

Sharing in the Evil and Lies of Religion

When you know of some evil and can speak out and you will not that is using silence to give consent to the evil. You cannot say it has nothing to do with you for when you know of it you are involved. Take a charity. Even if you are not a member of the charity, you formally co-operate with that charity by praising it or advertising it or giving it money. That in a sense matters more than being a member for charities can run without members. With religion you formally co-operate with it merely by being a member or doing the other things we mentioned. The stronger your role in it the more formal co-operation there is. That is why clergy of a religion or its best benefactors or lay preachers or religion teachers are far more to blame if they promote a fake or harmful religion than the grass roots member would be. It is complicated for it can be argued that the grass roots members are giving those people a role and requiring them and thus are in another way just as bad. If it is a bad charity that is bad but if it is a religion it is worse for you are claiming to represent God in some way. If you create a bad family deliberately that is bad. Religion is a family you can opt into so if it is a bad family you are to blame if it has a role and a place for people to do grave harm even if they are a minority.

Letting people be deceived in religion, ruins your credibility and shows you have no courage and cannot handle tricky things diplomatically. It ruins the peace of the other person who needs to be able to trust others. The deception or being complicit in deceit by silence deprives the person of the chance to find a religion and religious relationship that she values and that suits her better if not best. The notion that what she does not know will not harm her patronises her. It is unresponsive to what she cares about and needs. What is important is that she has a meaningful relationship with a religion or community not that she should have pleasant beliefs about that relationship that are false.

If you mistreat any minority or anybody because of the group they seem to belong to people will tell you, "What you have done is an attack on all gays, black people, Muslims, etc." They will readily agree that it is also an attack on all humanity. That cuts both ways. If to attack a Muslim for example is to attack all Islam then it follows that if a Muslim attacks then all Islam must apologise and regard itself as tarnished.

Religion sometimes directly has empathy for or sympathy for or active support for hate and atrocities. Often religious belief is not directly or clearly to blame but makes them possible in a way that they would not otherwise exist or be as bad. Often a bad religion infects people and weakens them so that bad things happen to them. It kills but not on its own and in a non-obvious way.

Being in a religion means you take on representation of it as in being an advertisement for it and a part of it. It does not make you its holy book, official interpreter, pope or prophet or authority but it cannot work without an authority so you are in a sense far more responsible for what the teaching authority or ruling authority than what they are. There is no point in complaining about tyrannical leaders when you help give them a reason or THE reason to be leaders. Mere membership of your own autonomous will is enough to make you share in the evil of a religion that it commands or that happens indirectly because of it. You are to blame for being empathetic, sympathetic or directly supportive of evil. An evil that takes place that is forbidden by the religion could still be the religion's fault for many and most bad systems do evil indirectly.

Though it is true we should not paint everybody in a group or religion with the same brush, if their leader who represents them and speaks in their name speaks bad things or represents an infallible revelation from God be it in Bible or whatever that speaks bad things in the name of God, then there is a sense in which we can. It is human nature and it is the way things work to blame a whole country when its leader speaks evil or unreasonableness. We have to treat the nation collectively with its leader then.

You don't need to be directly responsible for an evil to be responsible. Direct responsibility refers to those who do an evil deed hands on but agency is being through silence or permission or command a help to that person. Agency can be far more harmful and more insidious than direct responsibility. Another form of agency is looking the other way when somebody needs a reprimand or justice for what they have done. They are condoned in their evil and often condoning is masked in the form of forgiveness.

Every religion has its authentic teaching. This teaching is its main and distinguishing feature. A religion has the right to set standards of belief and religious practice but needs to be aware that if people find any of that evil or wrong they have the right to leave with the religion's blessing. If you have to do a good deed especially a major one and preach a truth specially an important one in spite of your religions authentic teaching then do the right thing and go. If you have to do it in spite of a religion you should not be in it. Its about you having no right to let a manmade religion think it is from God or to help it by permitting your name to remain as a member. One way of letting it know the score is by writing a polite demand that you be no longer considered a member. It's the bare minimum.

If you give a religion money or stay in its membership or join it, any problem it causes as a religion is in some way your responsibility. It may be far out responsibility but it is there. The notion that there are problems with everything does not excuse.

It is what a religion permits that matters more than the good or bad it does. A good religion that permits evil is worse than one that actively does evil. It is not really good.

If you are in a religion, it is not up to you to decide what that religion should teach. You have to try and believe. There is no need for religion if you can pick and choose. You represent the religion and its teaching whether you like it or not. A bad or confused representative is still a representative. That is why a kindly person or a person who is nearly atheist but who identifies with a religion is not to be let off the hook. If the religion is bad the person needs encouragement to leave the religion. It is about helping the person and opposing the religion. It is encouraging the person to leave because you respect her or him totally but not the religion.

What we do or don't do is more than just what we do or don't do - there are always wider implications. If you fail to politely encourage believers in religion to check it out, you show you don't care if they are wasting their time. You are encouraging their errors when you don't have to. They can't expect you to support their errors by silence or any other way. If they are decent they won't. You have a part to play in any harm that may follow. In fact letting error thrive when you can support people who err so that they may release themselves from it will lead to harm for when one person does it his friends start doing it too.

The fact that too many religious people upon discovering that their faith or holy book or religion is merely of human origin and/or dangerous and harms people won't leave their religion is worrying. Too many people doing that makes the religion more harmful and corrupt in the long-run. They don't have the integrity to walk away.

The prejudices of the religious person on the street ends up embedded in the political system when the religion gets too powerful. Religious politicians will take advantage of the bigotry of the people.

People prefer to deny or make light of wrongdoing than to fix it or to do anything about it.

To do nothing or too little when evil happens is to do something for it - it is helping it to happen. Helping it to happen does more to cause the evil than the person actually doing it. If you don't indicate disapproval to those who do evil, you share in what they do. It is enabling. If you don't do enough though you can, that is enabling too.

People tend to feel okay about letting others do evil they would not do themselves. That proves them more concerned about looking good than being good. They feel superior to those who do the evil directly though they are letting it happen and so are no better. Sometimes, they are glad to see others suffer as long as it is somebody else that is inflicting the harm. We all know that what hurts and frightens and endangers the most is people letting others hurt us. The child abuse victim is hurt more by the lack of support and compassion than what the abuser did - and it worsens the pain of what the abuser did. It prolongs and reinforces it. This is not to absolve the abuser - he knows the harm that enablers of evil do. And he still gives them something to enable. Enabling some evil soon leads to enabling a lot more and discourages people who want to do something about it.

The person who knowingly and deliberately does evil is easier to get on the right track than an enabler - the enabler does not feel that the evil he has helped to facilitate is his problem. It is easier for him to regret the harm he does when he does it directly instead of indirectly through enabling others to do it. He is too much of a Pharisee to see the truth. Doing evil directly does not mean you don't care about those you hurt - enabling however does involve being hard-hearted. We feel we are good even as we are enabling. The less we see and hear the damage the more it fails to sink in that we are helping evil and pain to happen.

When you praise the Bible as being unerring in its teaching and doctrine, you are saying it is right to say that God commanded that homosexuals be stoned to death. That is to mention one evil out of many that it commands. This is extreme evil. Respecting and approving of it makes you no better than those who picked up the stones. To praise the Bible is to indirectly respect and approve the evil. To praise the God of the Bible is to implicitly respect and approve the evil. The evil being implicit or indirect does not make it any less bad. It is still as reprehensible and intolerable. In one way, you are worse than the killers for they had more chance of feeling bad about it than you!

When you refuse to politely challenge somebody's evil ways or evil beliefs, you are not doing this out of respect. It is cowardice or because you don't care enough about right and wrong. You may say it is because you don't want to cause upset - but if you refuse to speak up for right you will end up upsetting yourself and others. And who are you to judge how a person will react? Who are you to accuse them of being a spoiled opponent of truth when you don't know this? Suppressing

freedom of speech in the name of people's feelings leads only to resentment and fear. It does not help the person who acts badly - it may be years before the bad fruits rebound but they will.

Some believers expect you to say nothing constructively critical about their faith or certain parts of it. This is disgraceful especially when they have signed up to the faith and taken on the responsibility to constructively and politely - or when necessary, assertively - challenge you if you are a heretic or unbeliever.

The worst offenders who are complicit in latent or blatant religious evil are the clergy. If more Catholic priests were honest about the Church and encouraged parents to check out the bad side - including the violence commanded by God in the Bible - there would be fewer baptisms of innocent babies into the Church.

THE EXCUSE

Many say that religion can be used as an excuse for violence. That implies that all violence is an abuse of religion. It implies religion is actually always good. That is nonsense and no religion believes that all forms of religion are good. It cannot believe - period! If man is not all good and is not infallible then how can you expect his religions to be that great? The excuse is pro-violence for it is helping it to start.

Thus there is a difference between a religion being used as an excuse for violence and being an excuse. The religion pretending to be goodness untarnished and pretending that bad members are not really members proves that the religion is BEING an excuse. And it gets more complicated when you see that there is a difference again between being an excuse and being THE excuse.

SILENCE

Silence never stops you being involved in or related to controversy. Or conflict either. Silence is a form of expression. It is communication. Silence when something harmful is endorsed by society or the law is allowing future harm to take place. It is consent to it. If you consent to the harm that happens by silence do not forget that potentially you have been consenting to more! If you consent to evil at all you consent to something that you know can get out of control.

MODERATES?

Sam Harris is right that "moderate" religionists are enablers of the extremists - I would add they are enablers of those who truly obey the scriptures and lap up the violence and religious hatred in them. The moderates are triggering the bystander effect - the violent can feel that they would be supported by the moderates if the moderates understood the religion properly. That is extremely dangerous. Remember an indirect enabler is as bad as or worse than a direct enabler. Subtle complicity with evil and violence is more poisonous and powerful for it avoids being easily diagnosed. Loving the bad person and hating their badness makes no sense - it is really passive aggressiveness. It is a good example of how a religion can look nice and good while brewing evil under the surface. The best poisoners administer small doses over time.

If a moderate Muslim and a moderate Catholic would not kill heretics or apostates that is hardly very praiseworthy. Why? Because if that person is a moderate Muslim or Catholic that is admitting that there are extreme Muslims and Catholics. They are fanatics but they are still part of their religion of Islam or Catholicism. A moderate Muslim or Catholic is only possible if a Muslim or Catholic can be an extremist. Otherwise the word means nothing. If you are not a meat eater if you eat only veg, then you are either a moderate meat eater or an extreme one. You are still a meat eater. The extreme meat eater may be a more "real" meat eater than the moderate if not equally real.