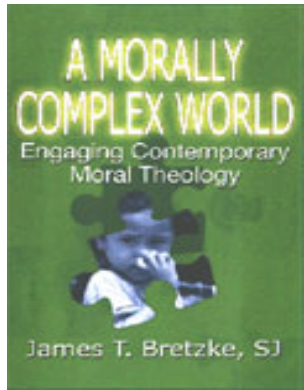


Confronting Sin, Suffering
& Moral Evil
in a 

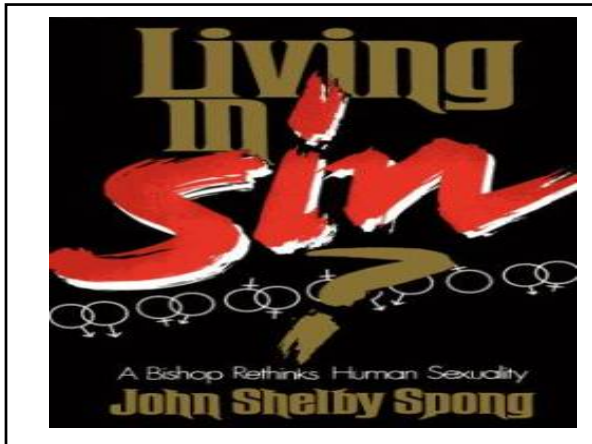
Presented by
Rev. James T.
Bretzke, S.J., S.T.D.

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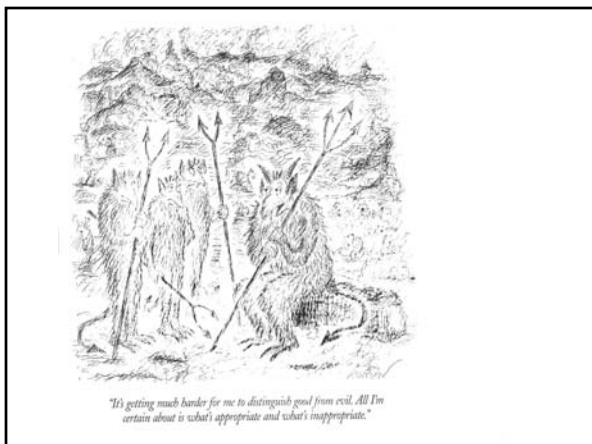


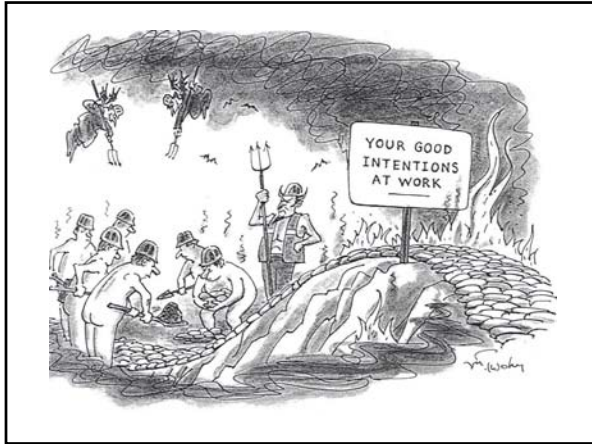




Contemporary Challenge

- Ambiguity regarding sin
- Therapeutic models
- Need for a Recovery of Sin
- Which requires confession
- Forgiveness
- Reconciliation
- Ongoing conversion

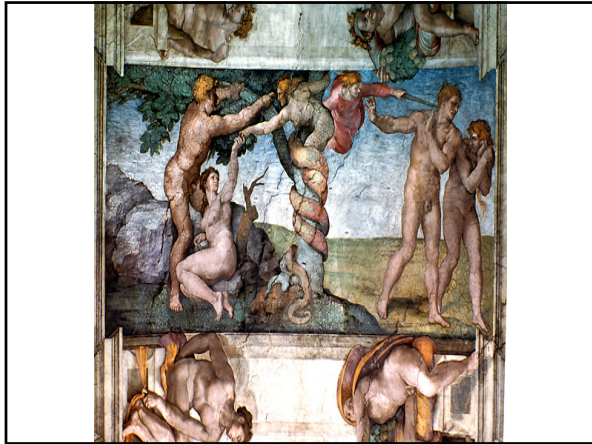






Biblical Understandings of Sin

- Old Testament Views
 - Grounding in the Covenant
 - The Decalogue as the “Ten Holy Words”
 - Role of the prophets as call to social concern and consciousness
 - Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)



New Testament Understandings

- Basic vocabulary from Hellenistic culture
- ἁμαρτία (hamartia) missing the mark
- ὑβρις (hubris) pride
- ἀδικία (adikia) "wrongdoing"
- Leading to μετάνοια (metanoia) turning towards/back, a "re-thinking"
- leading to a conversion, which can be
 - Basic and core to the person
 - as well as ongoing and deepening



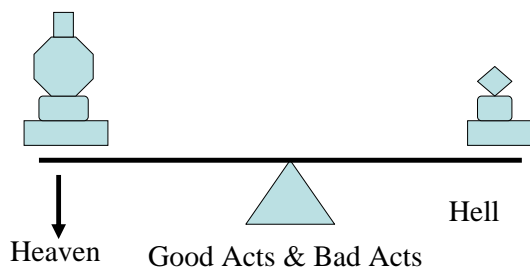
“Sin” as Seen in Jesus’ Ministry

- Call to Metanoia (Conversion) linked to...
- Call to Discipleship linked to ...
- Jesus’ own mission...
- A mission of liberation and healing
- *NOT* a mission of condemnation & punishment

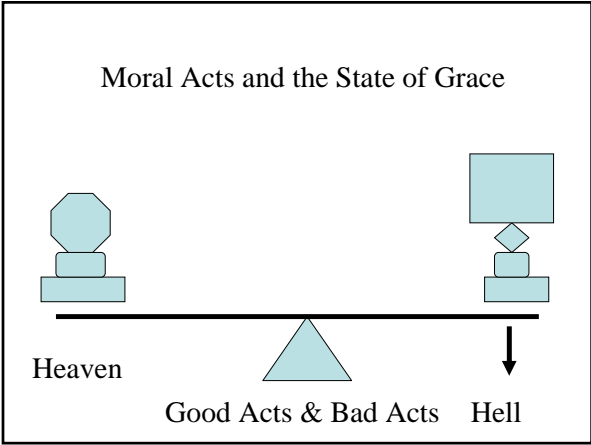
Pre-Vatican II Notion of Sin

- State of Grace and State of Sin were often presented as a sharply dichotomous position, like the “on” or “off” light switch
- One day you could be in the state of grace, then the next in mortal sin, then back in grace, and so on
- Belief that the act alone changed the balance...

Moral Acts and the State of Grace



But what if the balance shifted?
Be careful!!





Parables of God's Mercy

- Lost sheep
 - Not good business sense
 - We are each one of us unique and therefore absolutely valuable to God
- Lost Drachma
- Merciful Father and the Prodigal Son



The Return of the Prodigal Son to the Forgiving Father



The Our Father

- Prayer of the disciples: the Our Father ("Lead us not into temptation"):
- This should *not* be understood as a wish for no trials in this world.
- Rather Jesus is teaching his disciples to ask God not withdraw from them,
- and to guard them against temptation by ungodly powers.

Ministries in the New Testament

- Ministries founded in "charisms"—special "graces"
- Diversity: each person is unique and has his or her special gift and task
- Yet, the variety of gifts are held together in the unity of the Spirit,
- And exercised for the good of the community

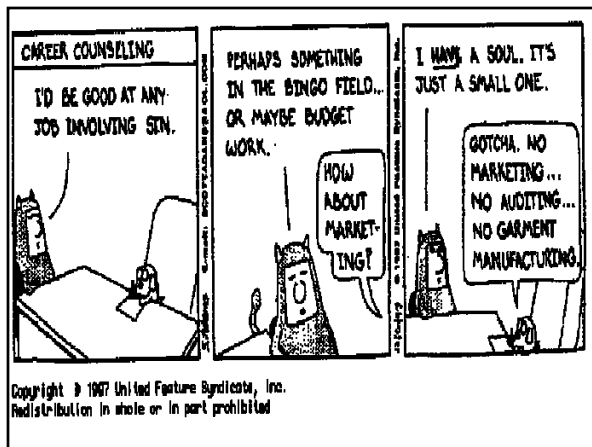
Fishers of Persons

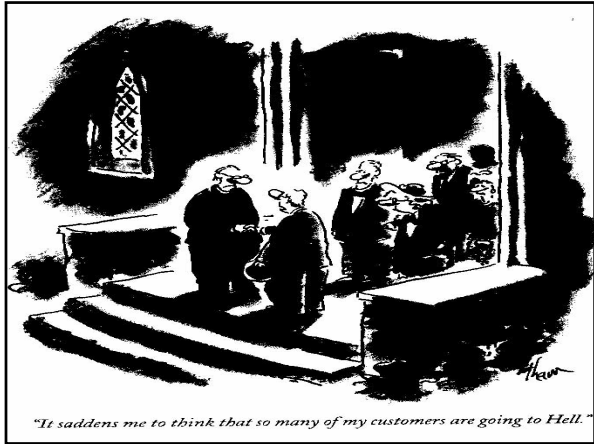
- What does it mean to "catch" someone?
- Not in the web of sin, but in the net of God's grace
- Thus, the primary Gospel response to sin and injury is *not* punishment and retaliation, but forgiveness and reconciliation.
- St. Paul speaks of this as being a "ministry" of the Church, and in this spiritual ministry we are all "ambassadors of Christ" (cf. 2 Cor 5: 18-21).

But Are We Overlooking Something?

- The initial development of the theology of sin, and the sacramental, canonical, and theological responses all focused on the individual paradigm
- Is this paradigm fully accurate?
- Are there aspects overlooked?
- Does this capture the full range of Biblical views on sin and sinfulness?



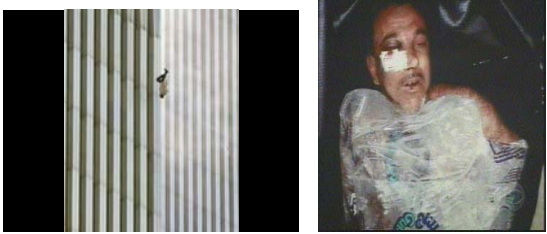




Collective or Personal Sin??



Innocent Victim or Legitimate Casualty?



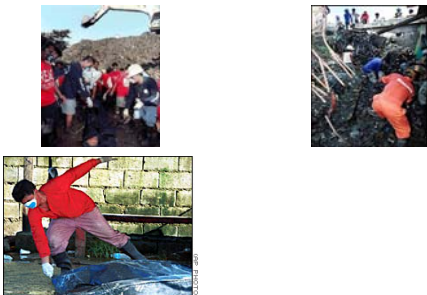
Response to Evil?



Is God Only on Our Side?



Tragedy, Sin, or ??



Whose Sin Is It Lord?

- This person's?
- Or his parents'?



Spirituality for the Ministry of Reconciliation

- Basic twin dynamics
 - Sin-->repentance-->conversion (on the part of the sinner primarily)
 - Sin--> forgiveness-->reconciliation (on the part of God, and the community)
- Confession of sin--not denial; forgiveness of sin--not "obliteration" of the fact of sin

Spirituality for the Long Haul

- We are still a pilgrim church, an *ecclesia semper reformanda*.
- Thus, need to deal with, but also live through,
 - my own sins
 - and the sins of others,
 - and of the institution

Further Marks of this Spirituality

- Spirituality of discernment and dialogue
- Spirituality of growth and liberation
- Spirituality of involvement
- Spiritual of ministry: Ambassadors of Christ