

Christian principles in the modern world

Angela Solis & J.P. Kuhlman

In discussions about religion and its relevance to our modern world, there arise many misperceptions such as those mentioned by Eli Caldwell in last week's article, "Hypocrisy and Homosexuality." He makes several points about religion and Christianity in particular that we would like to respectfully address.

Mr. Caldwell states that religion, by its innate nature, has created an "obsolete set of principles that have been used to slaughter and abuse human beings, and are still used to demonize them." To clarify, it is not religion that has caused these abuses, but rather faulted human beings who allow corruption, selfishness, and hatred to prevail over the principles embraced by Christianity. For if we were to accept Mr. Caldwell's claims that "religion is responsible for far more deaths than Hitler's Germany" and "is based on fear," then we would not be surprised to see the Church completely dissolved long ago. However, the Church has prevailed for over 2,000 years despite the clearly demonstrated periods of corruption and evil, suggesting that it must be more than a mere human institution. It is therefore based upon enduring principles much stronger than the transitory lies of humans.

In Christianity, each individual is called to "be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48 NAB). But it is painfully obvious that all people fall short throughout their lives. Religion lays forth an aspiration for people to strive for perfection in love and service, which are not necessarily "archaic beliefs." Mother Teresa is one modern example of answering this call to love, a woman who, as any other Christian, drew her life's purpose from the central teachings of her religion. She achieved greatness through humbly displaying a life of service and placing into action these foundational Christian virtues, illustrating how beautifully life can be lived.

The principles Mr. Caldwell refers to were not

arbitrarily created but rather intentionally formed for the true fulfillment and happiness of the human life, not to oppress people or "create a subset of humans." The Church teaches, "The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided" (CCC 2357-2359 *). Christianity does not teach us to "demonize our fellow humans," but as Jesus stated, to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mk 12:31 NAB). Out of love and understanding the Church does call all of its members, before marriage, to a life of chastity, "an apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom," but not for the intent to burden humans but rather to encourage principles of sacrifice and self-denial through which humans can hope to find peace and happiness, a message to be transmitted with compassion and respect (CCC 2339 *).

Given this, when people are mistreated or persecuted, it is out of a misconstrued understanding of this teaching combined with human fallibility. This so called "hatred of homosexuals" is not propagated anywhere in the Christian faith, for Christians are called to love one another as God loves us. Christianity seeks to teach us how to form loving and fulfilling relationships with God and each other. Yet these essential principles seem to have been forgotten in last week's article and, sadly, in our modern world today.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church

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In response to "Hypocrisy and homosexuality"

Courtney Gabrielson

In Webster's Dictionary, "homophobia" is defined thusly: "irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals."

It makes me very sad and quite frustrated that in the article, "Hypocrisy and Homosexuality," author Eli Caldwell used this term to make a general statement about practicing Christians that is unfair and untrue.

There is a fundamental difference between respectfully disagreeing with something and fearing it. Caldwell blurred this distinction in his article. As a Christian, it's true that I can't reconcile my beliefs with the concept of homosexuality. Does that mean I hate homosexuals or treat them with contempt, make them feel less than human, or disassociate myself from them? Not. At. All. It is this insinuation in Caldwell's piece that frustrates me the most.

Yes, I'll admit it-- the Christian religion has done a sound job of unifying itself with terms like "homophobic." This pains me, because it is not what the Christian faith (as illustrated in the Bible) is all about. As a believer, I am commanded by the God I serve to represent the love and truth of Christ, and to spread that message with a similarly loving respect. I hate the fact that crimes--heinous, disgusting, evil, crimes--have been done in the name of Christ; that people are suffering because someone else took His message, perverted it, and used it for their own ungodly gains (such as slavery); that what should bring joy and freedom is synonymous with hatred and pain. Christianity is not supposed to be this. Jesus is not this. He is not the God that the Westboro Baptist Church "quotes" on their infamous signs of protest. The God of the Bible is not a horrible homophobe, but a just Lord who hates sin--including the ones that were committed in His name.

I know saying that I respectfully disagree with the homosexual lifestyle isn't going to win me any friends, but if I believe the Bible is true-- and I do-- then I must believe that God knows what He is doing. I must believe that although Christ's sacrifice on the cross absolved me from the consequences of the sins that are outlined in the Old and New Testaments (Caldwell highlights some of the more colorful ones in his article), sin is still sin. We all do it, and every mistake--big or small-- pains God. Yet if I believe the most intense parts of the Bible--such as those dealing with humanity's inherent aptitude to miss the mark-- then I also need to believe that God wasn't joking around when He promised that He loved us with a powerful love--as insane as it is absurdly beautiful. And I have to believe that God was talking to me and other Christians-- and all of mankind, really, when in Matthew

(and Luke) He warned us to take the plank out of our own eye before we criticize the speck of sawdust in someone else's. Self-righteousness is just as abhorrent to God as ~~say, homosexuality--because after all, it's not about what the sin is that angers Him, but that it exists at all.~~

It should also be noted that I know many Christians who have homosexual friends and family members whom they love and who love them dearly in return (myself included). In most of these relationships, faith and sexuality are discussed openly, and although neither party can come to any kind of agreement,

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each respectfully acknowledges its differences. This certainly doesn't make my homosexual friends homophobic of my faith simply because they disagree; why then is it acceptable to see it the other way around?

As someone who loves Christ, I have a serious affection for the men and women He created. I may have fundamental disagreements with some of them, but it doesn't mean I hate them. I understand in some respects how Mr. Caldwell is capable of so easily allying Christians with the concept of homophobia, but I am disturbed that he feels the need to see all of us that way. As it is considered unwise and unkind to label others with stereotypes, I would ask that in the future, he would take this into consideration when dealing with my faith and avoid such sweeping generalizations as he made in this article.

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Hats off to you, Paul Ryan

Michael Romano

"Livin' off borrowed time, the clock ticks faster that'd be the hour they knock the slick blaster". So begins MF Doom's magnum opus "Accordion", wherein he amazingly seems to have prophesied our spiraling national debt and need for pragmatic solutions. In this introduction, he astutely suggests that Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security are ticking time bombs, and that we are "livin' off borrowed time [and] the clock ticks faster". As these entitlement programs will require more massive debt loads over the coming years, this seems to be an appropriate analogy. Government bonds are reaching maturity in greater and greater numbers, and soon we will have to completely recompense China, among other big investors, for all of this "borrowed time".

MF Doom continues to comment, "Dick Dastardly and Mutley with sick laughter a gunfight an' they come to cut the mix-master". Here, he details the boldness displayed by Paul Ryan, a congressman from Wisconsin who has brazenly attempted, "to cut the mix-master", or to address the need to change Medicare and Medicaid. He recently proposed to end Medicare for those retiring in 2021 or later, replacing it with federally subsidized private insurance. Also, his plan would shift Medicaid responsibility primarily to states. The Medicare and Medicaid changes Mr. Ryan put forth would alone decrease our spending by a projected \$2.2 trillion over the next ten years.

Doom follows with the question, "Is he still a fly guy clappin' if nobody ain't hearin'?" Here, he ponders the public response to Mr. Ryan's suggested reforms. Mr. Ryan deserves credit for risking his political career to prevent an economic crisis and to balance our

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national checkbook, something that few, if any, other politicians would have the stugots to do. However, if only a handful of citizens acknowledge that escalating Medicare and Medicaid costs present a problem--"if nobody ain't hearin'"--Mr. Ryan will probably not be perceived as a "a fly guy clappin'" as he should be.

Doom says of Ryan: "And he hold the mic and get your attention like two swords, either that or either one with two blades on it". That is, by bringing up the subjects of Medicare and Medicaid at a national level, he has at the very least catalyzed open debate about their futures. They are issues that politicians have been afraid to discuss in the past for fear of political suicide. Now our congressmen can openly discuss whether they want to face "two swords"--Medicaid and Medicare exploding our debt--or "one with two blades on it"--reducing federal outlays to or altering our entitlement programs.

Doom then explores the situation in a philosophical manner, claiming Mr. Ryan's proposal is, "like the end to the means, f*** [the] type of message that sends to the fiends". Doom acknowledges that Mr. Ryan does not want to eliminate Medicare, for instance, as an end in and of itself; rather, it is simply an unfortunate means to the end of reducing our national debt. The same applies to reduced federal outlays for Medicaid. The second line of this lyric simply suggests that, "haters gonna hate" (to borrow from 3LW); or, that Mr. Ryan is not terribly concerned with the immediate public reaction to his proposals. He is, as I wrote previously, placing his political career on the line by addressing Medicare.

In all seriousness, I could not be happier that Mr. Ryan is trying to bring Medicare and Medicaid to the forefront of the debate about government spending. Both sides of the political spectrum should applaud him for sticking his neck out, not appealing to interest groups, and delivering to voters his promise to try to fix our national debt. Hats off to you, Paul Ryan.

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