

SIN AND SALVATION IN A GUILT / INNOCENCE CULTURE

Introduction – Last week we studied how there are three foundational experiences to sin. We experience either guilt, shame, or fear. These three responses developed into a guilt / innocence, shame / honor, or fear / power culture. Every society, ancient or modern, is created out of these three perspectives. In most societies all three are present, but one dominates the others.

A. The Origins of European and North America's Guilt / Innocence Culture

1. The Roman Empire put an emphasis on the rule of Law as the ultimate authority. It was assumed that the State granted rights and punished wrongs.
2. Early church leaders like Tertullian, Basil the Great, Augustine, and Ambrose were trained Roman lawyers before becoming theologians.
3. The Catholic orthodoxy developed within the Roman Empire and responded to its emphasis on Law.
4. The Protestant Reformation was lead by trained lawyers like Luther and Calvin.

B. The division between Protestants and Catholics was over what the correct Christian response was to the Law of God. The discussion centered on the Roman letter.

Romans 1:16-17

Romans 2:12-16

Romans 3:21-26

Romans 6:23

Romans 8:1-4

This resulted in what we call “systematic theology.”

C. The impact of a legal guilt / innocence culture on the American society is profound.

1. There is an emphasis on individual right and wrong according to the law and accepted morality.
2. Our entertainment industry centers on the struggle between “good guys” and “bad guys.”
3. We are concerned with whether homosexuality, abortion, military intervention, and gun ownership is right or wrong.

4. Psychologists deal with severe “guilt complexes” among clients.

5. The goal is not just avoiding guilt, but the full exercise of our rights.

Conclusion – There is also influence from the fear / power and shame / honor perspectives on our American culture. Much of the rest of the world, from the Middle East to the Far East, are still dominated by shame / honor cultures.

(There will be no discussion groups today since we have a meal followed by our fall workday.)