

Spiritual, But Not Religious?

by Matthew W. Bassford

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fundamentally purposeful or meaningful existence. Awe in the redwood grove is nice enough, I suppose, but as a way of making life matter, it's not a whole lot more useful than the various pleasures of the flesh. Feels are feels, and ultimately they're unsatisfying.

So too with unlocking our inward potential. You live a life of *mindfulness* and *oneness* with the universe, and then you die. Is the dying of the light any better because you didn't rage against it? I suppose that such people can hope to go to heaven, but I'd much rather place my hope in a **the-truth heaven** than a **my-truth heaven**. The latter sounds an awful lot like wishful thinking.

Basically, it seems to me that the big appeal of being **SBNR** is not in what it offers, but in what it doesn't require. If you're just off being spiritual on your own, there are no rules, there are no expectations. Nobody is going to demand that you do anything you don't want to do.

This kind of freedom sounds inviting (it's sort of like being an atheist except with more meditation along the way), but in practice, it's a trap. Jeremiah 10:23 is still true today. None of us are wise enough to make our own way through life. We need guidance. We need a Shepherd. We need one another to keep us honest about following the guidance of the Shepherd.

The **SBNR** belief system rejects all of those things. I suppose that's freedom in a sense, but it's the freedom of life without signposts, stoplights, lane lines, and guardrails. You're free to do whatever you want.

You are not, however, free to avoid the consequences.

"Sin" in the New Testament

by Wayne Goff

The most common word for "**sin**" in the Bible is the Greek word **hamartia**, which means "to miss the mark." Implied in the word is the "mark" or "standard" by which men will be judged. The Word of Jesus Christ is that standard for all men in the world today (Matt. 28:18-20; Jn. 12:42).

The biblical *concept* of **sin** is a bit more complicated than we often think. In Romans 6 we see it viewed as "a governing principle or power" — "*the body of sin.*" **W.E. Vine** explains that "here sin is spoken of as an organized power, acting through the members of the body, though the seat of sin is in the will (the body is the organic instrument)..." While that may sound a bit complicated, Paul is simply saying that sin should be viewed as a complex enemy that invades the heart and mind through lustful desires and must be destroyed! He has already called it "*the old man*" — **old**, because it is **corrupt!** The old man, the body of sin, must be destroyed.

This Greek word can also be used for "**sin** **in general**", distinct from specific sins. Perhaps this is the way we most often think of sin, but don't be lulled to sleep by thinking, "I am opposed to sin" when, in fact, you do not have any particular sin in mind! Sin must be identified in our lives.

Finally, this same Greek word can indicate "a sinful deed, an act of sin" as in Matthew 12:31, "*Therefore, I say to you, every **sin** and blasphemy will be forgiven men,...*" The sinful deed of putting to death Stephen (Acts 7:60) is mentioned as another example.

There are other biblical concepts of sin found in other words like **trespass, transgression, disobedience, error, fault, iniquity**, etc. It is easy to see that sin is the great enemy of mankind because the New Testament is full of teaching, warning, and rebuking about sin. The simple English word "**sin**" appears 90 times in the KJV of the Bible. Make the word *plural* and you add another 81 instances. Then you can add another dozen or more instances through the words mentioned above. Sin must be taken seriously. We must learn what it is, how it affects us, and how it can live within us if we do not oppose it. Do not be naive about sin like the world is naive.

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