

## RELIGIOUS FAITH – UNNECESSARY EVIL

What about the view that belief in gods or God is not a problem but it is that people are not letting the evidence show them what to believe? Those beliefs are a problem in themselves if there simply is no decent evidence. And it might be said we should not judge believers as ignoring evidence but as virtually telling us they have none. Blind faith should be read as an indication that the believers and unbelievers are united in one thing: God has no evidential support.

A suspicion is a weak belief. To weakly believe Jesus was the perfect person is to admit you suspect anybody who opposes him or ignores him on purpose.

If belief in religion is a good thing and necessary then what if religious belief is a choice? Then you are to be morally blamed for not believing a specific religious system. That would lead to bigotry and forcing people to play along. What if religious belief is not a choice? Then the religion will seek to condition people. Either way, people are objectified. Choice or not it will be trouble either way. All evil and harm ultimately come down to a person being objectified at least a bit.

Human nature tends to develop faith which at root is thinking that luck will always be on your side. Its a magical belief though the person may not realise it. The realistic person knows that if you feel lucky you could be very wrong. The feeling of safety can be dangerous and it is clearly magical. That is why a person of faith can be so belligerent. You don't need to be in a religion for that to happen. But religion is a catalyst for it. If faith kills religion makes sure it does a better job.

Faith is belief in what might be wrong. You believe and hope it is true. While all admit that people of faith are irrational most people think that not all people of faith are. If we do not need faith, then anything else would be better and wiser. If we want to believe in the supernatural then we simply have to endorse faith. Faith is indispensable when it comes to the supernatural. The supernatural more than anything else is belief in what you cannot prove to be true. And it involves faith in man too. To have faith in a God of miracles means that it is the people who say he has done them that you have faith in.

If faith is good that does not mean that supernatural faith is good. If faith is good then supernatural faith is an abuse. It is an abuse if it claims to be supernaturally inspired in you but it is obviously no more inspired than somebody who has a supernatural faith that contradicts all your core teachings. It is an abuse simply because it has no reality check and goes too far. It is an abuse for there are better forms of faith you can have.

If faith in the supernatural is good it does not follow that all forms of it are good. If the believer shows resistance to reason and evidence and truth then it is bad. The supernatural always seeks to give its own version of evidence in the hope of overriding real evidence.

Doctors can battle to cure a sick person and get little or no credit from believers. They say God did the healing. Cured because of God you say? So it is not the doctors? It is not the person's own immune system? What you mean is they are cured by God because you have faith and have prayed. But it is not about you.

There are many kinds of faith. Faith is a necessary evil. But it does not follow that all forms of faith are equally necessary. If you have faith that things should be okay or reasonably okay that does not require belief in the supernatural. That comes from scientifically looking at your life. The equipment is not scientific machinery but your eyes and ears – your senses.

Religious faith, faith in the magical or supernatural, seems to be the cause of religion. Many religions claim they emerged from people's faith. Luther formed a religion based around faith in Christ alone.

Brutus in 2012 argued that faith does not cause religion. He thinks the religious traditions come along and then faith appears in them. If he is right then religion is a con. It gives spiritual teachings and doctrines and nobody believes them but they pretend they do. It is only years down the line that people get conditioned and bullied into believing in them for real. If he is right, then it is an example of how when nonsense is repeated time and time again as making sense and as the truth then people end up believing what they should know is lies.

A religion is what binds you and the rest of your community to believe its teaching. Christianity says that faith in the Christian religion and in the doctrines and truths God has revealed is not natural and is a gift from God. This recognises that the religion of God has to come from God and not man (if God uses man to speak for him it follows that it is really God you are listening to when you listen to his spokesman) for man errs and the religions he creates could turn nasty or mislead people. A man-made religion is an oxymoron. It can have no binding force. Would you really think you should say abracadabra every day five times just because some man says so? Whatever does not bind or obligate in reality is not a

religion though it may be a semblance of one. Religion must and can only be a communication to people from the God of truth. He must give you an experience of your faith as a gift from him. It is a gift from God who is a supernatural power that tells you the truth and only the truth and demands obedience. Anything else is fake religion for it is deliberately man-made. If religion is all man-made then it would be terrible if we thought we shouldn't challenge it or criticise it constructively. Anything human is dangerous if it is made sacred or sacrosanct. In short, if man made it, fault it where it should be faulted. If man made religion, then leave religion. Do not make a God out of the opinions and speculations and lies of men. To do that is to sign up to totalitarianism even if that never comes to pass. So to summarise, a religion that is from God is based on God communicating truth to people and making sure they know he is in touch with them. And false religion has to simulate this experience. So religion and the notion of infallible revelation go together. If the spiritual person sees herself as somehow infallible, so does the religious person. If religion is bad because people think they know what they don't know, then the spiritual not religious brigade are no better. Some would say the latter are worse for each one of them wants no constraints but to be her or his own religion. They would say there is nothing to stop them from going completely astray. They reason that religion is bad but each person being her or his own religion makes things worse for it means more religions - so the fewer religions around the better.

Man-made religion is not a good thing. God-made religion would be a necessary evil for faith itself despite the benefits could lead you astray. So faith needs to be a gift or personal communication from God in order to be endorsed as a necessary evil.

Faith involves a leap in the dark or the twilight. It is about accepting as true what you cannot know to be true. It means treating it as true in your mind and therefore your actions. If you see it as true it will affect your life and how you relate to others and yourself.

Religion says that though the part where you don't know is an evil, the not knowing is bad, overall, faith is good and its worth it. The bad side of not knowing is that you could be wildly mistaken and be wasting your energy and time on faith. The good side is supposedly that you are taking a risk in the hope of doing and believing the right thing. But that is an argument for good intention not faith. It is simply not true that faith is a good thing. It might be necessary at times but it is not good or to be celebrated. If faith is a necessary evil, you can only stop making it worse by searching for truth and being open to it and to evidence.

Faith that cares little about searching for truth and evidence and integrity is by default NOT a necessary evil - its just evil, period! Is it any wonder that faith like that has led religious people to reason that the end justifies the means, that it is okay to do wrong if you want to bring good out of it? It has led to it because it is an example of the end justifying the means!

When we do great harm or little harm in order to get something, we are using the evil to bring about some good. We are all the same. We never do evil for its own sake but for the sake of good. Thus faith is dangerous in our hands.

The best of a bad lot is faith that is genuinely about making you the best person for others and yourself.

A faith that involves a punishing God is simply vindictive. On earth, we need criminal law to protect us from dangerous people which is where punishment comes in. It is vindictive to be happy about it. Criminal law is a necessary evil. For believers in God, it is not enough. They want to believe that God has a criminal law of his own set up too which makes up for the faults and errors of criminal law. But it is vindictive to wish there was another law. It is better to just put up with the one we have got and be happy to improve it where necessary.

In the absence of evidence that such a law as the law of God exists, it is clearly vindictive to believe in it and to hope it exists.

If faith is bad or a necessary evil, then it follows that the bigger the leap it is the worse it is. Faith would only be half-acceptable if it sought to do no harm and to benefit and if it takes care not to violate reason and truth and the evidence. The more it does this the less bad it is.

Religion is fond of faith - of the blind variety. Blind faith does not use or does not care about evidence.

Religion may offer faith that is contradicted by the facts and by logic and evidence.

Religion may offer faith that has no evidence or logic in its favour.

Religion may offer faith that has INSUFFICIENT evidence or logic in its favour. It may make huge claims and offer weak evidence for them.

Religion may offer evidence but ignore the evidence against. In this case, it is encouraging confirmation bias. This is a

human trait where we only pay attention to evidence when it points to what we want to believe or think. But its being a human trait means we must do it less not more. We need to be made aware of it and its dangers.

Religion may offer good evidence for its beliefs but it may believe not because of the evidence but because it wants to. Thus they only use evidence in an attempt to look sensible but their motivation is anti-truth. They use evidence to create a deceptive appearance of honesty and love for truth.

None of these forms of faith are good. You will get in trouble if you don't try to keep grounded in reality and start to prefer faith to reality. And you prove you don't give a damn about truth.

There is no need for religion or religious faith.

We would need religious faith if there were a true religion because we need to be right but there is no evidence for any religion being true and god-made and the evidence says the only God I need is myself. If I love myself properly I will improve myself and others will improve themselves because they find me inspiring. Self-love in the right way is the only way to help yourself and others.

We might need belief in a higher power and need belief in right and wrong but that is not the same as needing religion. We can have a vague and consoling belief in some kind of deity and can work out what is right and wrong ourselves. We do not need baptisms and people who claim to turn bread and wine into God. We do not need popes and saviours. Teachings that are not needed cause trouble for millions even if it is just parents resenting their children for being sceptical of papal authority or whatever. It is something extra to fight over. Religion says we have a bias towards sin and it goes and creates new superstitions that will bring this out in us. We have enough to bring it out and make us angry and make us fight.

People need to do right because it is right and for no other reason at all. To do it solely or mainly for another reason is not right and is really bad. To have another reason means that up to a point you are not doing it because it is right. It is possible to do something mainly because it is right and partly because you don't care if it is right or not. We can have pure and impure motives at the same time.

So we must do right because it is right. It follows that people don't need higher powers or God or religion or morality.

Religion is an accessory for people to fight over and that is not right. Priests and clergy and all who have taught religion are responsible for every drop of blood that is spilled in Northern Ireland. Take the IRA. They would not be killing, maiming and torturing if they were not raised in the Catholic Church. They may pull the triggers but the people who motivated them to kill are worse. They have given them a device, in the form of religion, for the IRA to make a pathetic excuse for killing. It does not matter that the clergy oppose the killings for they are helping to cause them. Religion was always in the business of condemning war but in such a way that its ban would not be taken seriously. Its a tactic to look good while boosting evil. Good works are not really good when they are deployed to attract you to an evil cause. And the Church does good as a bait.

Anyone who wants you to help others not merely because it is right but because God demands it or requests it, is sowing at least a little disregard for right. They sow the poisonous seed that slowly grows to become a great tree that pollutes everything. The clergy cannot plead innocence when their flock starts to make bombs. They helped make it what it is.

If you protect evil people and open the door for them, you are worse than they are. A man who doesn't know what an evil monster will do and who does nothing to dissuade him is saying, "Do what you want no matter how bad it is. I set you free to do whatever it is you will do though I don't know what you will do." The man who sends him out to do evil is putting a threshold on that evil that must not be crossed.

Religion is a threat. In essence, what causes trouble or gives an excuse for trouble should be forsaken if it is not needed. To go inside a Church door to give the Church money and to eat its communion and to worship its God is to support the evil of religion. If nobody went to churches we would be rid of them.

Tribalism - the loyalty that comes from being in a tribe or simply born into it or labelled with it is what is causing all the division and hate. It is the chief problem. If religion did not exist tribalism would still be a problem. However at least it would have a chance at not being any worse. Religion breastfeeds tribal feelings by trying to become God's tribe and saying God has blessed and even set up the tribe. The less there is holding the tribe together - it will be a label at the bare minimum - the more insecure and therefore vicious and potentially dangerous the tribe will be.

Religion is dishonest tribalism or sectarianism. It tends to be obsessed with denouncing sex, tends to feign humility while living in mansions, tends to look for capital while nations starve, tends to meddle in the running of the state, causes lots of trouble over unnecessary rules and dogmas, tends to censure rebellion and independent thought, tends to promote and practice artificial goodness (remember, with bad attitudes at the back of your mind your good works are just over-selfishly

doing good when it suits you – the “good” actually feeds the badness and the vices), tends to cover up for child-abusing clerics and I could go on and on until my list is ten times as long as the Litany of the Saints.

Conscience can be faith and should be faith. Faith in right and wrong for atheists and faith in a moral God for believers should be an expression of conscience. Those who make faith to be a mere placebo or fantasy are advocating a form of faith that refuses to teach conscience and be based on it. Conscientious faith cares about being right and the truth for without the truth a conscience cannot teach you anything. We hear politicians worry a lot about protecting religious faith but it is telling that they never worry about the religious conscience. A faith that breaks the link with conscience is simply evil. It is evil in itself and other evils such as fanaticism or religious careerism will soon follow.

Why I Became an Atheist, John Loftus, Prometheus Books, New York, 2008