

LOVE THE SINNER HATE THE SIN IS UNSCHOLARLY NONSENSE

My observation: Though love the sinner and hate the sin is a popular proverb, there are two sides to it. "God loves the sinner and hates the sin." "Christians should love the sinner and hate the sin." It seems at first glance that God would not want you to hate sinners if he does not hate them himself. But is that correct? It is different for God for he is sovereign – he ultimately has all under control. He even uses evil. So God could love sinners and let us hate them or even command us to hate them. It does not matter if there is cat poison in the yard when you keep an eye on the cat.

This study is in the light of Systematic Theology by Vincent Cheung.

Some people are so prejudiced against the biblical teaching that God hates the reprobates that they insist in opposing it even when they show that they clearly know better.

For example, H. L. Drumwright, Jr. writes, "It must...be recognized that the Hebrew thought-form makes no sharp distinction between the individual and his deeds. A man in Hebrew thought is the sum total of the actions of his life..."

This is correct, and it follows that there is no sharp distinction between hating a man and his deeds. But Drumwright concludes the opposite! He continues, "...so that to say God hated a man is not to say that God was maliciously disposed toward a particular personality, but to note divine opposition to evil that was registered in that life."

This is pure lunacy. If $A = B$, then to hate A is to hate B ; there is no difference. But according to Drumwright, if $A = B$, and God says he hates A , somehow it means that he hates only B and not A . He is saying that because a person (A) is the sum total of his actions (B), when God says that he hates a person (A), he does not in fact hate the person (A), but only the sum total of his actions (B). This inference is ridiculous. He acknowledges that a person is the sum total of his actions ($A = B$); therefore, it is impossible that whatever applies to A is somehow transferred to B so that it no longer applies to A . But if $A = B$, then whatever applies to either A or B applies to both A and B . If God hates either A or B , he hates both A and B , since A is B . This is so obvious that it takes a professional scholar to confuse the issue. Moreover, if Drumwright is correct, then wonder what it means when the Bible says that God loves a person. Does he love anyone at all, or just his actions?

What controls Drumwright's thinking is a prior determination that God does not hate any person. He insists on this position regardless of what the Bible teaches, and the result is his gross incompetence in theological scholarship. Based on the first portion of his statement, that in Hebrew thinking a person is the sum of his actions, the only possible conclusion is the one proposed here, that God hates both the reprobate and his evil deeds, precisely because a person is the sum of his beliefs, thoughts, and actions.

The Bible says that God regards the wickedness of the reprobates as continuous:

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. (Genesis 6:5)

...every inclination of [man's] heart is evil from childhood... (Genesis 8:21)

In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God. (Psalm 10:4)

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. (Isaiah 64:6)

Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. (Matthew 7:17-18)

But if a person is the aggregate of his thoughts and actions, and the thoughts and actions of the reprobates are continuously evil, so that the totality of his life – the totality of his person – is evil, then it is nonsense to say that we should love the sinner and hate the sin, since one cannot be considered apart from the other. In other words, if we were to hate the sins of a reprobate person, there would be nothing left of the person for us to love.

As John Gerstner says, "As far as 'hatred of sins' is concerned, sins do not exist apart from the sinner. God does hate sinning, killing, stealing, lying, lusting, etc., but this alludes to the perpetrator of these crimes."

Peter Kreeft once told a homosexual college professor, "I love the sinner but hate the sin."

After some discussion, the professor responded:

Well, suppose the shoe was on the other foot. Suppose you were in the minority. Suppose what you wanted to do was to have churches and sacraments and Bibles and prayers, and those in power said to you: "We hate that. We hate what you do. We will do all in our power to stop you from doing what you do. But we love you. We love what you are. We love Christians; we just hate Christianity. We love worshipers; we just hate worship. And we're going to put every possible pressure on you to feel ashamed about worshiping and make you repent of your sin of worshiping. But we love you. We affirm your being. We just reject your doing." Tell me, how would that make you feel? Would you accept that distinction?

Kreeft had to admit that hatred directed against Christianity is tantamount to hatred directed against the Christian: "You're right. I would not be comfortable with that distinction. I would not be able to accept it. In fact, I would say pretty much what you just said: that you're trying to kill my identity."

Misconceptions about what it means to love our enemies have resulted in a loss of holy indignation and bold opposition against those who hate God. Christ's command tells us only to do good to those who hate us. It is like the natural benevolence that God shows toward all men (Matthew 5:43-45). But the Bible never tells us to think of the non-Christians as something that they are not; rather, its position is that all non-Christians are fools and rebels, stupid and sinful. For a person to think of them as something better amounts to a rejection of divine revelation, and casts doubt on his own faith and allegiance toward Christ. Therefore, although we are to exhibit a natural benevolence toward non-Christians, we must also be jealous for God's honor and imitate his holy hatred toward them.

Most Christians "love" their enemies in a way that amounts to rebellion against God. They should be admonished and disciplined. We "love" non-Christians in the way commanded by Christ when we offer to do them good and refuse to do them harm (Romans 12:20-21, 13:10). But we should have "nothing but hatred" (Psalm 139:22) toward non-Christians in the sense that we oppose all of who they are, what they believe, and what they do. We strive to diminish their influence and undermine their agenda by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Contrary to popular belief, we are even to rejoice over God's punishments upon the non-Christians: Mount Zion rejoices, the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments. (Psalm 48:11)

The righteous will be glad when they are avenged, when they bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked. (Psalm 58:10)

When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices; when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy. (Proverbs 11:10)

Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you. (Revelation 18:20)

Biblical hatred is defined as "an intense aversion or active hostility that is expressed in settled opposition to a person or thing." In this context, love and hate are not emotions, but volitions. They are policies of thought and action. Since God is impassable, and his mind cannot be disturbed, it means that divine love is not a disturbance of the mind, but an intellectual disposition of favor and mercy.

Complete hostility to another person's thoughts and actions, including his beliefs, desires, ambitions, preferences, values, lifestyles, habits, and so on, which is the same as hating the person himself, is hatred at the deepest level. This hatred is much deeper than the kind that would strip him of his natural welfare. By this definition, God and Christians hate non-Christians at the deepest level possible, and likewise, non-Christians hate God and Christians at the deepest level possible.

To illustrate, to regard the Christian faith as false is to hate me at the deepest level possible, since the content of the Christian faith permeates all of my thinking and behavior. If there is any aspect of my life that is not yet controlled by biblical precepts, it is only because I am still imperfect in sanctification, and not that I oppose Scripture on the matter. Therefore, for a person who regards Christianity as false, there is nothing in me for him to love. He cannot love me and hate my beliefs – I am my beliefs; I am a Christian.

Likewise, I may treat the non-Christian with kindness in speech and action (and in this sense I walk in "love" toward him), but if I regard his entire worldview as stupid and his whole lifestyle as sinful, and if it is my mission from God to arrange all aspects of my life in opposition to the non-Christian's worldview and lifestyle, then I indeed hate him at the deepest level possible.

The reason we do good to the non-Christians even though we have "nothing but hatred" (Psalm 139:22) for them is that God has reserved for himself the right to avenge his own honor and to avenge his chosen ones: "Do not take revenge, my

friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19). This is why Christians must not spread their faith and undermine the non-Christians through unjust or violent methods. It is up to God to punish them. Of course, Christians should endorse legal punishments against non-Christians, including the execution of dangerous criminals (Romans 13:4).

God ordained the government for this purpose. On the other hand, the church must use spiritual weapons to advance its cause, so that we demolish the wicked mainly through the publication of the word of God in preaching, teaching, and writing: For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension...