

Criticism of Religion

Define religion before you criticise it

What is religion? We need to decide that before we can decide if religion should be constructively criticised or even laughed at. Religion is easy to identify but very hard to define. People end up with too tight a definition or one that is too loose and presents everything even the Youth Club down the road as a religion!

Religion is best understood as a system that obligates members to worship some supernatural force or forces in certain ways.

When is Criticism Criticism?

Not all that is called criticism is intended to be criticism.

Sometimes people state the disadvantages of a religion or some of its doctrine. Their intention is not to criticise but to open discussion. Religionists like to accuse them of being critical and negative. That is a tactic it uses to try and quench the truth or what is feared to be the truth.

Criticism of a religion is criticism of a system. It is not personal. To criticise a belief is not to criticise the person holding the belief because belief means the person merely thinks the belief is probably true. A belief is not 100% certain so it by definition is open to hearing objections and dealing with them.

Ridiculing someone purely on the basis of their religion is a form of bigotry. It is to be avoided at all costs. Engaging in a discussion and pointing out to someone that they are attempting to pass off highly illogical arguments as rational is not bigotry. If you are giving logical arguments that are wrong then you ask for the criticism as long as it is constructive. Ridiculing the arguments may be rude and out of place, and not conducive to a productive debate. But it is not bigotry.

Is belief voluntary?

Many think that our beliefs - say that homosexuality is immoral or that God exists - are not voluntary and so should not be criticised. Please read Robert M Adams "Involuntary Sins". But even if we think a person who wants gays slain is believing that involuntarily we will criticise. If a belief is involuntary, it does not follow that it cannot be changed by input from critics. If belief is involuntary, religion is clearly abusing children by indoctrinating them. If belief is involuntary then is it belief? Would you say a person programmed to believe that bread is poisonous really believes it? It is not really his view.

Silence in the face of religious manipulation

A religion can err or lie or command evil. If it makes mistakes and teaches error, especially gravely harmful error, it will be glad to be corrected if it has any decency.

Catholics have a ministerial duty to promote the teaching of the pope and the Church. Even Catholic critics of Church teaching are still advertising that teaching because their dissenting views are not representative of the Church. It's reverse advertising. They provide the Church with some publicity at least and any publicity is good publicity.

If religion is unchallenged, then it is being supported. It is being helped to do its work through your silence. This is often seen as indirect support. But is it? You make the choice to be silent and that choice paves the way for religion to do harm or simply that harm should be done. It is doing far more to make the evil thrive than those who work shamelessly for the evil do. The shameless feel encouraged by the silence. It lets down and discourages those who want the truth promoted. It is far better support than giving religion money or whatever. It is direct support. If you want to put it as being more effective than direct support you can.

Giving the religion money to help it do the damage it does would be seen as direct support. But leaving it unchallenged does far more.

The Church has managed to stop the poorest of the poor from using contraception and the results are often these: maternal deaths, the babies dying, overpopulation and unwanted pregnancies. Yet some people don't seem to care about this. Their mantra is, "But the Church feeds the poor." They are not far away from becoming hard cold individualists. They are already

de-sensitised.

Crutch

People say it is not right to refute a person's religion when that person needs it as a crutch but that person should be looking for a crutch that is neither harmful or potentially harmful. Moreover, the person derives security not from their creed but from forgetting that it is not believable. It is right to discredit religion.

Many when asked for their opinion of religion in general witter along the lines of, "A feeling that there is something that will help us through even times that seem hopeless is extremely important. It is good that religion encourages it." That answer ignores the fact that you can and should get this feeling WITHOUT religion. Also, even if religion is doing good in encouraging the thought that belief in a higher power gives us hope it is saying, "It is better to be realistic rather than positive or negative. We oppose that truth. We want to encourage belief in God not because we care about evidence but because we want to throw people a crutch." A religion like that is asking for the hard questions to be put to it. It would be horrible if it is attracting the fearful and the vulnerable.

Religion is good so don't criticise

The view that religion should not be criticised as there is many in the Church who are good actually accuses them of being hypocrites. It implies that it is just their religion is keeping them good. Take away the faith or the Church and they will show their true colours.

The philanthropy of religion does not imply that it should be let alone by debunkers for it is only natural to want to do some good. The good works of the knowledgeable religionist cannot be performed with laudable motives. The Roman Church says that you can do good real good while being a sinner. But that good is an insult to God for it is you saying, "I will do good when it suits me so I am not doing this because it is good but because I feel like it". Thus, Catholicism is all self-deception. The humanitarian Catholics are really defying their faith. Their faith cannot make them good and luckily their own natural goodness shone through the darkness.

Also, as God deserves all love, it follows that you help others only for his glory. It is not for them though they benefit.

If there are good people in the Church, they will be still good people if the Church collapses. If they cease to be good without the Church then they were not really good in the first place. The effect of attacks on the correctness of Catholic belief and the collapse of the Church should not affect the goodness of the members. The teaching of the Church that the Church is holy unfortunately denies this.

It is argued that people should tolerate every religion and every form of non-religion for there will be good people found in them. That is a ridiculous view. You would not be in the Communist Party if you thought the Labour Party and the Nazi Party and the Looney Party was just as good. The view is intolerant towards rational people and tolerant of the shit-talkers. Also, a religion is to be declared bad if its official and required teaching is bad no matter how good the members are. You are condemning the teachings not the people. You would not argue that Satanism is good just because even its worst critics say that there are doctors and nurses who are Satanists. The "there are good people in the religion therefore do not challenge the religion" argument is really a polite form of bullying against those who speak for truth and who care about it. It is said that professing Christians educated the poor. People calling themselves Christians did it not Christianity. There is no verse in the Bible saying you must teach children maths and geography etc. The Church should not take credit as a Church for improving our world.

Without truth you cannot be clear on what your rights are and you may demand rights you actually don't have. Erroneous religion then no matter how much good it does in fact undermines your perception of your rights and therefore ruins your rights.

The "Leave it alone for nothing is perfect" argument

People will say that critics should leave Catholicism alone for no religion or organisation is perfect. They might say that there are worse organisations than the Church out there. All that is really, the saucy "You are not so perfect yourself so remember that and stop looking for faults in my Church." If we really believed that we would do no good in life and our faults would end up worse than before. So in actual fact, if a religion is flawed, we have the right to withdraw ourselves from it and inspire others to stay away from it even if the flaws are not that bad. A religion that is really the work of a good God will produce people who are better than average. A religion that does not manage this has no right to claim to be of God. If there is a God you will have to account to him for why you were in a religion that was not great at making people holy.

There should be no followers of bad religion left

When religion teaches error or could lead to harm that is a sufficient reason for becoming an evangelist for unbelief.

Anything like religion that has bad implications is dangerous no matter how nice most of its members are. Upsetting today's religionists by showing them how wrong they are is a small and regrettable price to pay for rescuing far more and doing the greater good. Never upset a religionist unduly.

If my religious group claims to be sure that its doctrines are all objectively true, then what if yours disagrees? Clearly religion has to undermine tolerance. If it acts tolerant it is being hypocritical. It may act tolerant but that does not change the fact that it is in essence intolerant. A dog that is trained to sing like a bird is still essentially a barker even if he never barks. It is his nature. Anything that can be done without such as religion that embodies intrinsic intolerance is bad no matter how inconsistent it is with its intolerant nature.

Catholicism should believe that birth control is evil - its part of its identity as a religion. Catholicism can't be the true religion if it is wrong about how sinful birth control is. It is wrong and tragically so. People should separate from it so that there will be no Catholicism left to believe it. If you belong to or claim to belong to a religion that should believe evil things, then even if it doesn't believe, you are being evil and supporting evil. A religion that doesn't understand or admit or see how evil it is meant to be, will be praised. But it is a religion that is being praised for going against itself. It is no compliment to praise it for you are praising ignorance and disobedience. Separate from it.

People say they only follow the Church because society does and they don't want to feel uncomfortable around the priest by cutting religious ties and they want to fit in in their hometown or wherever they are. But these are only pretending to follow the Church.

Everybody in the early 1900's thought that traditional Christianity with all its superstitions and absurdities was dead. They were wrong. In America, Christianity that pretends there are no errors in the Bible and that the world was made by God in six days about six thousand years ago is now more powerful than it ever was. Don't empower the Church to get back its control over people. It may not have much power now but that can change. The doctrines that should lead to the Church being able to exploit as it did in former days are still in force. Human nature is dangerously insane in relation to spiritual matters.

If a person loves their religion and the Atheist destroys their faith is that right? Is that putting persons first? It is for it is because persons come before error that a person cannot be allowed to err. If truth did not exist persons would not exist therefore to endanger other people's perception of important truth is to degrade truth and to degrade that person. That is why it is your business what other people believe and it is their business what you believe. The person who is hurt by losing their faith should not have been so attracted to it but should be grateful for the truth that exposes their faith for what it really is - shadows. A faith based on shadows is a dangerous crutch. The longer a person persists in it the worse it will be when he or she finds out that it was a pack of lies.

The Church of Rome claims to believe that human reason when correctly used is to be seen as inspired by God. But inspiration is not reason and reason is not inspiration. If God puts thoughts in your head that means you are not reasoning then. The Church is trying to cover up its opposition to reason. Its devotion to reason is lip-service.

Humanists hate spiritual opinions that look down on Atheism and the scientific method. Humanists hate it when religion tries to promote its teaching. Humanists know that Humanism is the method of getting to the truth. Religion opposes that method thus for religion to promote itself at all is for it to damage Humanism and the majesty of its ethos that we believe nothing until we learn the case in its favour. Humanists are only respecting themselves when they challenge religion.

Sincerity

If you err even with the best of intentions you still do harm. You harm your power to perceive the truth every time you err. You harm yourself though you feel no pain. You harm others by giving an example of error to them. To err is to take the side of error even if you never get the chance to express and live out your error. If somebody is wrong but sincere we can praise them for the sincerity but not for being wrong.

The view that if somebody has harmful religious beliefs that it is none of our business as long as they are sincere is wrong. It says that it is our business if they are insincere - probably because the fan of insincerity could be a possible danger to us. If it would be our business if they were insincere then the fact that they are sincere makes them more dangerous. It is even more our business then! At least if they are insincere they know they are wrong and on the side of wrong. The whole point of it being our business is stopping the harm. It is not about interfering with their intentions as intentions for we can't change anybody's intentions for them.

Conclusion

Tell people that you are an atheist. Kindly discuss or mention the things you have in common with the believer. Even the most ardent bigot will agree that like the atheist, she must accept the things in life and death that she cannot change. The atheist has to be courageous. Ask the believer challenging questions that will help them realise for themselves how their religion is false. There is no need for an argument.

appendix

Responding to somebody who says "I'm in no way religious but I've always found that quite sad; spending time and effort on something you don't believe in so you can feel superior."

Some religious people spend their lives debunking atheism and other religions. There is nothing wrong with some atheists and religions responding to that. Information must be put out there and shared to help people make up their own minds. I knew the Bible very well and wanted liberation from my Catholic faith. If it had not been for the critics I would still be a tee total virgin who never enjoyed his life and tormented at having to go to confession once a month to avoid the threat of Hell. That is no way to live. If a religion is man-made people have a right to know because man is not harmless and so the religion should not be harmless either. If man thinks his imagination is God talking to him that could be dangerous.

You say, "I'm in no way religious but I've always found that quite sad; spending time and effort on something you don't believe in so you can feel superior." How do you know that all critics of religion are just show offs? Your prejudice is what is sad. Why is it not sad for religious people to spend so much effort on atheism and other religions in which they do not believe?