

MANY PEOPLE JUSTIFY THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL RELIGION BY BLAMING NOT IT BUT BY BLAMING ITS LEADERS

Bad leaders are never all to blame. They are not the disease but the symptom.

Blaming leaders of a religion for the bad deeds instead of admitting the religion as a faith and system has a role is dishonest. The leader at the end of the day is much a member of the religion as the violent sectarian member. It is better to blame the beliefs of the religion if you cannot decide if it is to blame for the leaders. A religion that opens the door for bad leaders to rise to power is to blame and cannot blame human nature. It cannot use the fact that lots of organisations have bad leaders for it is not lots of organisations.

It is foolish of Catholics and Protestants to blame their religious leaders when cases of child abuse and child molestation and cover-ups by these leaders come out. The worst blame lies with the licks who put the beasts in power and keep them there and who lavish adulation on them. Nothing is better at making people want to look up to their leaders and paper over any evil these leaders do or condone than religion.

The Nazis looked up to Hitler. It was difficult for Hitler to achieve the standing he got in the eyes of Germany. For him, it was luck and those who paved the way for him. The people supported him and made him rise higher and higher in the power rankings. The people were the real force not Hitler. He was their figurehead. As much as we like to demonise Hitler, in fact it should be the people who gave him his power we should be demonising as well as him if not more. Yes they were worse. By demonising Hitler it makes us feel better about the evil we allow and we enjoy the hypocrisy - the pretending that we are great for judging Hitler. We definitely cannot claim to love him and hate his sin with a straight face for we are not even being fair.

Believers in God and religion will say that Hitler and Germany did terrible things and religion was not to blame but the political system.

But the system still had religious characteristics.

Religion is a problem because it is not open to changing doctrines if the evidence in favour of their veracity proves invalid or weak. Religion empowers people who have no real regard for truth and evidence. Thus if you want to set up a dictatorship and get the people to go along with it, the groundwork is laid if they are religious or if religion has great power in the nation. Anything that stakes a lot on poor or non-existent evidence, is religious even if it never mentions God. It is acting like it has some right to act as God. It is engaging in religious or magical thinking even if it will not admit it.

Patriotism so easily leads to hate - patriots tend to play God and look down on those who are not patriots like them. They direct the impulse for God to what they see in the mirror.

Religion and patriotism are similar in many ways - patriotism is the root of all evil so religion is dangerous as well.

The Nazis should have known better - Hitler was only a man and that was all he ever claimed to be. He never claimed to be a prophet or infallible. The Nazis suppressed their natural compassion for the Jews to destroy them and there was no excuse. They knew they were being irrational but still they went full steam ahead in their support for Hitler. This was inexcusable and a violation of natural feeling and reason. However, if God has a plan and appoints infallible popes and prophets there might be an excuse. Then the pope or prophet is regarded not just as man but as a mouthpiece for the divine who has been given divine authority. The Nazis and their enablers might not have said, "God wants us to do this", but they showed it by their actions that they thought he did. Actions speak louder than words.

If you claim to be the representative of a supernatural God and that sometimes this God commands what looks evil to us but which isn't if we understood the plan of God, then it is surely considerably easier to manipulate people and to win their adoring trust. Then you have a clever excuse for ordering evil deeds.

The phenomenon of religious leaders being adored and people refusing to believe the terrible things they got up to and side with them and not the victims is a common and a frightening one. The adoration is stronger than that for a political leader or a pop star. Nobody treats their political leaders or pop stars as perfect and as infallible no matter how much they love them. Nobody believes everything they say. But with religion, people tend to obey their leaders as infallible. Religion is dangerous. Religious leaders don't deserve to be imputed with altruistic motives when they get such a high estimation from much of their flock. Heretics and gay people cannot complain if religion turns on them when they support it. Religion is intrinsically self-important and looks down on people. Even when it helps it does it condescendingly. Religion depends on

us looking up to certain people who may be dead or alive and treating them as revealers of what we must do even if we don't understand.

A prophet who falsely preaches good things while claiming God inspires him is as bad as one who preaches bad things. He is still arrogant and feeding his arrogance by getting people to take his word as God's word. Bad or man-made religion will always lead to problems and troubles. To do good because some arrogant person says so is to use good not do good. It is using the good to feed his arrogance.

The person who knows Catholicism is not the religion set up by God is complicit in its errors and consequent wrongdoings. Even if he just lets himself be labelled a Catholic, that is what he is doing. To let yourself be labelled is to take a stand for Catholicism.

APPENDIX - POSTED ON PSYCHOLOGY TODAY

From David Kyle Johnson Ph.D.

Excerpt from *The Handmaid's Tale, Feminism, and the Dangers of Religion*

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The argument goes, religion's not dangerous—it's just its misuse that's dangerous. Indeed, those who misuse it aren't really religious. They don't really believe the doctrines they espouse; they don't really cherish the holy books they cite. They are simply hungry for power and thus appropriate religion and use it to manipulate others into believing and ultimately behaving in ways that grant them that power.

But it's not clear that this argument works, especially in the real world.

First, it seems unlikely that those who do evil in the name of religion don't really believe the religious doctrines they espouse. The puritans in Salem probably wouldn't have hung women as witches ... unless they actually believed in witches. Most suicide bombers probably wouldn't volunteer for suicide ... unless they actually thought it guaranteed them an afterlife with 72 virgins. Evangelical Christians wouldn't undermine science education by demanding equal time for young earth creationism ... unless they actually believed the Earth was only 6000 years old. It's not just a grab for power.

Second, even if religious leaders aren't true believers (and are merely manipulating people to gain power), that wouldn't mean religion isn't dangerous. After all, the populace couldn't be so easily manipulated if it weren't for its religious beliefs. Puritanism could never take hold in a population made up of atheists. The question is whether society would be better off without religion; and if a lack of religion would make it less susceptible to such manipulation, the answer would seem to be yes.

To counter this, one might point to historical examples where people were manipulated to commit atrocities without the use of religion—like in Stalin's Russia, Pol Pot's Cambodia, or the Kim family's North Korea. But there are two things to say in response.

First, the argument isn't that a lack of religion would make it impossible to manipulate people—just that it would make it much harder. To think that the inability to completely eliminate something is a reason to do nothing about it commits what I call the “All or nothing (link is external)” fallacy, a variety of false dichotomy. Yes, some leaders might still find ways to manipulate people, but if religion makes society more susceptible to manipulation, it's dangerous. (This same fallacy is invoked by gun rights advocates who say that gun regulations are useless because they can't stop all violent crime.)

Second, it's not clear at all that Stalin, Pol Pot, and the Kim family did not use religion to manipulate people. Yes, their communist ideologies were based in a Marxist materialistic naturalism. But to solidify their power, these tyrants essentially invented their own religion that made them and their government the objects of worship.

Take North Korea where the Kim family created a religion, known as Juche, that literally worships them as gods. Their people actually believe them to be perfect and flawless ... even capable of incredible feats like walking at 3 weeks old, talking at 8 weeks, driving at age 3, winning yacht races at age 9, writing 1500 books in 3 years, writing the 6 best operas in two ... and (I kid you not) never going to the bathroom. Kim Jung-il even supposedly shot a 38 under par the first time he played a round of golf, which included 11 holes in one.

The New Atheists criticize all forms of blind devotion and willful ignorance. It's not just supernatural beliefs that are dangerous, but the thought processes that generate and protect them. Even if they don't consider Stalin and Pol Pot's cult-of-personalities to be “religions” per se, the New Atheists do (at least) consider the “religious thinking” that makes such

cults possible just as objectionable.