

IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE YOUR RELIGION THEN YOU ARE NOT A TRUE MEMBER

Part of what religion is, is that it offers membership. Membership is not about mere enrolling but about keeping the membership alive. It's a process not an event. A cherry-picker obviously cannot be a real member but an actor. Religions that deny these things are about nominal members and about labels and should be called pseudo-religions.

Roman Catholic Canon Law is clear that the Catholic Church is a visible tangible organisation governed by the successor of Peter, the pope and by the bishops in communion with him. Full members are those persons "who are joined with Christ in its visible structure by the bonds of profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance."

Pope Leo XIII : "The practice of the Church has always been the same, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, who were wont to hold as outside Catholic communion, and alien to the Church, whoever would recede in the least degree from any point of doctrine proposed by her authoritative Magisterium." (Satis Cognitum, 30).

A religion cannot be a religion unless it has doctrines that are required to be believed.

If a person loses their faith and its not their fault, they can still hold that the teachings they disbelieve are essentials and they must wholeheartedly try to accept them again. They could still be true members for they do not deny that they should believe certain things and are obligated to.

It would be okay for such a person to say in public, "I am struggling with such and such a doctrine required by the Church." But for them to say publicly, "That teaching is rubbish" would be an entirely different matter. If you know your religion claims to teach the truth infallibly and that it teaches error then your membership is a mere label. To call yourself a member is honouring a religion of error and perhaps lies. If the religion is wrong, its claim that you are a member means nothing. You may as well claim to belong to somebody you sell your soul to on ebay.

If the religion merely asks that its teachings be believed, that is not requiring. Roman Catholicism makes adoption of all its beliefs obligatory. There must be a punishment decreed for those who believe and then wilfully stop believing. Those who refuse to believe or who wilfully abandon belief need to receive retribution of some kind. Why? Because a law that does not punish is not a law at all.

The minimal punishment has to be the loss of authentic membership in the religion.

If a teaching is required and if you can be a true member and reject the teaching then its not a required teaching at all. The Church is a religion is just a body of opinion - opinion cannot be taken very seriously. If the Catholic Church allowed or permitted Catholics to deny that Jesus was God, it would no longer be a Church. It would have to say to the person who say elects himself pope, "You have the right to do so and we welcome your belief." Discipline and Catholic identity would be under threat of extinction. The Church organisational structure would come apart.

Catholics today tend to hold that if somebody is Catholic and is cherry-picking what doctrines and rules they like, rather than encourage them to officially leave the Church and get a new religion, they should try and engage with them.

The cherry-pickers have left the Church in their hearts and want to see the Church become a social body that goes with the fashions and that takes its rules from humanistic and secular ideologies.

The Catholics would certainly have to hold that some of them should just leave officially. The Catholics would also have to hold that some of them are just confused and could be good Catholics if they got the right help and support.

The Catholics will not want to drive people out but will have to help a person decide if they should stay or not. Any other approach would be manipulative unfair and unhelpful.

If Catholics could be sure that those who claim to stay will never have any intention of considering acceptance of the real Catholic faith they would then feel its right to push them out.

None of this undermines the fact that a Catholic who invents his own version of Catholicism must be honest and admit they are not Roman Catholics and not in full communion with the Church.

Religion is a thing. It has to be. You cannot call just anything a religion. A religion will have characteristics.

Religion is not a gathering of individuals. It is not a social club for individuals. In fact, you have to give up at least some of your liberties to be part of the religion. But you may say that say Mormons and Catholics for example have a lot of freedom to do what they want. Yes but they are doing these things primarily because they are permitted so they are still not free. The only freedom the religious person has is the freedom to obey.

A club bases its rules on what suits the members best. Catholicism for example cannot be considered a club for the pope and the bishops decide doctrine and say they do it primarily for God and not for people. It is not a democracy and so it is not a club.

You are not in truth a member of any organisation or religion unless you are at least trying to believe what its authorities say you must believe.

Some religions teach that though you must believe to be a member, you will be considered a true member if you are trying to believe. This is believing in the sense that you believe its possible you can believe. Even then belief in a religion's teachings is making you a member.

There are so many hypocrites who claim to be Mormon, Catholic, Muslim or whatever when they don't believe all they are expected to believe. They dissent from the official standard of belief. The hypocrites would be best asked, "Are you a believing Mormon (or whatever)?" They will waste your time with excuses if you try to make them see that they are not Mormon or whatever. They fail to see themselves for the play actors they are.

It is said that baptism makes one a member of the Christian Church. The Church claims it does not have membership lists but merely records the fact that a ceremony of baptism was undergone. It admits the possibility that a baptism may not have been real or valid. So it follows then that the nominal Catholic is not a Catholic. He cannot argue that he is a Catholic because a list says so. So it his Catholic faith that determines what he is.

Authority is the right to delegate duties and to command others. A baby or child can't be a Catholic or a Muslim or an Atheist or anything else. The baby does not know what these faiths or whatever are or what they entail. False religions cannot really have the authority to make a baby a member even if a baby can become a member of the true faith. Having a child initiated into a religion, is simply declaring the child what he or she is not. It is implying that the child is somehow defective until this initiation takes place. If you thought your baby was perfect you would not need to have a religious label pinned on to her or to him. If this was done to you then now that you are older you can do something about it. And you need to honour yourself by reversing or nullifying that initiation.

It is obvious that the Catholic who is trying to accept and understand Church teaching but who does not believe cannot be Catholic to the extent that a believing Catholic is. Membership of the belief community is not the same as having your name in the registry of members. It is even more important than the registry or being socially accepted as a member of the religion. It is the basic thing. Its not negotiable.