

## The Dogma Assassin

I have no friends. There are many reasons for this phenomenon. Of course being a paronomasiac, a pun addict, is high on the list of friendless attributes. For example, I would define “dogma” as a female parent of a canine. “Vacillate” would be equivocation leading to tardy application of petroleum jelly to dry lips. And so on. That is usually enough for any budding relationship to go south.

But that isn’t all. I am an expert in refuting dogmas. All of them. Dogmas, after all, are opinions and like certain body parts, everyone has one.

Take the ‘credentials’ dogma, for example. I have...had...a friend, Elmer, who states emphatically that the most important part of a decision to trust any professional is credentials. That sounds ok at first. Heart surgery? Make sure the MD has done a lot of them successfully, has gone to a highly acclaimed university, and so on. Common sense, right?

We argued amiably back and forth, and then he brought up this politician who was running for governor, whether or not he was qualified. Elmer said, “Not only is he qualified, but he has the right religious qualifications too. He is a minister in his local gospel church. I admire people with religious credentials.”

“So you admire Torquemada, the highly credentialed Spanish Inquisition leader?” I asked.

Kaboom!!! RIP credentials dogma. I haven’t heard from Elmer in a long time.

Then there was the time my cousin Winslow started talking at the family reunion. He is somewhat to the right of Caligula, so I have to bite my tongue when he says anything remotely political. He claims to be an ideological pragmatist. He also claims I am an idealist and he doesn’t intend that to be a complement. He regales anyone who will listen how he deals with this issue or that election pragmatically. “I know how the world works, so I play with the rules whatever they are.” I asked him what he would do in Darfur, for example. “I’d join the rebel army, of course,” he said, “to save my life. They kill anyone who doesn’t join.”

“I can see that,” I said. “Of course, you’d have to pragmatically kill people to stay alive yourself,” I said. “Being an idealist, I’d stay and try to change the

dynamics of the conflict by trying to negotiate a settlement. Of course, I'd be the first one you'd have to nail, right?"

Kaboom!!! The rest of my relatives started clapping. Winslow hasn't been to a family reunion since.

My dogmatic religious ex-girlfriend, Mona, loves to quote from the Bible. She is very fond of saying poor people just need to pick up themselves by their bootstraps. Then they would be successful. I asked her where in the Bible "God helps those who help themselves," comes from. She said it was from the book of Ecclesiastes. I told her it was from Ben Franklin and, by the way, Jesus' message was the opposite of that slogan: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Kaboom!!! Last I heard Mona is a high class hooker in Washington D.C. I guess she picked herself up by her garter belt.

Then there was this priest friend of mine, Father Gonzalez José Garcia Rodreguez Garcia Plomero Garcia Ladrillo. While we were playing a nice, placid game of chess, the discussion turned to sin. I claimed that the definition of sin kept changing. "For example," I said, "It used to be a Mortal Sin to deliberately eat meat on Friday. Now it isn't." Father Garcia said that the Vatican Council balanced a lot of things like that. Pressing my advantage, I said, "But isn't any form of contraception still considered a Mortal Sin?" He said it was because sex was intended only for procreation, so to abuse it is sinful. "But murder is also a Mortal Sin," I said, "so using rubbers and blowing someone's brains out with a shotgun are equally offensive in the eyes of God, right?" Kaboom!!!

Father Ladrillo has two armed guards outside the church to make sure I don't accidentally get in.

I should have known better than get into the global warming issue, but like a fool, I did. My friend Hugo from Atlanta is convinced it is a political hoax perpetrated by left wing communists. "Lets say you're right," I said reasonably. "Let's assume the sun is acting up and the human contribution to heating the planet is negligible. How do you like the air here in Atlanta?"

He scrunched up his face as if expecting some disagreeable odor to happen in the next few minutes. Rhetorically it did. "It stinks," he said.

“Well, don’t you think something should be done like in Los Angeles and London to clean it up?” I asked logically.

“Sure,” he answered, face still with its malodorous expectation intact.

“And New York, Kansas City, Guadalajara....shouldn’t they clean up their air too?”

“Probably,” he answered carefully.

“Well, if all the cities cleaned up their lousy air, all that nasty, man made polluted air, wouldn’t it be better for all the people that live there anyway and wouldn’t it limit the carbon monoxide that is burned into the air even if we aren’t responsible for global climate change...and if we are, wouldn’t cleaning up our cities’ air fix it?”

Kaboom!!! Hugo moved to a nice, oil polluted Texas town. I hear he’s happy.

I wouldn’t be fair if I didn’t include my former friend, Leonid, a self proclaimed liberal. One day we were amiably chatting about “entitlements”. Leo, as I call him, wanted government subsidized health care. I agreed with him on that one. “Everyone should get a good, free education and basic health,” I sympathized. “The trouble is there are too many things you socialists want and there isn’t enough money to pay for them all.”

“Wait just a minute,” he yelled. “I’m no damn socialist. I just want basic services for people who need them.”

“Oh?” I responded. “Where do you stop? Should everyone have a pet gerbil? Should there be government sponsored hookers, basically a government brothel? On the other hand, I would probably define Congress as a government brothel anyway, so we don’t need to discuss that one.”

Kaboom!!! Leo decided to join a monastery where everything is provided as long as you pray a lot.

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So there you have it. I’m an equal opportunity dogma assassin. Somebody once asked me if I’d rather be happy or right? Like I said, I have no friends. Apparently, my eminently sensible comments are like throwing a grenade into

the conversation. That reminds me. A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart, wouldn't it?

Oops. I guess I just lost anyone who reads this if they were ever, unaccountably, thinking of being my friend.