

THEOLOGICAL GEOGRAPHY

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Legitimate And Illegitimate Hatred

By The Rev. David R. Graham

Every negative emotion, to include hate, has a legitimate place in life. Lots of illegitimate ones, of course, but a few legitimate. One legitimate use of hate is of evil. Hatred of evil is commendable and necessary. "Hate speech" is appropriate in a handful of situations, even required.

When evil embodies as a creature, including as a human creature, or to be more precise, when a creature, including a human creature, is so filled with evil as to be overwhelmed by it, then that

creature is a legitimate object of hatred.

In such a case, hatred is not blinding. In most instances of hatred, it is terribly blinding. But in this one it is sight-enabling.

Deciding what is and what is not a legitimate object of hatred is a difficult task requiring high ability at discrimination. Absent that ability, and even sometimes with it, hatred goes to an illegitimate object. Few are endowed with, and fewer have honed such endowment as they have, the ability to

discriminate between legitimate and illegitimate objects of hatred. This is why the near universal and usually justified counsel not to hate at all is accepted by rational people.

However, that counsel is neither universally nor constantly justified.

There are some, myself included, who have decided that the White House's current occupant is a legitimate object of hatred on the grounds given above. It is, as this theologian full knows, a dangerous decision to make.

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Nor is it one the justification of which can be argued, one way or the other, in the absence of discrimination sufficient to making such a decision, yeah or nay.

In such matters as these, the cliché applies that the proof is in the pudding, or better, in its eating. Jeremiah told his calumniators, "Watch developments."

It is useful in this context to recall that **Bonhoeffer** and his generation of theologians faced this decision and that some went one way and some -- most -- another. **Bonhoeffer** went with the some, not the most. Who outside the pastures of Afro-Mohammedan Imperialism will argue that the Nazi Party and its leadership represented -- and still represents -- a creaturely embodiment of evil sufficient to merit hatred?

It should also be unthinkable, and regrettably is not for very many, that the Communist Party and its arrays of fronts and leaderships be less a legitimate object of hatred than the Nazi Party and its elements are.

So if we are going to object to hatred and desire moral high ground in political discussion and activity, it is advisable that we admit to the discussion documentary, historical, spiritual, psychological and sociological evidence supporting the legitimacy of hatred in certain decisively few circumstances. Doing that improves the entire condition of man and the specific concatenation thereof under review.



