

Sin as Crime

1 John 3:4 “Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” Transgressing does not mean breaking the law so much as going beyond it. Going beyond the law is a metaphor for taking God's law into your own hands. Breaking the law and transgressing it mean the same thing. The teaching is it is not your business to argue against God's law.

Sin is an offence against God or to put it another way, it is breaking the law of God. It's a crime not against the civil law of the land but the civil law of God. Crime is that which cannot be tolerated. Thus Christians worthy of the name will not tolerate sin. They will vote so that the law of the land does not tolerate it either. Some sins breach the civil law of God and the other sins violate his moral law.

Sinner means the same thing as lawbreaker - the law concerned is the law of God. Law is needed to regulate human affairs - we can't have chaos. So why does God need law? He doesn't need it for he is powerful enough to stop say some president destroying the world in nuclear war. He doesn't need to set up laws forbidding this.

A king who creates a curfew that his court is to be out of the palace by 8 pm and decrees that if any disobey they will be fined is being vindictive for he has the manpower to have them removed if needed and all he needs to do is ask them to go. He doesn't need to make the law. If he is vindictive, then God is more so.

A law implies the right to force or compel people. Human law because of our limited resources for controlling people is bad at forcing. But God does not have this limitation. He stands by and lets people kill without at least threatening them with retribution to their faces.

Not only does God make law which means he is necessarily vindictive but he also refuses to enforce it meaning he approves when somebody kills though it is against his law. He lets the killer get away not out of love but because makers of vindictive laws could vindictively let evil people go as a sign of contempt for their victim or society.

Suppose God is serious about his law. Suppose somebody murders. What he is against is not so much the killing but the breaking of the law.

Those who approve God's law are saying would do the same if they were in his shoes. When you believe in a God of Law you cannot believe in loving the sinner.

Sin is evil but is not the same thing as evil or wrongdoing though there is a link. Sin is a religious word and involves God. It means doing what God says is evil.

Forgiveness is at the heart of the Christian faith. It is supposed to be good while condoning, rewarding the ill-done by acting as if it does not matter, is bad. So forgiveness says the sin does matter and involves judging and hating it and yet loving the sinner. Christian forgiveness is two-faced because you can no more love the sinner and hate the sin any more than you can trust the sinner and not trust the sin they commit. To separate the sin from the sinner is to deny that the sinner is the cause of the sin. It is to pretend the sinners are not the cause and to deny that sin is a description of what is in their character rather than an act. You can't hate the sin like it was the sinner and not the person committing the sin. It's not a person. It's ridiculous hating a thing. It's only a thing. Do you hate and resent a book for falling on your head? You only dislike chocolate when you say you hate it. You do not feel about it the same way as you do about something bad that a person does. To hate the sin is hating the sinner as well. Christ said if you have two masters you will love one and hate the other (Matthew 6:24). This shows that it is his doctrine that hating a person considered to be a sinner is too easy for us all.

The utter failure of love the sinner and hate the sin shows that belief in God is harmful and peppered with malice. God is intrinsically loving to the sinner and a hater of the sin. If it is impossible then he is impossible and does not exist.

A God who treats sin as if the sinner had nothing to do with it is refusing to admit the dignity of the sinner as a responsible agent.

And a God who hates sin as if it were a thing and as if there was nothing personal about it might as well torment himself over a block of ice. His hate shows self-hatred for it ruins his happiness. Self-hatred makes you a threat to other people.

Love the criminal and hate the crime is a variation of love the sinner and hate the sin. It is bizarre to put a criminal in jail and claim that it is only the crime you want to hurt. It is hypocritical and callous. The love is not about doing the criminal

any good but about you feeling how terrific you are for loving a criminal. This is like the love the Epistle of James tells us about. It is love that wishes well to the hungry and give them nothing to eat. James is clear that this is hypocrisy and not real love.

The doctrine of sin being a crime is evil. It is evil to accuse people of crimes without proof. It is evil to accuse people of being sinners while being unable to prove there is a God to sin against. Religion cannot prove God's existence sufficiently.

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