

LOVE THE SINNER, HATE THE SIN - AN ABSURD AND UNAVOIDABLE OFFSHOOT OF BELIEF IN MIRACLES

The Miracle of Loving Sinners and Hating their Sins

A miracle is supposed to be a sign from God to show that God's message or religion is true and takes the form of a magical event an example of which would be Mary appearing at Lourdes two thousand years after her death.

Christian teaching says that we must hate sin so much that we would rather have an eye gouged out than sin with it. Jesus said that a man who looks at a woman with lust commits adultery in his heart and he said that if your eye causes you to sin it is better if you gouge it out (Matthew 5). He said this to indicate the abhorrence that he considers to be due to even a harmless sin of lust. Are we to hate the sinner then?

Christianity teaches that we must love the sinner but hate the sin. This is impossible for we do not hate sin for it is not a person and we feel personal about it. Sin is not an act but it shows what a person is – a bad or partly bad person. So sin is not about actions so much as what kind of person is doing the action. Sin reveals the sinner so to hate the sin is to hate the sinner. To praise Mary's poem and not Thomas' is to say that Mary is better than Thomas – therefore a more valuable person. It is saying Thomas is bad or inferior.

Love the sinner and hate the sin is the cardinal doctrine of many major religions.

Religion's fundamental doctrine is not the existence of God but the truth of loving the sinner and hating their sin. If the doctrine is untrue, then God does not love sinners and religion is hatemongering in its essence.

Is it self-righteous to love a sinner and hate his sin?

The Christians say it is indeed impossible to love the sinner and hate the sin. Their answer is that God makes it possible. Sin is a miracle. That view leads to further views and conclusions. The Handbook of Christian Apologetics teaches that Jesus miraculously separates sin from the sinner so that we can hate the sin and love the sinner. See page 127.

The Handbook of Christian Apologetics states that it is true that we cannot avoid being Pharisees (self-righteous hypocrites) when we go on about right and wrong and cannot hate sins without hating the sinners (page 127).

The Handbook says that that to hate evil is to give in to evil and become evil and negative. This contradicts the Christian teaching that hating sin is a good thing. The reason the handbook says this is that hating evil can make us hard and cruel just like hating a sinner can. This is of course correct.

But they are not suggesting we should not care about sin or love it for that would be worse than hating sin in their opinion. So they imply they want us to hate sin as the lesser evil if there is no other choice.

Some would say that would say that if you really hate sin, you will hate it because you love the sinner. They will reason that no matter how much you hate sin and how harsh and stern you get you are only doing it because of love and so you cannot be called hard and cruel at least as far as your intentions go. You are like a person whose bark is worse than the bite.

The book is right that hating the sin makes us bad people. The word sin does not describe an action in reality. It describes a person. It describes a kind of person. To hate the sin is to hate the sinner.

But it still tells us to hate the sin. What is its answer?

The Handbook says that Christ miraculously separates the sin from the sinner so that you can love the sinner and hate the sin. This is totally insane. You don't hate sin like you hate burnt custard, you hate it with a bad person to person feeling. Even Christ can't change that!

The Handbook shows, however, that if you want to believe that you can love the sinner and hate the sin, you have to pretend that only God can enable you to do so. You know you certainly cannot do it yourself. Belief in God only gives you a pretend morality. It also urges you to silence as threats to morality, those who oppose this pretending or who expose it. It promotes the power seeking activities of religion. The believers act as if they need God to bolster the claims of a counterfeit morality. In that case they should say that they need God not for maintaining morality but for backing up a caricature of it laden with hypocrisy.

What if the solution to the problem of how you can hate sin and love sinner is forgiveness? Such forgiveness would be a miracle that God causes us to perform for it is so unnatural. Because we CANNOT love the sinner and hate the sin, we need to be lifted above nature to be able to. Granted if we really love the sinner and hate the sin something which is more than just unnatural but impossible then this is direct experience of a miracle. It would be the most important miracle of all. Without this miracle nobody can be a true servant of God or a true believer. This would mean God couldn't possibly use any other miracle as a substitute.

The believers say that loving the sinner and hating their sins is impossible without his help. To say that God miraculously enables you to love the sinner as you hate sin is to say that religious faith must come before everything for we need faith in God to be able to love sinners. You may suspect that God may help the atheist to love evil people and hate their immorality - but the atheist will not know its impossible without a miracle. He will think it is natural. But surely God cannot do this without the atheist's informed consent? Hence the need for faith.

We are called upon to believe people who tell us unbelievers that they have the miracle power to love sinners and hate sins. These people are proclaiming their own superiority. Their claim is the foundation of their claim to be servants of God and good people and reflects in all they do. Its a very serious persistent insult.

The believers say that loving the sinner and hating their sins is impossible without God's help. He does a miracle so that you can love the sinner and hate the sin. Without that miracle to hate the sin is to hate the sinner. There is no thought for the godless. If loving the evil person and hating the evil requires a miracle then it follows that the atheists and pagans either love the evildoer and the evil he does or they hate the evildoer and the evil he does. The miracle doctrine incites to hatred, by implication.

Christianity says love is voluntary. If God miraculously makes you love sinners and hate their sins then it follows that you do not love them at all. He has to intervene to distort you so that you think you love them. He is really pulling strings. So the love is not voluntary. It is like what witches say, "You want x to love you. Do spells to make you more lovable to him. Do not do spells to make him love you. That will mean you think he is not being himself and its down to the magic and not him." Same principle!

Religion advocates cold-blooded hatred and dresses it up so that it still manages to come up smelling of roses. I am referring to its doctrine: "Hate the sin but love the sinner". To hate is to oppose the wellbeing of. To oppose the wellbeing of anything is an act of violence. The absurdity of hating a thing and wanting to hurt it shows that you must be stirring up love of violence in you. To pretend the sin is not part of the sinner actually means you refuse to look at how you can hurt the sinner by hurting and hating it. It contradicts the alleged love you have for the sinner. If you really separate the sin from the sinner why are you categorising the person and evaluating the person as a sinner? It is bad enough to do that but to lie to yourself and others about it makes things worse and you will hate a person's guts and be in total denial of it.

Miracles would mean nothing unless we thought they were encouraging us to love the sinner and hate the sin. Loving the person gone wrong and hating what they are doing to themselves is different. People often get them mixed up. Loving somebody so that you hate the way they endanger themselves does not mean you are making any moral judgement on them. It is not about them being sinners but being in danger. Loving the sinner and hating the sin is impossible for it judges the person as guilty of sin and therefore deserving of punishment. It is hypocrisy to call a person a sinner and then to say that the sin must be separated from the sinner so that the sinner is loved and the sin is hated.

If you hate the sin you must hate the sinner for the sinner freely commits the sin. Sin is a quality a person has and you are your qualities. To hate your sin and wish evil on it is to wish evil on you and hate you. If a person hated your kindness you would know that is only another way of saying they hate you. Sin cannot be treated separately from the sinner for it reveals the sinner, it reveals what kind of person the sinner is.

Religion encourages us to suffer the pain of hating sin. Yet the hypocrites say we must spare ourselves the pain of hating sinners by forgiving them so that we may be free from the pain. They do not care about our feelings at all. Also, how can you forgive a person unless you hold that they do not have sins but they are sinners? You cannot forgive unless you judge.

Assume that to love the sinner and hate the sin is a miracle. It accuses those who do not follow God or pray of hating the sin and the sinner because they have refused the miraculous help. Also, if miracles are signs then no other miracle – not even seeing the resurrection of Jesus Christ – would be as good as the miracle of loving the sinner and hating the sin. It would be an internal experience of a miracle. A miracle happening inside of you would be stronger evidence than one outside of you. The Church claims it is only historical investigation that verifies the resurrection of Jesus and not everybody will believe such evidence. That is what happens with evidence. It means the external miracles were not needed as signs so we can safely ignore them.

No miracle can do you any good unless you experience the power to love the sinner and hate the sin. So no other miracle is necessary. External miracles then are not the works of God for whatever is doing them is showing off or working tricks or they are human hoaxes. They are too ridiculous to be considered as possible.

No external miracle would have the right to distract the believers from the miracle within but none of them not even apparitions put any emphasis on it.

The internal miracle of loving sinners and hating sins would be doing the impossible and makes no sense. It would prove that this miracle is a contradiction and irrational and we have no right to ask rational people to believe in it. It would mean we cannot use external miracles or this one either as signs from a God designed to appeal to our intelligence and our hearts. Murder would be right and wrong at the same time if you can love a sinner and hate the sinner at the one time.

The Church says that if you don't believe in people who testified to miracles you can't believe in any human testimony so if you reject the testimony of miracles you are committing a great sin and are opposing the message of God. Clearly it cannot be wicked to disbelieve for any other reason. But the condemnation is too harsh. The Church itself rejects most miracle testimonies or just pays no heed to them which amounts to rejection. Miracles encourage hatred and harshness. They are not a true inspiration to love the sinner and hate the sin. The one who thinks they are is temporarily confused.

What if the solution to the problem of how you can hate sin and love sinner is forgiveness? Such forgiveness would be a miracle that God causes us to perform for it is so unnatural. Because we CANNOT love the sinner and hate the sin, we need to be lifted above nature to be able to. Granted if we really love the sinner and hate the sin something which is more than just unnatural but impossible then this is direct experience of a miracle. It would be the most important miracle of all. Without this miracle nobody can be a true servant of God or a true believer. This would mean God couldn't possibly use any other miracle as a substitute.

To say that we need magic in order to obey the foundational rule of Christian morality that the sinner is to be loved and his sin hated is to trivialise morality and right and wrong. If there is no magic then it follows that the Christians are lying about loving the sinner and hating the sin. They do one or the other but not both.

Our final word is this. Being vindictive towards a sin means being vindictive to the sinner. A sinner shows what he is as a person by his sin so the sin cannot be treated as if it were not him. The sin is different from him but not separate from him. The Church contradicts the truth with love the sinner and hate the sin. It gets away with the lie because people think that hating the harm is the same as loving the person but it is forgotten that sin is a judgemental term. It is about what the person deserves and not the harm done to the person as such. The Church says God judges the sin not the sinner and loves sinners. Only a miracle could make that possible. Only a miracle that can make the impossible possible can enable us to love the sinner and hate the sin. The doctrine is so outrageous that it implies it is safer NOT to believe in God.

Conclusion

If miracles call us to believe in God and hate sin and to follow religion it follows they are influences to hypocrisy. They are hidden incitements to hatred. If it takes a miracle to hate a person doing grave harm but not hate the person then clearly secularism and the secular state has to charge religion with hate speech even if it says it detests evil doing but loves the agent who is responsible. The state cannot endorse religious doctrine. There is no obligation on anybody to believe a person who says they love the person who does vile things. Firstly it is only a theory that it can be done. Secondly it is a very dubious theory full of obvious lies and contradictions. Thirdly, if it is achievable it is only managed by a handful of people and what use is that?

* Handbook of Christian Apologetics, Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, Monarch Publications, East Sussex, 1995

The Future of Atheism, Alister McGrath and Daniel Dennett, SPCK, London , 2008

Ethics: The Fundamentals, Julia Driver, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2007

The Cambridge Companion to Atheism, Edited by Michael Martin, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007