

Outline of Lecture

Chapter Seven: Ray Anderson, *On Becoming Human* In Contradiction and In Hope

(SIN AS A THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM)

The root human predicament is Sin, not sins (see sheet), and not that we are ignorant or immoral.
p88 we can apprehend sin only through the eyes of faith: sin has to be *revealed*. We can apprehend the consequences of sin empirically. We can't apprehend the substance of hope as readily.

Note the nature of hope: a future certainty grounded in a present reality. (Not "hopefulness")

p89 for the Greek mind sin is rooted in the body; the body corrupts the spirit.

Augustine and Plotinus.

Pelagius and "atomistic" sin.

Note the difference in Eastern and Western emphases.

p91 Arminius and, after him, the Enlightenment. (Is sin linked chiefly to being or behaviour? -- without in any case rendering sin fallen hk's essence.)

p92 Anderson's proper objection to "crude anthropomorphisms" and their consequences for psychology.

However [1] God *is* angry with the sinner

[2] God's anger isn't petulance or irascibility

[3] God's anger is an expression of his love

[4] God's anger is known only from his mercy.

[5] Not anger/hatred by indifference is the opposite of love.

p92 And. comments that society, alternatively, may view untoward behaviour as rooted in poverty, poor education, poor domestic provision, etc. Question: How are Sin and the above related? Which is primary? Which we regard as primary governs where we look for a cure.

(SIN AS A SIGN OF HUMAN DISORDER)

p93 Sin as the contradiction we can't slough off and the bondage we can't escape, *contra* all shallow views.

p94 Niebuhr roots sin in anxiety. Shepherd: scripture roots anxiety in sin. Jesus says "Fear not."

Nieb. roots temptation in the failure of the self to face the dread of having to act responsibly.

Shep.: in script. sin remains a mystery. There is *no* explanation for Genesis 3.

p94 Ernst Becker similarly psychologizes sin: we are unlimited spirits whose mortal bodies precipitate a quest for security, and this quest for security warps us: sin. I.e., for Becker we "settle for too little", and forfeit the loftiness that could be ours.

Both Nieb. and Becker provide descriptions of certain aspects of human behaviour, but not definitions of sin.

p95 Note the distinction between the feeling of guilt and the state of guilt. Note, finally, that only grace (gospel) quickens that ultimately real guilt that the gospel relieves.

Note the difference between shame and "shame-bound": psychopathology isn't to be encouraged.

p96 Note how guilt (feeling) fuels idolatry (especially self-righteousness).

Luther: "Your god is that which you trust for every good, that to which you give yourself." The arch sin is installing ourselves as our own Lord, the spiritual equivalent of narcissism.

p97 And. cites Rom. 1:28-32. Note the difference between "God gave them up to...." and "God gave up on them...."

p97 However aberrant/wicked human behaviour, and however psychotic we may be, we are made to long for transcendence (God) and for holiness (ours.) *This must always be kept in mind.*

p98 Becker: "It is easier to lay down light burdens than heavy ones."

[1] our burden is our coping mechanism

[2]our burden may be our identity

[3] in counselling/preaching we ought not to take away (7 demons) but to substitute this huge burden with him whose burden is light -- and then we have to support this person.

(SIN AS THE INVERSION OF THE *IMAGO DEI*)

p99 sin here is more pronounced in *religious* manifestations

[1] religion isn't faith but the contradiction of faith

[2] religion is curse

[3] religion fuels superiority and nastiness

[4] religion is ineradicable -- and therefore must be converted. (Atheism is a form of religion.)

p99 Karl Menninger: "Why did church and theol. abandon the spiritual/theol'g concept of sin for psychological categories?"

[1] the worst evils aren't perpetrated by psychotic people but by sane.

[2] "sinner" is the most hopeful diagnosis.

[3] if we are made by God for God, then owning a "theol' anthropol." is essential if we are to be restored fully.

p100 theol' anthropol. recognizes that

[1] psychological distortions can arise in an individual in a way for which s/he isn't responsible

[2] the Word of God holds all individuals accountable.

p101 (The lengthy comparison of Brunner and Barth comes down to this: Brunner said that the *i.d.*, however vitiated materially, remains formally as a "point of contact" for God's grace.)

Barth objected:

[1] there's no distinc'n here between material and formal

[2] the *i.d.* remains despite the fall (or else we shouldn't be human) but is now inverted and twisted.

[3] as inverted and twisted it isn't a "point of contact" for grace but rather is that which God's grace must turn right side up and untwist.

Barth always feared that Brunner's "pt. of contact" would [1] give rise to a natural "theol" that subordinates JC, [2] end up re-religionizing us so that we became better religionists or better moralists.

p102 Sin as "ontological impossibility"

[1] sin has no *ground* in us [2] yet sin is clearly possible since it's actual

[3] therefore sin is ultimately un-understandable, "incomprehensible" in both senses of the word.

p102 "Health precedes sickness; it is not the result of a cure."

Non-theol' anthropol.(e.g., existentialism): we have a capacity for health as we are; it merely needs to be actualized. We are authentically human in light of our cap. for fulfilment.

Theol' anthropol.: we are human *as created whole* (not with the cap. for wholeness); by grace we are *restored* to that wholeness: we don't achieve it or find it.

p103 Don't misunderstand And. -- "Grace precedes sin and makes it possible" Not that God helps us to sin, but rather that we were created human by grace -- and therefore sin as human self-contradiction presupposes our grace-created humanness. (If sin were the presupposition of grace, then sin would be part of our nature -- and we'd not be accountable.)

Shepherd: At all times we need

[1] a sound understanding of sin

[2] a sophisticated understanding of human complexity and woundedness

[3] to be able to integrate these, always understanding which is ultimate.