

Andrew Sullivan's Anti-"Christianist" Crusade

Andrew Sullivan, a writer and "essayist for *Time* magazine, a columnist for *The Sunday Times* of London, and a senior editor at *The New Republic*," is currently known for both his supposedly "unusual" personal-political identity (libertarian¹, [liberal-postmodern Roman Catholic](#), homosexual, HIV-positive), as well as his "successful and pioneering efforts in the field of blog journalism," i.e., *The Daily Dish*. His *Daily Dish* certainly set journalistic standards in the blogosphere; however his persona is not all that unusual when his religious orientation ([read interview](#)) is adequately understood. In light of his religious views, the mixing of both his political and sexual identity makes perfect rational sense.

Mr. Sullivan, a British expatriate living in Washington, D.C., is a leading advocate for so-called "gay marriage,"—an effort to legitimize homosexual relations. Understandably, he rejects "marriage" as the exclusive union between a man and woman established by God at Creation. Like so many other homosexuals, he likely envisions a point in time when society's level of acceptance and approval will bring emotional and psychological catharsis to the homosexual psyche, as well as vindication for what the gay community believes is less-than-fair treatment by the majority culture. He flatteringly sees himself as a "warrior" engaged in cultural and political warfare. Consequently, he is a highly, sought-after speaker for left-of-center media (e.g., *NPR*) and at numerous colleges across the Nation—compliments of your tax dollars.

Andrew Sullivan holds a PhD in political science from Harvard. He has authored three books: *Virtually Normal: An Argument About Homosexuality*, *Love Undetectable: Notes on Friendship, Sex, and Survival*; and his latest, *The Conservative Soul: How We Lost It, How to Get It Back*, which has generated numerous reviews², radio interviews, and blog commentary. Here is the Kirkus Review which was for awhile displayed at Amazon.com.

True conservatism recoils from the fundamentalist obsession with virtue and natural law, but embraces a minimalist view of government that allows a maximum of economic and lifestyle liberty. This is the argument that Sullivan has long been refining on his popular blog, *The Daily Dish*, and in his numerous print columns and books (*Virtually Normal*, 1995, etc.). In this book, he deploys an interpretation of the philosophy of Michael Oakeshott to support his continuing effort to reconcile his Catholicism and Thatcherite conservatism with the normalization of homosexuality and, most of all, with the redefinition of marriage to include homosexual couples. Sullivan notes that government must be based neither on reactionary adherence to the past, nor on Thomist theories of natural law, but on doubt: specifically, on the Hobbesian disbelief that our neighbor can be trusted not to do us an injury in the absence of a public authority. (Oddly, liberty requires that we give our neighbor "the benefit of the doubt" and therefore civil equality.) Government has no business inculcating virtue in society, the author says. Rather, good conservative government will accommodate itself to the felt needs of the time, like

¹ He frequently uses the term "conservative," which he defines as limited government with fiscal budgetary restraint. On social issues, his views are more properly categorized as *libertarian*.

² Particularly irritating to Sullivan are the voices of other so-called "practicing" Catholics. For example, read NRO's Jonah Goldberg's, [SULKY SULLIVAN](#). For a less contentious exchange, read or listen to Southern Baptist [Albert Mohler's interview](#) with Andrew Sullivan. You'll need to search for the transcript or MP3 broadcast. If you really have more time than sense, check out the 6-part (!) book review by a fellow Harvard alumnus - [MarkDRoberts.com](#). Caveat emptor.

Disraeli's support of the democratic franchise in 19th-century Britain and, as Sullivan would have it, gay marriage in 21st-century America. In order to reach these conclusions, the author devotes about half of this work to explaining why most people who call themselves conservatives are really fundamentalists, a class that stretches from Osama bin Laden, through the editorial offices of the better neoconservative journals, and up to the fundamentalists-in-chief, George W. Bush and Benedict XVI. What all these people have in common is the belief that they know the truth with a certainty that allows them to impose their views either by force or by a definition that can compel consciences. It's difficult to imagine the audience for this philosophy: Cultural revolutionaries can turn to franker polemics, while self-described conservatives will be unnerved by Sullivan's anti-foundationalism.

The Kirkus Review, likely written by an above-average-educated Catholic, was apparently less than acceptable. It was deleted and replaced with a more supportive piece composed by Bryan Burrough of the liberal *Washington Post*. He writes:

The *Conservative Soul*, in fact, is one of several similar books issued this fall that collectively serve as a call to arms to American elites to put down their New York Times crossword puzzles and their glasses of Fumé Blanc and wake up to the idea that the fundamentalists most dangerous to our future are not Islamic and foreign but Christian and homegrown.

The first half of *The Conservative Soul*, which explores the philosophical underpinnings of Christian fundamentalism and explains how they are anathema to a free society, made me as angry as anything I've read in months. That there are people in 21st-century America who believe the Bible is literally true, who believe the Earth was created 6,000 years ago, and who believe that our lives today should be dictated by codes of conduct written by people who lived 2,000 years before modern medicine, electricity or equal rights -- and that these same Americans have influence in national affairs -- should infuriate anyone with a functioning mind.

...the book doesn't really explain how conservatism lost its soul, just that it did, and it doesn't offer any real prescription for getting it back.

So, is the book's title something of a ruse--a marketing ploy? As Burrough's reaction might suggest, is the primary purpose of *Conservative Soul* to act as a medium for a pathology of anti-Christian contempt and bigotry³? I believe it is. A further concern is his success in being able to subtly spread ill will and misleading caricatures of born-again Christians, and to elicit readers' anger. Without a doubt, Burrough is neither the first nor the last to react in this manner. Sullivan is influential on the political left, with Old Media and the elites of the Democrat Party. If you're a Bible-believing Christian, don't be surprised if you're subjected to irrational insults during your next verbal discussion with a liberal colleague at work. It is

³ Despite his strong academic background, Mr. Sullivan's mind is to a large degree muddled in the realm of religion, Christian theology, and the broader history of Christianity. This illiteracy is best expressed in his willingness to equate fundamentalist Christians with fundamentalist Islamists, despite the numerous differences and [stark contrast between Jesus and Mohammed](#). Further, he is possibly the ideological inspiration for lesbian talking head, Rosie O'Donnell, who has become well known for publicly spewing venomous hate toward Christians. Understandably, there may be an emotional tension between his homosexual identity and his desire to retain his Catholic heritage, which might also in part explain his need to create skewed and depreciatory characterizations of "conservative" Christians and the so-called Religious Right.

Andrew Sullivan, and others like him, who hope to bring about increased negative perception of so-called “Christianists” or “theoconservatives” (*theocons* for short)—pejorative terms he uses to describe conservative Catholics and Jews, Protestant evangelicals, or Christian fundamentalists—any who possess (fraudulently in Sullivan’s opinion) a sense of epistemological certainty and flow through into civic and political action. As we shall discover, Andrew Sullivan is an articulate dogmatist on behalf of philosophic and religious skepticism, and removing God and religion from the public square.

“When Not Seeing Is Believing”?

I was sitting in the doctor’s office and noticed a 3-page article in the October 9th edition of *TIME* magazine, [“When Not Seeing Is Believing.”](#) In the article, adapted from his book *The Conservative Soul*, Sullivan seeks to focus in upon the “*rise of fundamentalism and why embracing spiritual doubt is the key to defusing the tension between East and West.*” The provocative title caught my eye.

I momentarily reflected on his introduction’s stated goal—“*defusing the tension,*” and wondered what his response might be if he were aware of the broad gulf between his utopian yearning for peace and the simple truth of Jesus Christ’s two advents and the social/political character of the intervening age (Matthew 10:34-36). Of course, this is commonly not understood by religious liberals—both the person of Jesus Christ or His messages—which leaves them scratching their heads and questioning both the truth and practical value of Christianity.

With his keen intellect, Sullivan seeks to describe the central issue between secular or religious *naturalists*⁴ and the religious fundamentalists of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—those whom he says find “spiritual repose” in the “Torah, the Gospels,” or “the Koran.” For Sullivan, a major problem is the unnerving, psychological *certainty* that flows from the “fundamentalist psyche.”

Many Western liberals and secular types look at the zealotry closing in on them and draw an obvious conclusion: religion [fundamentalism for Sullivan] is the problem.

Domestically, the resurgence of religious certainty has deepened our cultural divisions. And so our political discourse gets more polarized, and our global discourse gets close to impossible.

Reflecting his own brand of certainty, Andrew Sullivan sees an answer to the certainty generated by religious fundamentalism and resultant cultural doom.

There is, however, a way out. And it will come from the only place it can come from—the minds and souls of people of faith.

The alternative to the secular-fundamentalist death spiral is something called spiritual humility and sincere religious doubt. Fundamentalism is not the only valid form of faith, and to say it is, is the great lie of our time.

There is also the faith that is once born and never experiences a catharsis or “born-again” conversion. There is the faith that treats the Bible as a moral fable as

⁴ Those who believe that the natural world is all that exists; the *supernatural* is either false or unknowable.

well as history and tries to live its truths in the light of contemporary knowledge, history, science and insight. There is a faith that draws important distinctions between core beliefs and less vital ones—that picks and chooses between doctrines under the guidance of individual conscience.

There is a faith that sees the message of Jesus or Muhammad as a broad indicator of how we should treat others, of what profound holiness requires, and not as an account literally true in all respects that includes an elaborate theology that explains everything. There is the dry Deism of many of America's Founding Fathers. There is the cafeteria Christianity of, say, Thomas Jefferson, who composed a new, shortened gospel that contained only the sayings of Jesus that Jefferson inferred were the real words of the real rabbi. There is the open-minded treatment of Scripture of today's Episcopalianism and the socially liberal but doctrinally wayward faith of most lay Catholics. There is the sacramental faith that regards God as present but ultimately unknowable, that looks into the abyss and hopes rather than sees. And there are many, many more varieties.

Those kinds of faith recognize one thing, first of all, about the nature of God and humankind, and it is this: If God really is God, then God must, by definition, surpass our human understanding.

The fact begins with the assumption that the human soul is fallible, that it can delude itself, make mistakes and see only so far ahead.

Here we gain insight into the dogmatic religious skepticism of Andrew Sullivan. For him, non-supernatural, 'make-it-up-as-you-go,' and hypocritical forms of *faith* (religion) are equally as "valid" as any fundamentalist version or claim that one true God has initiated communication with mankind. Thus, he favors a limited definition for both the "nature of God and humankind." Like all true agnostics, he likely takes comfort in the fact that no one is able to force proof of God's or Truth's existence upon him.

For Mr. Sullivan, veracity is also of no concern; he is assuaged with the superiority of his own cognitive powers. Similar to the rhetoric of George W. Bush, Mr. Sullivan is big on *faith* as a stand-alone virtue. He neither understands nor appreciates the eternal positive value(s) of having Truth as the object of one's faith. In fact, the real point of Sullivan's article, and book, is to proclaim the tenet that Truth does not exist or cannot be known—a radical skepticism—which he hopes will spread far and wide in 'Christianist' circles.

But there is still something we will never grasp, something we can never know—because God is beyond our human categories. And if God is beyond our categories, then God cannot be captured for certain. We cannot know with the kind of surety that allows us to proclaim truth with a capital T.

Contrary to *Daily Dish* dogmatism, born-again Christians assert that God is not "beyond our human categories." In fact, the opposite is true. For an introductory treatment to this subject, I recommend Ronald H. Nash's, [*The Word of God and The Mind of Man*](#), P&R Publishing, 1982. Mr. Nash carefully explains the "extent to which the human mind can receive and understand divine revelation, insofar as this revelation is understood to include the communication of truth." He also describes how modern, liberal theologians followed the rationalism of 18th century philosophers David Hume and Immanuel Kant which questioned God's ability to communicate truth to man as well as undermined man's ability to attain

knowledge about God. The book seeks to give an answer to the question, "...is there a relationship between the human mind and the Divine mind that is sufficient to ground the communication of truth from God to humans?" "The Christian God is not the Unknown God of ancient Athens [Acts 17:23] or modern Marburg. He is a God who created men and women as creatures capable of knowing His mind and will and who has made information about His mind and will available in revealed truths."

The fact that there are competing claims as to which religion is the true Divine channel, does not invalidate the possibility that God has, in fact, spoken and select portions of mankind have heard His voice.

To the Bible-believing, epistemologically-certain Christian, Mr. Sullivan's sentiments should come as no surprise. His desire to speak for and elevate the value of "spiritual doubt" are the logical genesis of the *natural man* spoken of in Scripture.

The [natural] man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. 2:14.

By contrast:

...no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We [fundamental Christians] have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what [knowledge/truth] God has freely given us. 1 Cor. 2:11,12.

Therefore:

The spiritual man makes judgments about all things...we have [in part] the mind of Christ. 1 Cor. 2:15,16.

However, Andrew Sullivan does to a degree understand and is rightly sensitive to the clerical hypocrisy and harsh authoritarianism that is Roman Catholicism. Yet like hundreds of millions of others, he fails to understand how his ersatz "Christianity" has utterly and miserably failed him. For Catholic, Protestant, or Greek Orthodox, there is no [New Birth](#) at either infant or adult Baptism, nor reception of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation. All of these sacraments are ecclesiastical hocus-pocus, and he and millions of others are the tragic victims of hollow and near-worthless traditions. Sadly, Andrew holds and is held by an empty faith, one which misleads, deceives, and eternally destroys.

It may be no coincidence that a large percentage of today's Western homosexuals were raised in nominal Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, even Christian households—households with forms of non-fundamentalist faith extolled by Mr. Sullivan. In the first chapter of Romans, the Holy Spirit via the Apostle Paul wrote:

For although they knew [of] God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts [Ps. 14:1] were darkened. V.21

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. V.24

...God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. V.26-28

Contrary to secular theories or gay propaganda, the basis of homosexual thought, impulse, and behavior is *ontological*, never genetic. Its primary cause is similar to other “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19), its source being the [life which flows from the First Adam](#) to all the “once born.” Tragically, even a majority of today’s “evangelicals” are untaught or unaware of these basic Christian truths. For a more in-depth treatment of the subject, albeit dated, read the late Christian author, Miles J. Stanford’s: [HOMOSEX AND THE CHRISTIAN: The Making, and Breaking, of Homosexuality.](#)

The Living God can be known! It is not beyond the realm of cognitive knowledge nor human experience as the highly-talented, skeptic Andrew Sullivan claims. Let him, and others like him, contemplate the realm, dynamics, and benefits of genuine “spiritual humility.”

For the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its [own] wisdom did not know him, God was pleased though the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

On account of mankind’s Satan-infused pride:

...God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before Him. 1 Corinthians 1:27-29



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