

Sin n. 1846-1876

n. 1849 ‘Sin is an offence against reason, truth and right conscience.
It is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbour
caused by a perverse attachment to certain things perceived as good.
It wounds human nature and injures human solidarity.’

Psalm 78 is rich in descriptions of sin

- missing the mark (verses 17, 32)
- rebellious (verses 8, 17, 40, 56)
- disobedient (verse 10)
- stubborn (verse 8)
- unbelieving (verses 8, 22, 32, 37)
- untrusting (verse 22)
- wavering heart (verses 8, 37)
- testing God (verses 18, 41, 56)
- untruthful (verse 36)
- unfaithful (verse 57)
- grieving God (verse 40)
- provoking God (verses 41, 58)
- speaking out against God (verse 19)

Letter to the Hebrews is rich in images for sin

- missing the mark (many times)
- rebellious (1:9)
- disobedient (2:2)
- drifting (2:1)
- enslaved (2:15)
- deceived (3:13)
- hardened heart (3:8)
- embittered (3:16)
- irreverent to the sacred (9:13)

n. 1866

Capital Sins – Latin caput (‘head’)

7 ‘founts’ from which sin springs

- **pride** – thinking, judging and acting in a self-reliant, self-focused way, disdainful of others and inattentive to God and to God’s will.
- **covetousness** – never satisfied with who we are or what we have but grasping for possessions, prestige, reputation, and for whatever gratifies our self-centred desires.
- **lust** – using our sexual energy either for our own self-gratification or to exercise power over others without regard to their true happiness.
- **anger** – not the anger which is an appropriate protection of self against unjust aggression, but the anger that resents anyone who crosses our ideas, our preferences, our comfort, even when they are right and we are wrong.

7 'founts' from which sin springs

- **gluttony** – living so superficial a life that bodily gratification is more important to us than the aspirations of our spirit, or the needs of others.
- **envy** – when we see someone doing well, instead of experiencing joy we feel ourselves devalued and in overt or subtle ways we find ourselves putting others down, feeling miserable that we do not have their beauty or their possessions or their success.
- **sloth** – unwilling to commit ourselves and our energy to the noble tasks of life, preferring to hang around waiting for life to deal out fortune to us.

‘It is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come:
fornication,

Jesus begins with ‘fornication’(**porneia**): a word covering a whole range of morally irresponsible behaviour in matters of sexuality. He puts it first because the way we relate sexually is central to who we are and to the way we express or fail to express love.

theft, murder, adultery,

We will reflect on these when we examine the Ten Commandments

Mark 7:21

avarice

Ways of indulging greed by grasping at what one does not have just so as to have more. We can grasp for power, prestige, possessions, pleasure ...

‘Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of **avarice**; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions’(Luke 12:15).

‘Put to death whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and **avarice** (which is idolatry)’(Colossians 3:5).

‘You must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy (**avaricious**) to practice every kind of impurity. That is not the way you learned Christ!’(Ephesians 4:17-20).

Mark 7:22

wickedness, deceit, **licentiousness**

the vice of unrestrained gratifying of sensual desire

‘They are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm; for them the deepest darkness has been reserved. For they speak bombastic nonsense, and with licentious desires of the flesh they entice people who have just escaped from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for people are slaves to whatever masters them. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first’(2Peter 2:17-20).

‘It is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires’(Romans 13:11-14).

Mark 7:22

envy ('the evil eye'), slander, pride, folly.

'People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power'(2Timothy 3:2-5).

Mark 7:23

All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.

‘The works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness

Paul offers a list of conventional vices, described here as ‘works of the flesh’. These are typical ways in which we behave when we are enslaved by desires that have not been purified by the Spirit of Jesus. Like Jesus, he begins with ‘fornication’(*porneia*). He then speaks of ‘impurity’: the pollution of our physical environment bears no comparison with the harm caused when we pollute the mind and heart. He goes on to name licentiousness: the vice of unrestrained gratifying of sensual desire.

Being a Christian means living in a certain way. It concerns the truth of who we are as persons. It is not surprising, therefore, that Paul moves immediately to speak of sexuality, for where else do all the dimensions of being human meet more intimately and more mysteriously than in our identity as man or woman? It is traditional Jewish and Christian wisdom that sexual relationships are meant to be sacraments in which we encounter the divine at the heart of another person cherished in love. There are divinely mysterious depths in every person. Sexual experience invites us into this mystery in which two people enjoy, encourage, heal, forgive and create each other in loving trust. There is a restlessness and a mysterious yearning at the heart of sexuality, for we know that we are not sufficient of ourselves. We need the other; we long to be in communion with the other. It is common human wisdom, born of experience, that when we give expression to our sexual desire we should do so in a way that recognises the sacredness and the dignity of our own person and of the other. Paul speaks of sexual behaviour which ignores all delicacy, by-passes love, and uses, even abuses, another person in a selfish attempt to assert one's own power or gratify one's own misdirected passion.

Galatians 5:20

idolatry, sorcery

Paul moves on to name the vice of worshipping false gods. For Paul, this is any god other than the God revealed by Jesus. Linked with this is the vice of sorcery. Rather than accepting human limitations and the mystery of our own being and of the world of which we are part, rather than placing trust in a loving God, we seek false assurances from people who claim to know the future or to be able to control spirits.

enmities, strife, jealousy

‘Enmities’ and ‘strife’ are found where people are defined by race, or by any other quality other than their being made in the image of God.

‘Jealousy’ (zēlos) is a form of ‘zeal’ motivated by self-interest. We hold on to what we have so tightly that we treat people as objects and are unwilling to share with others when love requires it.

anger

Paul lists 'anger' among the vices. He is not speaking of appropriate anger when we defend ourselves or others against unjust aggression. Rather, he is speaking of the unreasonable and spiteful passion that can come over us when we fail to get our own way or have our own whims gratified.

selfishness, dissensions, factions, envy

The many different ways in which 'selfishness' (eritheia) finds expression lead to 'dissensions', and create 'factions'. We are 'envious' when we are unhappy with the prosperity of others, or the freedom they have in Christ. Being dissatisfied with who we are or with what we have, we want what others have.

drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.

'The Lord knows how to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment – especially those who indulge their flesh in depraved lust, and who despise authority ... These people are like irrational animals, mere creatures of instinct ... They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their dissipation while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed'(2Peter 2:9-14).

Romans 7:14-25

‘I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin.

I do not understand my own actions.

For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate ...

I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh.

I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.

Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it,

but sin that dwells within me.

When I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand.

For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self,

but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind,

making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members ...

With my mind I am a slave to the law of God,

but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.’

Mortal & Venial Sins

‘All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not mortal’(1John 5:17).

- ‘Mortal’ (Latin mors – ‘death’)

Breaks/kills off our communion with God and so with the community

n. 1857 For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must together be met:

What is done • is a grave matter

- is done with full knowledge
- is done with deliberate consent

n. 1860 Responsibility is diminished by unintentional ignorance, and can be diminished by passion, external pressures and pathological disorders

n. 1861 ‘Although we can judge that an act is in itself a grave offence, we must entrust judgment of persons to the justice and mercy of God.’

- ‘Venial sin’ (Latin *venia* – ‘pardon’)

Wounds but does not break communion

n. 1863 Venial sin

- weakens our love-communion with God
- manifests a disordered attachment to creatures
- impedes our progress in the exercise of virtue and living a moral life
- has effects that make our behaviour to some extent dysfunctional.

n. 1863 ‘While we are in the flesh, we cannot help but have some light sins. But do not think lightly of these sins which we are wont to call ‘light’: if you take them for light when you weigh them, tremble when you count them! A number of light objects makes a great mass; a number of drops fills a river; a number of grains makes a heap. What, then, is our hope? Above all, confession ...

(Augustine on John’s Letters 1.6).

n. 1865 ‘Sin creates a proclivity to sin. It engenders vice by repetition of the same acts. This results in perverse inclinations that cloud conscience and corrupt the practical judgment of good and evil.’

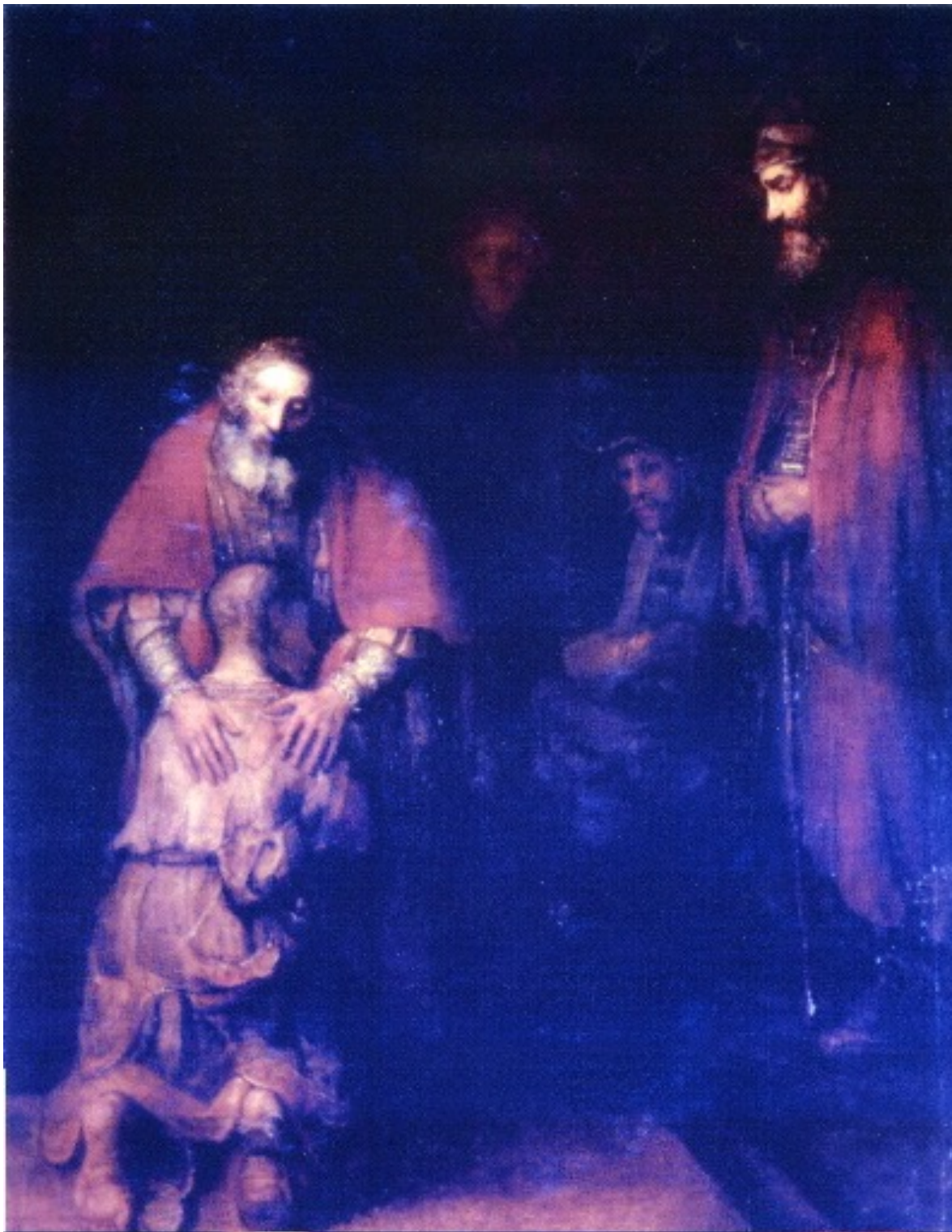
n. 1868 ‘We have a responsibility for sins committed by others when we cooperate in them:

- by participating directly and willingly in them
- by ordering, advising, praising, or approving them
- by not disclosing or hindering them when we have an obligation to do so
- by protecting those who do evil.’

n. 1848

‘Conversion requires ‘exposing sin’(John 16:8 – showing sin up for what it is). It includes the interior judgment of conscience, and this, being a proof of the action of the Spirit of truth in our innermost being, becomes at the same time the start of a new grant of grace and love: “Receive the Holy Spirit.” Thus in this exposing sin we receive a double gift: the gift of the truth of conscience and the gift of the certainty of redemption. The Spirit of truth is the Consoler.’

(John-Paul II. *The Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and the world*, 31).



Father, I have
sinned

Eugene O'Reilly CSsR

CJM Music

