her”) to emphasize the power of the human conscience to judge the sinner. Conversely, a person without a functioning conscience is not only prone to sin but does not also feel guilty of his/her sins. Such a person is described as possessing a “dead” conscience (*ne tibua awu*).

Confession of sin

Confession of sin is a crucial step in the salvation and reconciliation processes of both Akan Traditional Religion and Christianity. According to Christian theology, the act of confession opens the way for God's forgiveness and mercy, allowing believers to experience the cleansing and restoration of their relationship with him (Psa. 32:5). This restoration of fellowship is vital, as confession fosters intimacy and honesty with God, knowing that he is faithful to forgive and cleanse them from all unrighteousness (James 5:16). Additionally, confession plays a crucial role in spiritual growth and transformation, helping believers confront their shortcomings, receive God's grace, and grow in holiness and obedience to his Word (2 Cor. 7:10).

In Akan Traditional Religion, repentance needs to yield a verbal confession of one's own sins. Awolalu and Dopamu (1979, p.220) opine that the confession of sin is regarded as a way of renewing their "spirit and alleviates the burden of guilt, preparing them to start anew and lead a life free from the stain of wrongdoing." As previously noted, among the Akan people, there is a strong correlation between illness, misfortune, and the presence of sin or curses. When an individual falls ill and the cause is suspected to be rooted in sin or a curse, the process of healing becomes intertwined with rituals of confession, atonement, and seeking forgiveness. In instances where an ailment is believed to be a consequence of a committed sin or curse, the path to healing involves a structured process. The afflicted individual is required to openly confess their sins before either the community or a designated panel of judges and a priest (Peprah 2022). If the person refuses to confess, they will die due to the sin committed (Peprah 2022).

Atonement/pacification

The final condition necessary for reconciliation is atonement/pacification. The term "atonement" derives from the fusion of "at + one + ment," signifying the reconciliation of two separated entities. Thomas More in 1513 became the first person to use it in reference to the payment made to bring two parties together (Selvam 2017). Thus atonement may be defined generally as the act of making amends or reconciliation for wrongdoing or injury, typically through some form of repentance, apology, restitution, or compensation. In Christian theology, atonement refers to the reconciliation of humanity with God through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Jesus' death on the cross was required to mend the broken relationship between God and human. On the cross, God's divine wrath was poured out on Christ, bearing the weight of all the sins of the world. Christ endured the profound punishment, experiencing unparalleled torment and anguish (see Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34). The cross also serves as God's instrument for redemption; meaning Christ's death bought humanity from slavery to sin (John 8:34). Another salvific dimension of Christ's atonement is justification which mean to be declared not guilty (Rom. 4:25).

Dealing with sin then reconciles humanity to God. Reconciliation denotes the restoration of the broken relationship between humanity and God. By taking on the sins of humanity and dying on the cross, Jesus removes the barrier of sin that separates humans from God. Through faith in Jesus Christ, individuals can be reconciled to God and restored to a right relationship with him. This reconciliation is not only vertical, between humans and God, but also horizontal, leading to reconciliation among humans themselves. The salvific relevance of the cross is captured aptly in the following quote by Kuma (2011:39): "The cross is the bridge we cross over to search for the well of his blood. The blood-pool is there. If it were not for the cross, we would never have the chance to wash in that blood. The cross is Christians' precious inheritance; it brings us to eternal life." Here, Kuma depicts the cross as the antidote to the human problem of sin, for it is the cross that gives humanity access to the blood and cleanses sin spiritually.

Similarly, the Akan religious worldview appreciates need to appease deities and ancestors in order to reconcile humanity with the supernatural. In Akan to be liberated from sin and experience abundant life entails being set free and empowered to engage in a life centered around community (Asante 2001). It involves being endowed with the ability to actively participate in communal life. The Akan achieves forgiveness of sins through pacification (*mpata*). When such disasters as famine, epidemic, calamity, floods, and drought threaten the security of the society as a result of the anger of the gods and spirits against an individual or the community at large, the Akan make appropriate sacrifices to avert the situation. Thus, it is not enough for one to simply acknowledge their wrongdoing and/or repent of it (and confess it). Acknowledgement of sin and confession must be followed by pacification rituals. The pacification often requires the sinner to either return stolen items, provide restitution, or appease the offended party (ancestors, gods) with offerings determined by the religious leader. These offerings may include fowl, eggs, sheep, or money (Obeng 1996). Among the Akan, eggs and sheep hold particular significance, being considered sacred.

In comparing the Akan concept of appeasement with the biblical/Christian understanding, it is significant to note that God is not like the traditional deities whose wrath is unpredictable and requires constant appeasement. According to Morris (1986:131) “God is not thought of as being capriciously angry (like the deities of the heathen), but, because he is a moral being, his anger is directed toward wrongdoing in any shape or form.” Morris’ assertion is supported by Old Testament depiction of God as a merciful Being who does not rejoice in the death of a sinner (Ezek. 18:23). God's wrath means his “stern reaction toward evil” (Morris 1986:132) which is only provoked by the presence of sin (cf. Exod. 22:23-25; Job 21:20; Jer. 21:12; Ezek. 16:38; 23:4; 24:13; 25:17). Stott (2011:197) argues that any crude understanding of anger, sacrifice, and propitiation that portrays God as akin to the bloodthirsty gods of paganism is inconsistent with biblical teachings.

Furthermore, a clear distinction arises between the Akan tradition and Christian theology regarding the initiation of the atoning process. In the Akan tradition, worshippers themselves provide the atoning sacrifice, whereas in Christian theology, it is God who takes the initiative by providing the sacrifice. This theological premise is underscored by the apostle Paul, who articulates that through the shedding of Jesus' blood, God orchestrated the means through which humanity could find reconciliation with him (Rom. 3:25). Thus, it is God who intricately planned and executed the atonement process for the redemption of humanity. In Christian theology, all salvific sacrifices are exclusively directed towards God. This theological perspective sharply contrasts with the Akan practice of offering sacrifices to various spiritual entities, including lower divinities and ancestors. Gehman (2001) writing about the doctrine of salvation in African traditional belief, of which Akan religious system is part of, asserts that “salvation has nothing to do with eternal life in heaven since sin is primarily an offence against one's neighbour and the punishment is in the present.” Thus, the Akan and biblical views about salvation differ remarkably on the outcome of the reconciliation process.

With the foregoing as a background, I now proceed to offer a reflection from the Christological viewpoint.

Christological reflections

Christology is the study of the person and works of Christ. Such a theological endeavor cannot be undertaken successfully without considering the doctrine of sin. This is because the purpose of Christ's incarnation, life and ministry is for the salvation of humanity from sin. Therefore, the Christological reflections on the subject matter begin with a look at the doctrine of sin from an Akan Christian perspective.

A holistic approach to the concept of sin

Western missionaries who introduced Christianity to the Gold Coast emphasized the individual aspect of sin (Asante 2014). They portrayed sin mainly as affecting the individual's relationship with God. This understanding of sin was undoubtedly informed by the Western individualistic view of life. Admittedly, sin is fundamentally against God. Though sin may affect people, sin is ultimately against God (Psa. 51:4), the Creator of all people and every other creature. Therefore, it is not unbiblical to define sin in relation to one's relationship with God. Nonetheless, while the individual-oriented understanding of sin is not unbiblical, it does not capture the total essence of the biblical concept of sin. As noted earlier, the biblical understanding of sin has both individual and communal aspects.

In my view a balanced theological understanding of sin must comprise theocentric, anthropocentric and biocentric perspectives. From a theocentric standpoint, sin may be understood in relation to God as any actions, thoughts, or omissions that oppose his divine will or deviate from his moral standards. Anthropocentrically, sin pertains to humanity, encompassing behaviors or attitudes that disrupt harmonious relationships with others or violate ethical principles. The ethical principles in mind here are those rooted in the Bible. Akan traditional ethical principles need to be subjected to the scrutiny of Scripture. Those that are biblical grounded should be upheld and those that contradict biblical teachings should be discarded. Biocentrically, sin involves the broader natural world, encompassing actions that harm the environment or disrupt the balance of ecosystems. This dimension of the theology of sin is crucial for addressing contemporary environmental challenges facing the Akan community and Ghana at large. Earth-keeping theological principles can be derived from the biocentric dimension of sin.

Putting the three aspects together, I propose the following definition for sin: any action, thought, or omission that opposes God's will, disrupts harmonious relationships among people, and harms the natural world. The proposed definition is not only biblically sound but also contextually informed in that it resonates well with the Akan communal worldview of life which emphasizes the need to maintain harmony with the supernatural and the environment. Sin understood this way creates disharmony between humankind, God and the natural environment and hence disintegrates of the society (Asante 2014). This understanding of sin underlines the sense of the African concept of *Ubuntu* and stands in contrast with excessive individualism that characterize the Western concept of sin and salvation (Asante 2014). Sin, understood this way, not only affect God but also affects all creatures.

A holistic look at the doctrine of sin cannot exclude the doctrine of original sin. The biblical data indicate that all humans were affected by Adam's sin. Sin entered the entire human race through Adam's sin (Rom. 5:12). Sin is universal—no one is free from it. This means all human have sinned (3:23). Adam sinned not merely as the first bad example but as the representative of all humanity (5:12-14). Presently, the Akan traditional understanding of original sin is limited and not well-developed. The Akan believe that there was a time when sin entered the world. However, they do not believe that the first sin affected the entire human race as Christian hamartiology holds. There is the need for Akan Christian theologians to delve deeper into this concept in order to formulate a comprehensive African/Akan doctrine of original sin. In my view, the Akan saying "*mfomsoɔ bata nipa ho*" ("sin/mistake is attached to human beings") serves to prepare the Akan people for the Christian concept of humanity's inherent sinful nature. The word "*bata*" denotes an intimate connection rather than mere proximity and hence emphasizes that sin is intricately linked to the human will; thus, sin is unavoidable in human existence. This inevitability can be linked to the fact that all humans are Adam *asefoɔ* (Adam's descendants). I believe there is the need to integrate the Akan concept of sin and reconciliation be into theological education and training as well as Christian discipleship training curriculum. Such integration should be guarded against syncretic tendencies; Paul's strategies in Acts 17:16-32, where he utilized Athenian culture to convey teachings about God as the creator, may be helpful in this regard.

As noted earlier, the Akan differentiate between sins. For instance, *mfomsoo* (error) within interpersonal relationships is resolved without the need for sacrificial offerings or prayers for divine forgiveness. The Akan rationale stems from their belief in the distant nature of God from humanity, suggesting that human sins do not directly impact him. This understanding contrasts biblical teachings asserting that every sin ultimately affects God and is taken seriously by him (Psa. 51:4). The biblical perspective highlights the need to correct the Akan understanding by emphasizing God's wrath against sin and the need to seek forgiveness for every kind of sin. Akan Christian hamartiology, therefore, needs to include the fact that sin, whether small or big, whether committed advertently or inadvertently needs to be atoned for because no sin is too small to send one to hell. In this regard, the Akan traditional idea that ignorance of the law is a valid justification for one's breach of law needs to be rejected to make way for the biblical view.

Christology of mediation/reconciliation

It has been mentioned previously that the Akan consider such entities as ancestors, lower divinities and other supernatural entities as intermediaries between them and God. God is considered so holy and majestic that no one qualifies to approach him directly. Again, no human is considered holy enough to serve as a priest for the God-human relationship. The Akan political idea that a king/chief cannot be approached directly informs the practice of approaching God through ancestors and lower divinities. This practice, however, underlines the Akan attribution of salvific importance to these supernatural entities.

The religious vacuum created in the Akan religious set up due to the lack of a qualified human being to mediate the God-human relationship needs to be addressed by the Christian religion. To do this, Akan Christian theology must emphasize Christ's role as the exclusive mediator/priest in God's salvific agenda. Paul's description of Christ as the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, and the one through whom and for whom all things were created (Col. 1:15-16) underscores Christ's uniqueness and preeminence as the divine mediator and source of salvation and provides a foundation for developing the a Christology that adequately addresses the Akan context. Paul illuminates the inadequacy of such rituals in attaining genuine salvation. While sacrifices may be perceived as a means to placate spiritual forces or curry favor with deities, Paul emphatically declares that true salvation is found exclusively in Christ. He underscores Christ's role as the reconciler of all things to himself through his sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection (Col. 1:20), thereby providing a comprehensive and satisfactory solution to humanity's spiritual needs.

Like Paul, Akan theologians must accentuate Christ's supremacy and adequacy over other spiritual authorities or customs. Christ must be upheld as the sole legitimate mediator between God and humanity, whose once-for-all sacrifice redeems humankind from their state of despair (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:17; 9:11-15, 26). Akan theologians need to caution their audience against becoming ensnared by human traditions or elemental spiritual forces. This underscores the paramount importance of placing one's faith solely in Christ for salvation, rather than relying on rituals or offerings that are ultimately inadequate and incapable of reconciling humanity to God. They are also encouraged to warn people against the worship of false deities and the engagement in practices like divination or necromancy, which are often associated with ancestral and spiritual mediation in African traditional religions. For example, the book of Isaiah condemns those who consult the deceased and seek counsel from mediums, affirming that such actions are contrary to God's will and ultimately fruitless in procuring salvation (Isa. 8:19).

Christology of power

In Akan, as in other African societies, religion addresses the physical and spiritual security needs of its adherents. The Akan cosmology, previously outlined, situates humanity amidst a multitude of antagonistic forces, engendering a pervasive sense of vulnerability. In times of adversity, whether on an individual or societal level, Akan culture often attributes misfortune to the influence of these formidable forces. Seeking deliverance from such perils involves the practice of offering sacrifices to appease the ancestors, gods, and other spiritual entities to reconcile these forces with humankind and mitigate the perceived threats they pose to human existence.

Carrying this worldview into Christianity, some Akan Christians still undertake various activities aimed at pleasing such entities as local deities and ancestors. Regular sacrifices are made to ancestors and gods to reconcile humanity to the supernatural realm in order to live harmoniously with such entities. One therefore agrees with Asamoah (1955, p.297) “Anybody who knows African Christians intimately will know that no amount of denial on the part of the church will expel belief in supernatural powers from the minds of the Christian.” This assertion, made some decades ago, is still true for contemporary African Christianity. Contemporary Christian practices and observations from everyday life suggest that the belief in supernatural powers is deeply ingrained in the minds of African Christians and cannot be eradicated solely through the denial or dismissal of such beliefs by the church.

In such a context, salvation should not only focus on deliverance from sin but also from the myriad threats that loom over people’s lives. In order to achieve this liberation, Akan Christologists need to develop Christology of power—that is, a Christology that presents Christ as the supreme authority and sovereign ruler over all creation. The New Testament narrative presents Christ as the triumphant conqueror who vanquished Satan's hold over humanity and the world. His life, ministry, miracles, and resurrection not only attest to his victory over sin, evil, and death but also establishes him as the ultimate authority and liberator of humanity from the clutches of darkness. Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus demonstrated his authority through miraculous deeds, such as healing the sick, casting out demons, and commanding the forces of nature (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 5:1-20; John 11:1-44). Again, through his sacrificial atonement on the cross, Jesus triumphed over sin, death, and the powers of darkness (Col. 2:15). His victory over the forces of evil not only secured forgiveness of sins but also provided believers with access to divine power and authority. Christ is depicted as the mighty Warrior who achieved victory over Satan and death (Heb. 2:14), thereby liberating those enslaved by the grip of death. Moreover, Christ's sacrificial act on the cross addresses the spiritual and eternal death that threatened humanity. In this vein, Kuma (2011:7) avers that Jesus “has bound death to a tree, granting us joy and hope.” Therefore, believers are empowered to live victorious lives, liberated from the bondage of sin and death (Rom. 6:4; Eph. 1:19-20).

The Akan traditional worldview of spiritual forces must be shaped, influenced, and guided by the victorious defeat of the Satanic Empire. This triumph over Satan signifies the defeat of demons, witchcraft, and all malevolent forces. Akan Christians are urged to view the world not through the lens of their traditional religion, but rather through the lens of Christ's victory at the cross. While earthly life may indeed be threatened by Satanic power, as affirmed by the Akan worldview, this power has already suffered a decisive blow through Christ. Instead of perceiving the world as under the dominion of Satan, Akan Christians are called to see it as under the victorious reign of Jesus Christ. However, this reality is tempered by the tension between the "now" and the "not yet," as Christ's victory over Satan awaits its full manifestation upon His return (John 16:33).

Conclusion

The Akan understanding of sin as behaviors deemed unacceptable by society makes it difficult for them to appreciate the Christian concept of salvation. The social dimension of sin is a good foundation for dealing with such issues as environmental degradation. To some extent, the biblical view of sin does include the social dimension. However, when overemphasized, the Akan traditional notion of sin has the tendency of making people feel whatever the society accepts is right and whatever the society does not approve of is evil. Such an ethical framework may lead to a situation where people are more inclined to obey human beings than God. There is, therefore, the need to balance the horizontal effect of sin with the vertical component.

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