

A Sermon on the Firing of Roy Anderson

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for October 10th, 2021 (and beyond)

Roy Anderson is a character on the US sitcom “The Office” formerly on NBC. If you are unfamiliar with the show, I’ll do my best to provide enough context for this sermon to make sense to you even without familiarity with the referenced situations and characters. Roy Anderson worked in the warehouse at the fictional Scranton location of the Dunder Mifflin paper company. He is at first glance European American (AKA “white”). He was fired after one incident in which he assaulted, but did not batter Jim Halpert who worked in sales in the office. He was prevented from harming Halpert because Dwight Schrute intervened spraying Anderson with pepper spray or mace to stop the attack. Does it matter to you why he attacked Halpert? Would the reason make a difference in regards to whether you would fire him for doing so? Even if you find the attack worthy of the firing, would it make a difference to you if other employees who had similar outbursts were not fired and at times even promoted?

Roy Anderson was engaged to the receptionist Pam who worked in the office. Jim Halpert kissed Pam while she was still engaged to Roy and Halpert later marries her. Anderson also causes property damage outside of work at a local bar after learning of the affair. His family pays for the damage caused to the bar. Is that white privilege or class privilege? If his family couldn’t afford to cover the damages to the bar, would the bar owner have pressed charges sending Anderson to jail? If Roy were a person of color, would Jim have filed a criminal complaint and pressed charges for the assault? Do you think Roy’s ancestry or genetics had anything to do with the fact he was only fired and not also criminally prosecuted?

Andy Bernard graduated from the Ivy League Cornell University and was a salesman at Dunder Mifflin who is later promoted to branch manager at the Scranton branch after he punched a hole in the wall at the office damaging company property and engaged in a duel with another salesman, namely Dwight Schrute. Bernard wasn’t a good salesman either. But, Bernard had an impressive resumé and maybe having someone with such a degree contributed to the vanity of the leadership at Dunder Mifflin. Is that why he’s given so many second chances before ultimately being fired after defrauding the company for months as a result of a spontaneous cruise with his brother to the Caribbean while still accepting paychecks and pretending to be at work? Even after that, he maintains his position as manager. He isn’t fired until he does it again in pursuit of a singing career. How Bernard keeps any position at Dunder Mifflin is mind-boggling especially where Roy was immediately fired for one violent outburst where no property was damaged and no one was hurt beyond reactions to the pepper spray which were temporary.

Dwight Schrute also brought a loaded gun into the office and shot through the floor of the office above the warehouse. That shot could have killed someone directly below the office. He also destroyed a CPR practice dummy that was not company property though the destruction occurred on company property. He was later promoted to branch manager. But, unlike Bernard, Schrute was a very good salesperson and often the top

salesperson regionally and nationally. So, it is possible with both Bernard and Schrute, leadership at Dunder Mifflin found the benefits outweighed the risks in terms of giving them second chances. But, Roy was easily replaced and attacked Jim Halpert who was almost equal to Schrute in terms of sales or bringing in revenue for the company.

Was Roy fired because he was the only one referenced with an express intent to harm another person? Are you forgetting the duel? Does it make a difference that the duel was agreed upon between Schrute and Bernard with the battle taking place off company property? Would you fire all of them after their first offense if the offense was violently damaging company property, shooting a firearm creating an unreasonable risk of serious bodily harm or death, and/or attempting to violently attack a co-worker they claimed they were going to kill? Would it make a difference to you where anyone doing any of those things went to college, how much money they make, and/or their heritage? Would it make a difference how fond you were of the person and if you enjoyed working with them?

Objectively, I tend to agree that firing Roy was appropriate. However, I think there is a lot of hypocrisy in how standards or rules are enforced at Dunder Mifflin. Todd Packer should have been fired multiple times and apparently destroyed the Scranton Branch Manager's carpet under two separate managers. Packer was a prospector-type "on the road" salesperson. Packer also drugged/poisoned his co-workers after he was fired for failures at the Florida store launch. No one presses charges for it. He is forgiven or so it seems. Why are the sales-staff given so many second chances where the warehouse worker is fired after the first offense, which should have been mitigated or arguably so given the personal nature of the basis for the outburst? The duel was personal too and over a woman who worked in the accounting department.

I believe classism may have played a role in Roy's firing. I wouldn't believe that if Bernard and Packer were more swiftly fired as well. I understand the benefits of keeping Dwight Schrute likely outweighed the risks resulting from any of his eccentricities. And, ultimately, Bernard and Packer are fired. But, why wasn't Roy given a second chance too? Would you support a second chance for Roy or are you more inclined to fire everyone including Schrute after their first serious offense causing serious property damage and/or unreasonable risk of serious bodily harm and/or death? If in their shoes, would you find being fired unreasonable, unfair, or reasonably fair? Would you recognize your office-staff privilege and consider Roy didn't get a second chance because he was just an easily replaced "unskilled" warehouse worker? If you worked in the warehouse, would you be more considerate of the office-staff after Roy was fired? Would it change how you express yourself and would you engage in any self-censorship where you hadn't before and the office-staff doesn't seem to do that in consideration of others? Would you feel passively oppressed by your economic position or position in the workplace? Is the firing of Roy Anderson in full context evidence of any identified micro-aggressions?

Regardless, Roy shouldn't have attacked Jim and doing so should make anyone eligible for termination under the circumstances. Bernard and Packer are not exceptional and

therefore did not deserve the exceptions, in my opinion. But, I'd be more inclined to give Roy a second chance over Todd Packer. Dunder Mifflin is a fictional company and no version of me was ever in leadership there. The same is true of you more likely than not. But, contemplating how you might handle a leadership role at Dunder Mifflin given the various situations presented may reveal more about you than anyone else. If you want mercy, show mercy. Matthew 5:7 (KJV).

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

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