

## PEOPLE OF THE LIE, PECK ON RESPONDING TO EVIL

Dr M Scott Peck a psychiatrist who is in the self-help genre wrote the famous book *People of the Lie*. It is about evil people and what he learned from his patients regarding what evil is and what it does.

He regards evil at being its strongest and most complete form when the person does not even realise they are evil. He points out how ordinary evil is. Evil people will see evil as good or justifiable or neutral. He sees your evil as a mental disorder for it is a mask for terror you are in denial about. Here is what Peck says about judging:

"Evil people are easy to hate. But remember Saint Augustine's advice to hate the sin but love the sinner. Remember when you recognize an evil person that truly, 'There but for the grace of God go I.' In labelling certain human beings as evil, I am making an obviously severely critical value judgment. My Lord said, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' By this statement—so often quoted out of context—Jesus did not mean we should never judge our neighbour. For he went on to say, 'Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.' What he meant was that we should judge others only with great care, and that such carefulness begins with self-judgment."

Unpacking this then we should be automatically suspicious of Christian love for sinners. If all that is stopping you hurting and hating sinners is that you could end up the same without praying for God's grace that is a flimsy and thin barrier. It is not going to work. And the doctrine just leaves you pretending that it does work. How can it work when you always think others are worse than you? When you do wrong you are confident of staying in control of your character. Nobody really thinks they will be a Nazi style scientist or warmonger even if they could be. And if you think you are totally evil but the grace of God is curbing it, that means you will have no real trust for anybody else. You are not saying the grace is changing you but curbing you. The difference is important.

Peck quotes the following with approval in the book. It is from Aldous Huxley's *The Devils of Loudon*, page 192:

The effects which follow too constant and intense a concentration upon evil are always disastrous. Those who crusade not for God in themselves, but against the devil in others, never succeed in making the world better, but leave it either as it was or sometimes even perceptibly worse than it was, before the crusade began. By thinking primarily of evil we tend, however excellent our intentions, to create occasions for evil to manifest itself.

My comments are as follows. At times all we can think about and all we have to think about is primarily evil. He is accusing the victim of a child sex abuse of being evil. The victim has to think of the evil first and foremost.

If thinking of the evil first or mostly is solved by God then that backfires. Nobody can expect anybody to be mainly or completely about God. God alone matters for he makes all and is the one true good and the perfect good so putting him first is a sin for it weighs most love for God and the rest goes to everybody else.

Peck may ask for a person to be more about crusading for God than against evil. But for our own protection and because we have fears, we will stress battling evil more than doing good. It remains true that doing something about evil matters more than doing good as important as doing good is.

Suppose Peck is right. It will be impossible to tell if a person is 51% for God or 51% for battling Satan. You will only know by the end result and by then the damage will be done. A bad person will centre on battling evil for that is the best and craftiest way to do harm.

Peck is pitting "hate or battle the evil or sin (sin for him is a subset of evil)" against "love the sinner and do good deeds for her or him." We can be sure that when people say they love sinners and hate the sins the hate bit is the bit they really do.

Here is another quote from *The Devils of Loudon* (page 260) that Peck cites for us:

No man can concentrate his attention upon evil, or even upon the idea of evil, and remain unaffected. To be more against the devil than for God is exceedingly dangerous. Every crusader is apt to go mad. He is haunted by the wickedness which he attributes to his enemies; it becomes in some sort of a part of him.

Comment: You are in some way partly responsible when you know of somebody's sin. The other person's responsibility for

his evil reflects yours for your evil. There is a link and in that way you share responsibility. The evil of the enemy becomes you. Imagine then how your own evil becomes you!

Evil is contagion and thus God then if he looks at evil without being sullied is not really looking at evil. He is either evil himself or evil in the sense that he cannot identify evil correctly to deal with it correctly.

Being the same species as the people who are evil leads to solidarity in the sense that the evil done by others reflects on us for in terms of species there is no us or them. It is us not them. Plus there are evils in human nature or nature in general that we are happy about so that is our yes to evil. Evil is evil so there is no this evil or that evil. Its just evil. You are glad that your mother suffered to give birth to you and risked her life. See the point?

Back to the quote. It claims that thinking about evil as a reality or an idea contaminates you. And if the contamination is not as damaging as it might be it still potentially is very dangerous. It is still like playing with a bomb. Not only do you have to worry about loving x and hating his sin you have to worry about how x's sin becomes part of you as well. This is a new thing: to love x the sinner and hate his sin is to love the group he is in and hate their absorption of his sin and how they are somehow in it too. If love the sinner and hate the sin is a hoax or a futile enterprise then that explains why we tend to love our group and nation and hate other ones.

It is obvious once you say somebody is blind to their evil, the only answer is to confront them with evil and hurt them so they start to see the true face of evil and hopefully its presence in themselves. Peck is inciting to violence whether he sees it or not.

