THE DEMONIZATION OF CHRISTIANITY

4 de octubre de 2015
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Fuente: http://townhall.com/columnists/michaelbrown/2015/10/04/the-demonization-of-christianity-n2060945/page/full

When a white supremacist murdered black parishioners in Charleston, SC, there was national outrage leading to the banning of the Confederate Flag and a fresh discussion of race relations in America. But when Christians are targeted and murdered on a campus in Oregon, much of the nation yawns.

According to eyewitness reports, the Oregon shooter asked students what their religion was, and if they said "Christian" he shot them in the head. Yet the secular media, for the most part, is focusing more on gun laws than on the shooter's alleged anti-Christian motivation. Why?

Can you imagine what would have happened if the shooter went into a creative arts class, asked the students to declare their sexual orientation, and if they said "gay" shot them in the head?

There would be a massive media frenzy, with instant accusations of national homophobia and pulling of quotes from Christian leaders whose failure to support same-sex "marriage" would somehow make them complicit in the deaths.

The same thing would have happened if the killer had targeted Muslims, with immediate charges of "Islamophobia" shouted from coast to coast.

Not so, though, when it's Christians who are killed for their faith.

Is it any surprise, then, that hours after the eyewitness accounts had been released and well after conservative news outlets were reporting the alleged targeting of Christians, liberal news outlets had not said a word about the alleged anti-Christian connection?

It could well be that the Oregon shooter suffered from a mental illness, which suggests that we can't read too much into his actions. But why, then, did we read so much into the Charleston shooter's actions, since he reportedly suffered from a mental illness as well?

The Oregon attack is also one isolated incident, which suggest that we can't extrapolate too much from it in terms of national sentiments towards Christianity. But why, then, did we extrapolate so much from the Charleston shooting in terms of race issues?

When it comes to the Oregon massacre, we still don't know all the facts and, at this point, only God knows the motivation of the murderer. But we do know there is a growing national climate of extreme hostility towards Christianity, and from professional news media to popular social media, it is open season on committed followers of Jesus.

It's one thing to have a civil debate on the meaning of marriage or to disagree on what the Bible teaches on sexuality or to have different perspectives on the best way to address transgender issues.

It's another thing entirely when your failure to support the redefinition of marriage or your adherence to biblical sexuality or your opposition to gender-neutral bathrooms gets you branded as a sick, vile, bigot worthy of death.

Today, it is not just the Bill Mahers and Dan Savages of the world who are trashing Christianity and vilifying conservative believers. It is not just radical liberal professors on college campuses who continue their aggressive attack on people of faith.

Today, Bible-bashing and Christian-mocking is a favorite pastime on social media, replete with unprintable insults, ugly invective, and death wishes galore. Simply stated, it has become part of the larger pop culture.

Within a 72-hour period last week, at least 6 different people posted death wishes on my Facebook page, some getting into graphic detail (including the person who didn't know how to spell pancreatic), while scores of others posted comments that were so ugly they were immediately blocked.

At about the same time, a reviewer of my newest book (which, by the way, has an entire chapter calling on Christians to take the highest moral ground and to overcome evil with good and hatred with love) claimed that, "This book is in pure and perfect alignment with the views of white supremacy groups and the KKK."

Also about this time, someone posted on my Facebook page, "Oh goody another neo Nazi crazy fanatical zealot posting their b****** on my wall." (Actually, we post things on our page; we didn't post anything on that person's wall.)

Of course, this is nothing new for me or other conservative believers, since ridiculous rhetoric like this has been coming our way for years.

The problem is that more and more people actually believe this baseless drivel, and instead of comments like this coming from the most extreme anti-Christian groups and individuals, similar remarks are becoming more and more mainstream.

In short, we are not just dealing with the incremental criminalization of Christianity in America (to use the words of Janet Folger and Mike Huckabee) but with the demonization of Christianity (and Christians) in America. And while this is hardly the first time in the last 2,000 years that believers have been demonized – far from it – it may well be the first time in American history that hostility to the faith is so vile, mean-spirited and widespread.

At this point, we have no idea whether this hostile climate contributed to the Oregon massacre. But it is certain that words have consequences, that hateful people do hateful things, and that when you declare an ideological war against Christianity, the results could be deadly – literally.

This calls for renewed faith, renewed courage, and renewed boldness.

As we unashamedly confess Jesus' name here on earth, He will unashamedly confess our names in heaven.