Patrick H Gormley

DON'T CONFUSE CIVILITY AMONG RELIGIONISTS FOR THE RELIGION AS SUCH BEING GOOD

Religion gets a free pass in society despite the harm it does and gets access to the vulnerable. The problem is that we are too superficial and admire its seeming civility. That is not enough. Dictators got to power on the back of civility.

Love the religionists but not their religion?

Though people say you must hate the sin and love the sinner, nobody seems to say you should hate the religion and love the people in it when it is an error-ridden, bad and dangerous religion. Are those who say that a religion is acceptable for not all the people in it are bad really qualified then to assess? No.

To prefer to blame a religious person for the evil he or she does in the name of faith in religion and say it has nothing to do with religion is persecuting that person in the name of religion. It would be kinder to look at how the beliefs ruined that person. If religion demands that it be exonerated all the time, then religion is bad.

And loving the sinner and hating the sin is such a basic principle to religion that it can be considered its bedrock. But it is deceitful. Moreover it leads to people saying, "I love the sinner but do not forgive his sin." Good people should not join religion when it is founded on a bad and hypocritical principle. Hypocrisy is the seed of further and worse hypocrisy.

The few bad eggs can justify condemning a religion

Suppose there is reasonably good religion x and reasonably good religion y. X has a few bad eggs and so has y. The bad eggs are sometimes enough to justify condemning the religion and urging people to depart from it. They justify departures when the evil they do outweighs any good done by the religion. They justify departures when the evil they would do if able outweighs any good done by the religion. We know Islamists and some Fundamentalist Christians would wage nuclear war just to destroy other religions. This justifies those who depart for there are signs and a real risk that the disease of religious fanaticism will spread to the majority and make them dangerous too. It is going to have a political impact and influence. If you support say a fundamentalist evangelical religious and social structure, you are creating the political religious crank of tomorrow. The disease of religious fanaticism will spread to make most members enablers of the violent view. Members usually let the bad people do their violence or make excuses for them afterwards or demand that they be forgiven. You can convert to a religion you would normally dismiss as crazy or stupid when you see it getting the superficial credibility that comes from a seemingly big though albeit superficial and hypocritical membership and by the fact that society seems largely to permit the religion.

A country asks one person to vote to see if it will introduce infanticide clinics or not. What if that person is you? You will feel horrendous about voting yes. You will nearly certainly vote no. But what if the vote was put to the whole country. Imagine that half the country if not more is expected to vote yes. You will not feel bad about your yes vote then. Something called diffusion of responsibility is at work. You don't feel as much to blame if others are involved. Yet you are still the same kind of person as you would be if the vote were given to you alone. Hypocrisy then is built into human nature and is stronger than any desire for God. In fact claiming to be God's pal is boastful considering how hypocritical human nature is. It is trying to put God's stamp on your pretence. If you think God is ultimately in control of the universe that means that if you murder babies you think you share the responsibility for the deaths with God. That is diffusion of responsibility too.

"My leaving the religion will not help"

If a religion has a violent history, some violent members and violent scriptures then it is the height of arrogance to reason, "O I would never get involved in sectarian violence." The violent members once told themselves the same thing. And you are unaware of how easily people can be corrupted or misled. And you are involved indirectly in the violence for no law forces you to support this religion or let your name be on its membership rolls. To be arrogant and proud when people suffer and die or have done because of your religion insults them. You have taken the baby steps to corruption.

If you claim to be in a bad religion because it will improve or leaving will make it worse, then prove that. You would need to be arrogant to think that your presence in a religion is indispensable to improving it. It is too serious of a matter to expect people to take your word for it that you have good intentions and are not a hypocrite or a coward. Anybody who sits on a fence can say staying in helps or avoids something worse. The religion is bigger than you if it is corrupt and your staying is only asking for to be corrupted. And unless you are pope or something you cannot do much about the corruption.

To stay in a harmful or lying religion while claiming that you feel it will change for the better is just an excuse unless you have strong proof that it will change or you are doing something serious to change the religion. It was the ordinary Catholics of the Dark Ages that empowered the Church's reign of terror and some of them told themselves that the evil Church would change so it was worth staying. When the Church was murdering and butchering and persecuting truth, some kings/rulers and some of the populace said, "They are sinners and not a reflection on our holy religion." They told themselves that to feel good about the fact that they were complicit in all that. It is like how Eve tried to blame Adam for what she did.

The Church ran a few hospitals and orphanages and bragged about some of the saints and that made the populace willing to overlook the bloodletting.

Your staying in a religion is bad if it is not going to change anything. And if you are honest, you will stay in the religion even if your support helps make it worse! And in a small way it does - there is strength in numbers and in big membership lists. Your membership is support.

You do not see humanistic or secular organisations trying to justify evil behaviour (and enabling evil to happen is evil behaviour!) done by members the way religion does. For example, the humanist cannot say that she let the child molester run rampant for she had the feeling that he would miraculously see the light. The secular politician will not let terrorists roam free while claiming that he is saying prayers that will prevent them from doing any harm.

Finally

We conclude that a religion from a loving God will produce something better than civility. It would be arrogant to attribute your civility to God. It suits you to be civil. There is no remarkable goodness in any religion or non-religious entity in the sense that you can find a person better than Mother Teresa in any camp. And any goodness comes from within not from religion. When you join a religion with a dark side you must take responsibility for helping that dark side to exist. The "not all bad" argument is a reason for rejecting religion not accepting it.

What bad people in your religion do makes it right and a duty for others to say of you, "Not likely that she is as bad but maybe?" It may be a slight maybe but it is still there. And if it is not it should be. If you refuse to admit this you only compound your indirect role in the evil of the religious bullies and religious terrorists in your religion.

A religion being mostly filled with good people is only mostly good. It proves religion can be bad and if something is mostly good then it is true to call it partly bad. You cannot ignore the bad members and the bad side and thereby condone them by saying the religion is essentially or totally good! You close off any discussion if people are willing to be corrected if they are contradicting their religion. That cannot happen if you treat them as outsiders of their religion and it creates a new us versus them fiasco.

Religion is stronger and gets better commitment when it is demanding and nasty. That says a lot.

People tend to believe lies they hear over and over again or they think they believe. If that is the reason for religion's success it makes it to blame for the harm it does as a religion and also to blame for the harm done by that tendency. People who are conditioned to let themselves be conditioned by lies only end up as prey for sharks other than religion.

Those who praise your involvement in a harmful religion while saying all people in it are not bad are actually one-dimensional. They won't challenge your faith and allegiance and so are to blame for the spread of the disease.

Real goodness is rooted in an extreme respect for human life. Extreme as in you will not give up promoting whatever helps life thrive and thrive happily. If religion is not needed to help people become good it is superfluous. The person who is not religious but who goes among the lepers to be the "god" that cares for them in the absence of divine love is better than the whole system of doctrine and scriptures and authority that makes up the religion. The religion that is superfluous is to blame for the badness in its flock for it pretends to be able to treat it with prayers and sermons and sacraments and it cannot. To make people think they are helped when they are not is to hinder not help.

Religion when it claims to connect you to absolute goodness and give you power to overcome your dark side must live by and be held to a bigger standard than a secular body should be. It never is and it does not want to be. It would not last if it did.

It is stupid to point to religious people as religious people and say any problems their religion causes are one thing but the most important thing is that they are not all bad. Not all being bad is not enough. They need to be good as well. Moreover they should be seen as good people not good religious people. Good is natural and letting a system of religious belief steal it is in fact bad. The goodness they have has nothing to do with the religion which is why it is only fair to look at the harm

the faith does.

All guns could in fact be loaded. We know that despite that they might not be. But if we carry on as if we know they are, at least we are safe and protecting others as well. It about survival. If we refuse to believe then soon there will be many many murders. The same goes for any religion you can name. Treat its beliefs and ideology as a threat and more people will be safe.