

## Is religion to be condemned if used as an excuse for violence?

### 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.

Saying anything is an abuse of religion can be used in an ideological way and become a strategy for disrespecting and attacking religious freedom. You can say it is an abuse of Catholicism not to let priests break the seal of confession to stop murders. Or you can say it is an abuse of Catholicism to ban abortion. Or to ban atheists from becoming pope. Atheists would not want to but you never know. Stranger things have happened. It is thus in a faith's best interest to admit that it, at least in some unknown way, leads to hate and violence.

### YES

Is religion to be condemned if or when used as an excuse for faith based violence?

Yes if there are enough excuses without religion!

And yes if religion really is an excuse for violence. There is a difference between a religion being used as an excuse for violence and a religion 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.

And yes if religion could be an excuse. The rule that you don't condemn something just because it can be abused is not correct for all circumstances. It depends. Anything that shows little sign of being used as an excuse is to be honoured and respected more than anything that shows bigger signs. If you

If a religion claims to be the best or perfect system of belief and morals that leads to arrogance and it will ignore any evidence that it is wrong. If a religion claims to be an imperfect system that can lead to some believers reasoning, "I don't have to be perfect so I should kill for God. If I am wrong I am wrong but God understands. All is in the hands of God anyway."

Is helping a sick baby good regardless of whether there is a God or not or what God thinks? If the answer is yes then goodness is independent of God and thus God cannot help you become good - only you can do that. Your journey to goodness is solely your own business not even God's. Instinct shouts yes at us so any attempt to say no will only make us stop finding joy in the good we do. Even if the answer is no, the no is not natural for us. And instinct is part of being good and to suppress it only makes a morality that does not agree with itself. This is at the root of all religion based on God and so the evil and hypocrisy is in the faith DNA!

A religion that is not an excuse will have fewer violent members than the average population. Or better still none. No religion that has fewer evil people than you have in the general population exists. If religion or any religion has more violent members then it is a "good" excuse. A good excuse is worse than a mere excuse.

What if the violent members of a religion are acting in its name? It will then be easy to blame the religion and see how it causes at least some to be violent. That it causes anybody at all to be violent means it does not matter how many good people are in it. In fact they are not that good if they make such evil possible. Without their being part of the religion and enabling it to exist it would not happen. It is an insult to point to the good people in the religion as if the bad does not matter or as if they prove the religion is good. If you point to those good people, it is wrong for you should be pointing to good people regardless of what religion they are in or if they are in no religion. A good person is a good person. Don't be prejudiced by concentrating on good people in a religion. Do not enable religious evil by insulting those who are naturally good as in their goodness is intrinsic and was not put there by religion.

Now what if the violent members of a religion are not acting in its name?

The religion is to blame if it has treated them with beliefs, morals, sacraments and prayers that fail to help improve the bad side of human nature.

And religion says that it is the people so whether the member behaves bad or not it reflects on the religion.

## THE DEFINITION OF RELIGION IS PRO-ENABLING OF VIOLENCE

Religion defines itself as something set up by God so that people know what to believe and do to please him. It is not up to religion to define. Only evidence can do that. The problem with religion's definition is that there is no point in claiming to be of divine institution if it is not true or believable. If religion shows no difference from what you would expect if it were man-made then religion should be defined as an institution that claims to be divine. Religion does not like that definition because it denies that religion is intrinsically good - anything acting in the name of God when there is a good chance it is wrong cannot be good by definition. Religion is trying to condone the evil it does by denying it is the cause.

What if religion is all about arrogance and hypocrisy and pretending to be virtuous? What if religion defining itself as an organised system of righteousness and devotion to God is only pretending that this is its definition? What if religion is an organised system that engages in pretended devotion to God? If so, then religion is a lie. And it is to blame for anything bad that its members do even if it does not tell them to do it.

Religion has a lot of causes but the main one is the notion that what is random and happening without design or intention is in fact the work of an agent, God. When good things happen it is God and when bad things happen they are not really that bad for God is using them in a plan. That is making an excuse. You could say that the good things in your life are magically drawn to you because you feed the wild birds and the bad things that happen are really just blessings in disguise. An argument that cannot be tested is not an argument at all but a superstition. Both religious and superstitious people manipulate how they see things and manipulate others and they do it for the sake of feeling that life is on their side.

To define religion as necessarily good is to say, "If it causes violence I don't want to know. I want to praise it regardless."

If the evidence is that religion or religious people do a lot of bad then the evidence is saying that religion is not to be defined as essentially good.

## THE RISK OF VIOLENCE IS ITSELF A FORM OF VIOLENCE

If there is no God then religion is condoning evil and suffering for nothing. If there is evidence for God the believers are risking condoning for what if they are wrong?

The risk of condoning what should be cursed and hated is so big

The risk would seem justifiable if it leads to people having unusually good and kindly lives. But it does not. There are wonderfully good people but too few in every camp.

It is violence to take on silly risks and to encourage others. The risk of condoning all the evil in the universe is the biggest risk of all.

You can never know exactly how your violent actions will turn out. Violence is inflicting suffering on others in the hope of risking unforeseen damage.

A religion of risk is necessarily a religion of violence. The bigger the risk or the more risks there are the more the violence is an ingredient of the religion.

## WHEN RELIGION LIES THAT IT IS NEVER AN EXCUSE

Many say that religion can be used as an excuse for violence - as in "Violence in the name of religion is an abuse of religion". It denies that religion is an excuse for violence. It implies religion is actually always good. That is nonsense and no religion believes that all forms of religion are good. If man is not all good and is not infallible then how can you expect his religions to be that great?

As for man saying that God set up the religion, what else would you expect him to say? Loads of religions use the same excuse and they all contradict each other.

People say they would be inhuman if they did not weep for starving babies in Third World Countries. Sorry, you would be human! Get over yourself and stop being a hypocrite.

Anybody who denies that there can be a religious motivation for doing harm or lying is lying and does not care what harm

religion does. And he is making harm possible.

If religion leads to not caring about religious violence then that is as bad as it being a direct cause of violence even if it is not. It might as well be a direct cause.

The religion in that case would be the direct cause of not caring. The not caring would be the direct cause of violence. A religion like that would boast that it is not the direct cause of violence - as if not caring is something to be proud about!

## ABUSING A GOOD THING

Friedrich Nietzsche said that morality no matter how well worked out and fair it is will have some bully DNA. That is true. Each theory of what basic morality is has casualties. Religion then if it is "moral" has to take responsibility if rebel members kill in its name. It has to take an even bigger helping of responsibility if it sends members out to kill or has scriptures that tell them to kill.

Abuse of a good thing is possible. Abuse of a good thing that is not strictly necessary is even MORE possible. If religion is like that then it is still to blame for the lies and hatreds and atrocities that occur in its name. Medicine can be abused and used to make somebody sick. But there is a sense in which the abuse can itself be abused. Once the medicine is abused, it is possible to use the abused situation to create worse or longer abuse. It is like when you have to put a little poison in the well, to make it possible for others to put worse poison in.

## RELIGION DOES NOT REALLY CARE

No religion is very good at getting most members to obey and many that are thought to be obedient just have not been caught out yet or are covering up their true nature. It knows that. It knows as well that human nature is always ready to use any differences say of skin colour or religion or background as an excuse for creating division and hate. The black man and white man might be friends today but that could change rapidly.

When religion knows all that, it is to blame if people use their religion as an excuse or reason to abuse people. If you set up a playschool and know that sexual abuse will probably take place then you cannot accuse the perpetrators of abusing the system as if you are not worse than them. You are.

People of battling religions can work together and enjoy each others company. You would expect them to get along when it comes to religion but that is when the friendship turns into enmity. Religions that succeed in getting people to do something so unnatural even if we don't know how, should be condemned and abandoned.

## THE VIOLENT EXAMPLE OF RELIGIOUS SCRIPTURE

Why is it that the four biggest scriptures in the world, the Bible, the Quran, the Book of Mormon and the Gita all quote God as commanding violence and murder? No peaceable book that abhors violence is that popular and revered.

If a religion has scriptures attributed to God's authorship that command cruelty and war and violence a neutral reading of such texts will not be possible. In other words, you have to interpret and there is no way out of it. Some will feel they are being called to fulfil the violent edicts from God. A religion with sinister teachings or nasty scriptures is to blame for the violence even if it forbids it. Violence is uncontrollable and unleashes further violence so forbidding means nothing. The forbidding becomes part of the problem for you need evil to drop its mask in order to deal with it.

The need for interpretation can be minimised. The text needs to be written in a clear way that does not allow too many interpretations. The Bible God speaks of the virtues of clarity in his Bible but yet much of the stuff he authored with the human writers is unclear and nasty and hateful. There is a bigger chance of interpreting something vague incorrectly than in interpreting it right or how the author intended. A scripture of violence that is clear in its endorsement is to blame for any violent acts that are done in its name. And if it is that bit unclear, it is to blame if people obey what they see as its violent dictates even if their interpretation is wrong.

A religion's peaceful activities and peaceful official teachings do not matter if violence can be found approved in what it says is a revelation from God. It is not less to blame but more to blame. It is responsible.

If God likes violence and you engage in it in a way he does not approve of then it is hardly a huge mistake considering he is usually okay with violence anyway. Violent scriptures give an excuse for violence. And if they do not give an excuse they give you an attraction towards it. A religion with violent messages from God be it Islam or Christianity is giving evil people an excuse for violence - giving the means to make an excuse. The less chance there is for making an excuse the better. Excuses should not be enabled by religion. The better the excuse, the more the religion is to blame.

The terrible example of God's men which they gave in God's name in the Bible is itself pro-violence. That is a terrible example for impressionable people.

When there is a dispute in a religion over interpretation of the faith, usually some recognised authority tries to settle it. Many would say, "There is no final authority in Islam for interpretations so both the violent and non-violent interpretations of the Koran and the religion are to be considered valid and acceptable." That means that though the non-violent are against arms, they are still okay with violent interpretations of Islam and are accountable for that. Both sides are not against violence on principle. If you are against religious violence on principle, you will not have a faith authority such as a Bible telling you to hit children to discipline them for the Lord or to kill gay people. You will not be a man of peace and seek converts and expect all those converts to agree with your peaceful interpretation. It is not going to happen and you are making it possible for the terrorists of tomorrow to get a recruitment ground. And as the Bible or Koran claim to BE the ultimate authority having a final human authority is not going to help. If it seems to, that is luck helping.

Religion is an excuse for violence. It is an even bigger excuse for condoning violence and not hating it enough. A religion that really hates violence expunges anything from its holy books that seems to even reek of blood.

## NOT ESSENTIALLY VIOLENT?

There have been many examples of religions and religious denominations killing people simply because they are in a different religious institution. Eg, ISIS killed Shiite Muslims instead of trying to win them over. It would not even give them a chance though they share a close faith relationship.

Religions of peace protest too much! Christianity and Islam love to assert that they are not essentially violent. But to say is to imply and pretend that the violent Christians and Muslims who kill for God are insane or not really Christian and Muslim. Anybody can play that game. Stalin could have said that he was not really political when he killed people for a true politician gets respect from the people and labours for the people. Even if the religions were not inherently violent they would have no right to ask to be taken for inherently peaceful either.

To say religious people who kill in the name of faith are brainwashed or mad is not helpful. No matter how bizarre their logic is, you need to dialogue with them and try to understand them and guide them to think again. To call them brainwashed or mad is to end any hope of discussion. It will only fuel their enemies to feel that as they will believe what they want there is no point in talking to them and bombs will be the only answer.

Nothing is inherently peaceful. A bomb is about to go off and only one person can escape. If you or your neighbour will die then will you give your life for your neighbour or will you fight him so that he dies? The question alone shows religion allows violence for it lets you decide this one and will support your choice even if involves violence.