

Two Perspectives on Sin

Legal

1. Based on image of God as judge and law-maker.
(*contract*)
2. Presumes a clear sense of right and wrong
 - absolute
 - precise
 - objective
 - defined by authority
3. individual recognizes personal *responsibility*
(a *duty* to act)
4. feels shame when s/he fails
("I am a bad person")
5. failure deserves punishment
(we pay for our mistakes)
6. Virtue = what *should* be done
7. Sin = a violation of the law
8. Main Scripture reference:
Ten Commandments
9. Comes to Reconciliation to confess and do penance

Relational

1. Based on image of God as creator and parent.
(*covenant*)
2. Uneasy with a definitive sense of right and wrong
 - relative
 - circumstantial
 - subjective
 - defined by the individual
3. individual recognizes a personal *response-ability*
(a *capacity* to act)
4. feels healthy guilt when s/he fails ("I did a bad thing")
5. failure needs rehabilitation
(we grow from our mistakes)
6. Virtue = what *could* be done.
7. Sin = a failure to achieve what is possible/desirable
8. Main Scripture reference:
Sermon on the Mount
9. Comes to Reconciliation to acknowledge and change.

PERSPECTIVES ON SIN

"Traditional" "Modern"

1. Presumes a clear sense of right and wrong
1. Uneasy with a definitive sense of right and wrong
 - precise
 - circumstantial (relative);
 - objective
 - subjective
 - authoritatively defined
 - suspicious of external authority
2. individual assumes a personal responsibility (= a duty)
2. individual assumes a personal response-ability (= a capacity)
3. feels guilty when s/he fails (I did a bad thing)
3. feels shame when s/he fails (I am a bad person)
4. deserves punishment
4. needs rehabilitation
5. Sin = violation of the law
5. Sin = failure to achieve what is possible
6. Virtue = what *should* be done
6. Virtue = what *could* be done
7. Scripture reference: *Ten Commandments*
7. Scripture reference: *Sermon on the Mount*

> comes to Reconciliation to confess and do penance
> comes to Reconciliation to acknowledge and change.

- Two perspectives co-exist (not happily) in society, individuals, and in church today.
nb. public opinion on crime (very traditional) vs. individual morality (modern)
- Each in its own way is correct; both lead to the same end -- "correct" behavior
- Either can lead the individual person:
 - a) to realize that some behavior is more or less acceptable/appropriate; has positive or negative effects; is helpful or hurtful (to self or others); should/could be done or should/could be avoided
 - b) to actually shape one's behavior by this guideline
 - c) to correct or change inappropriate behavior -- ie, to *reconcile* one's behavior with what one knows/senses is right/appropriate.

Child Discipline

- begins with traditional (as young child depends on external authority/parents)
- leads gradually to integrating the modern (as child's subjective sense of self develops child interiorizes the external)
- nb. danger of shame: children cannot distinguish between themselves and their actions; cannot understand "I love you but do not like what you are doing."
correction/punishment must always be followed by reassurance (i.e., reconciliation)
(with younger children, the two are almost simultaneous)