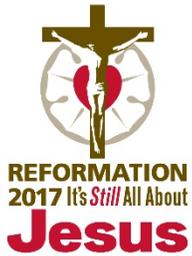


# The Hidden God: Man's Problem

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Identifying *sins* is an easier task than identifying *sin*. To identify *sins*, take up the Ten Commandments. “I don’t always trust God as I ought. I’ve cursed with His name. There are Sunday mornings when I refuse to gather with His saints around pulpit and altar.” Those are sins against the First Table of the Law. Identifying sins from the Second Table would be even more personal and pointed. With a review of the Ten Commandments, you come to Private Confession and Absolution.

Yet the Ten Commandments, as our Lutheran Confessions teach, are meant to reveal something worse than actual *sins*.

Our being in *sin* (being sinful, original sin, hereditary sin) is what gives rise to *sins*. If there was no sin of origin, no sin of being, there would be no actual sins. Original sin is the disease, the leprosy, the inherited corruption, the fatal illness of our being. “It seeks not only the pleasure of the body, but also fleshly wisdom and righteousness” (Ap 2.26). Your church and pastor teach what “our churches” have taught since 1530 in the words of AC 2: “since the fall of Adam (Romans 5:21), all who are naturally born are born with sin (Psalm 51:5), that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God and with the inclination to sin.”

Even worse, original sin hides God from us. “It is not being able to believe God and not being able to fear and love God” (AP 2.26).

Was there opposition to this teaching? You bet there was. First, the Roman Church (now Roman Catholicism). On that, read AP 2.1-51. Also opposed were the so-called Reformed churches, i.e., the churches of Zwingli and the Anabaptists, who denied that unbaptized children are sinners; they rejected the entire doctrine of original sin. Take a look at SD 1.1-62 for more on that.

Finally, there’s nothing more concise than SA 3.1.1-11; 3.2.4. Why do we need the Ten Commandments, the Law? So we can make good private confessions of real sins? Yes. Of course. But, first and foremost so that we can confess of the chief sin, the root of all *sins*, original *sin*; to reveal original sin with all its fruit. All evil deeds originate from original sin and all sin has but one remedy, the blood of Jesus shed. “The magnitude of Christ’s grace cannot be understood unless our diseases are recognized” (AP 2.33).

## Further reading

Summary—AC 4, SC 2, SD 2.9; Deeper—Ap 4, SA 8, LC 2.25-33, SC 3; Scripture—Rom 1:17, 3:9-21, 4:13-25, 5:17-19, 8:33; Eph 2:4-10, Gal 3:11, Heb 11

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## Abbreviations

AC = Unaltered Augsburg Confession  
Ap = Apology of the Augsburg Confession  
SC = Small Catechism  
LC = Large Catechism  
SA = Smalcald Articles (exclusive of the Tractate)  
Tr = Tractate on the Power and Primacy of the Pope  
Ep = The Formula of Concord, Epitome

SD = The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration

Cat = Catalogue of Testimonies

**NOTE:** Articles and sections/paragraphs in the *Book of Concord* are denoted in Arabic numerals, separated by a period. Please note that the first number in citations of SC and LC points to the Chief Part; any numbers following the period point to the specific section/paragraph. Thus SC 1.8 does not point to the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment, but to the explanation of the 4<sup>th</sup>.