

I keep coming back to the basic insight that there are two main forms of sin.

One is the pursuit of one's own individual self-interest regardless of God's will.

The other is pursuit of one's own righteousness by obedience to the law—taking "law" in the broad sense of consuetudinary norms of all kinds understood to be divine demands that require to be satisfied if one is accepted of God.

This basic insight connects not only with Bultmann's analysis of the two forms of sin—self-love and self-righteousness—but also with H. R. Niebuhr's analysis of the two forms of faith alternative to radical monotheism. It also connects with what Gamwell has to say about the two main ideologies—libertarianism and conservatism—that have so dominated American public thinking, notwithstanding the very different understanding of the individual-in-community upheld and handed down by Christian faith.

Not least, it connects with Luther's analysis of the struggle that has been going on since the beginning between the true saints and the false saints over the right worship of God. Although both sides agree in condemning self-love and the cruder sins that express it, they are sharply at odds over what else is required if God is to be rightly served.

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