

Leaving judgement to God

Too many today confuse sin with the harm principle which asks for the least possible harm to be done. But why is it wrong to harm? Because people are feeling creatures and vulnerable and have the right to have their dignity respected. It follows from this that limiting morality to harm fails to see why harm is wrong and thus paradoxically this morality denies human worth and value. A morality that gets its authority from human dignity and won't admit it is just not morality at all but is whitewashed immorality.

"Sin must be against someone. It is not primarily a matter of being against a rule—for a rule does not exist without a rule-giver, or the specified persons that the rule concerns . . . whenever the law is broken, that means that someone has been wronged, grieved, or hurt" says Doug Wils. It follows from you cannot say, "Your disobedience to God is between you and him," for that is all about worrying about the rule and not that an attempt was made to violate God. It is not caring that God is wronged.

For Christians, you don't just judge actions for being harmful. You judge them for not admitting the dignity of the other person or your own dignity. Christianity has a whole list of sins that do not harm another. It has a list of sins that only slightly harm another. So there are some sins that may not harm other people. Doing fortune telling for yourself in the privacy of your room seems harmless but it is a severely condemned sin. Sin ultimately is not what we do to each other but to God. So obedience to God and disobedience are the real discussion points. The harm principle is itself harmful if it leads to a false morality and takes away God - takes away the point of morality.

The Bible seems to get mixed up about condemning evil actions and the people who commit the actions. Christians say you must condemn the deed not the doer. In practice this means being kind and fair to the doer and helping her or him to forsake the sins or wrong actions.

Jesus said in the sermon on the mount that you must not judge unless you get the plank out of your own eye first before you try to remove the mote in the eye of another. Judge here is taken to mean assessing the action as opposed to judging the person. It urges fairness and bans hypocritical judging but commands judging. The declaration that Christians will judge angels in 1 Corinthians 6:14 is interesting. Christianity has to judge actions.

Judging a person is only acceptable if the judges are able to directly stop the person doing serious harm to themselves or other people. You judge for the practical reasons not just to make a point.

We need judges in this world but to wish that somebody who did terrible things in life will get their come-uppance in the afterlife is just vindictive. We should not want people to be judged when it is not about stopping evil. Though evil should be punished, it should only be punished when punishing is about revealing that it is evil and trying to stop it. So if murderous John is dying, do not punish. If murderous John is young and healthy and he might stop murdering if he gets caught and dealt with by the law then punish.

People who say they do not judge, say that judging must be left to God. So they are calling judging a good thing.

What if judging is unloving? If God judges and he alone is judge then he cannot really love anybody that well if at all. And he is not great if he tells us to judge sinners - the Bible has examples of people judging with God's approval people whose actions did not even affect them! Remember Paul judging the man living in sin in Corinth!

The doctrine that God judges is said to be good for discouraging sin and justifying the notion that sin is bad and to be avoided. That insults atheists and accuses them of doing away with moral boundaries.

The believer is not to oppose sin so much for our sakes but for God's. The believer who endorses the judgmentalism of God is simply vindictive and putting religion above what is best for people.

We have to judge on this planet in order to survive. Even anti-judgment people judge when somebody threatens danger to them. So we tolerate judging for practical reasons. But to tell people that a God will judge them is just cruel for judging though necessary is not a good thing. To worship a God who judges is denying this.