

PEOPLE CHERRY-PICK WHAT SINNERS TO LOVE AND TO HATE

Few take seriously religion's claim to love the sinner and hate the sin. The claim is never emphasised except when religion comes under fire for condemning people.

The promoters of love the sinner and hate the sin do agree that it can be a mask for hating the sinner.

They say the sinner is hated with the sin when -

* The person loves one adulterer and hates another for it. That would be hypocrisy. It is really using the person's wrongdoing as an excuse for attacking them.

* The person does not believe in just deserts or when the person decides some sins deserve punishment and others do not. Retribution is a foreign concept to most people today. If you kill a person of your own free will then you deserve capital punishment. If that principle is wrong then punishment is entirely nonsense. Suppose capital punishment is the only real punishment for murder. Anything else then is softness. It would be hypocritical to oppose a murderer deserving to lose their life while you argue that he deserves punishment if he commits other crimes. Believers in love the sinner and hate the sin give themselves away when they cherry-pick what to punish and what not to punish.

* When the "direct" sinner is seen as worse than the sinner who sins by consent and not directly - as in Catholicism. A direct sin is when a person hits their parent. An indirect sin is when a person lets somebody hit their parent. They consent to what the other has done. The argument is that the direct sinner exercises free will more than the sinner who merely consents. That is nonsense.

* The sin is virtually harmless - like masturbation or spitting out a communion wafer or neglecting to read holy books.

* The person is selective about what sins to hate. For example, Tony Blair's warmongering might be excused (poor Tony meant well and had difficult though perhaps wrong decisions to make - never mind that he lied about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq) while Miley Cyrus is condemned for her raunchy performances.

* The sins are over-condemned or excoriated. They are judged as so bad that they deserve extreme punishments such as suffering in Hell forever. This point is only made by religious people who oppose Christian and Muslim teaching about Hell. The fact that they say their own sins deserve it too makes no difference. The point is not who is condemned but that sin is demonised. Religion goes on about objective moral evil - if you do such evil without being able to see that it is vile then that is no excuse. You are seen as so bad that you can't recognise evil. Christianity and Islam are objectively evil for they pronounce sin as worthy of eternal Hell. The Christian/Muslim religious system certainly is lying about hating sins and loving sinners and that is the truth even if some individual Christians do love sinners and hate sins. People who over-condemn sins are always selective in what sins they want to demonise. For example, the war-mongering Catholic president will never be barred from holy communion but the president who declares himself pro-abortion will be.

The promoters of love sinner and hate sin are right that hypocrites and those who cherry-pick what sins to hate are hiding hate for others behind their alleged love for them. Their real interest is their own self-glorification at the expense of others.

Now let us examine all that.

Could it be that the person who hates one adulterer for adultery and loves another who commits it is merely giving himself away when he claims that loving the sinner and hating the sin is possible? It might be not that he is violating it but showing that it makes no sense anyway. The reality is that people do pick out what sinners to love and what to condemn. Usually the abortionist can be loved while the child porn seller is hated. So even if you claim to hate all sins and love all sinners correctly, you cannot expect people to believe you.

OBJECTION: X is a burglar. Y is a burglar. Mary hates X and she claims to love Y and hate his sin. But if loving the sinner and hating the sin is possible then perhaps she really does love Y. Her hate of X would be a separate issue. If you love one sinner and hate his sin and if you hate another sinner with his sin then that is two separate things. You can have one and the other.

The error or lie in this objection is that it is all about persons and not sins or actions. If the person excuses the extreme evil of Tony Blair and slams Miley Cyrus who never killed anyone then the person is not opposed to evil as such but just uses it as an excuse to oppose some people. The objection seeks to endorse the excuse. Love the sinner and hate the sin is not only

hypocrisy but if it is in fact wrong then it endorses evil. It enables evil. And it is wrong as sure as saying you love the flu but hate the symptoms is wrong.