

Review of Pat Collin's book Freedom from Evil Spirits

Pat Collins is a Dublin Vincentian priest who engages in ministry of deliverance from "demons."

This book is quite a surprise for there is a lot of psychology in its pages which is not what you expect from the title.

Fr Collins asks what the basic human feelings/emotions are having outlined that you can have emotions you are not aware of and which can harm your health.

He gives Aristotle's list of passions as "anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling, hatred, longing, emulation, pity and in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure and pain." Aristotle, the priest notes, thought there are nine.

Then he says that modern psychologists tend to argue that the number is six. "Happiness, sadness, fear anger, surprise and disgust."

The priest then mentions the studies done a short time ago by Glasgow University which limits the emotions to four, "fear, surprise, anger and disgust."

The common thing he says between these lists is that fear is there and he thinks that fear is not a basic human emotion but the main one, its not a but THE. "What is the basic human emotion or feeling? I have come to the conclusion that it is fear."

Take Aristotle saying that joy and friendly feeling are two of the fundamental passions. How can you say that fear is behind them? First of all they are fragile as if you are protecting yourself from being hurt - you are afraid. Second, joy and friendship are a reduction of fear. The more fear weakens the more joy and friendship feeling you get. But they are clearly parasitic on fear.

The Glasgow study fits the idea of fear being behind all emotions best for anger and disgust are responses to fear. Surprises may come from realising a fear was wrong.

From all that we gather that the quest for God, prayer, religion, salvation and the supernatural/paranormal are rooted in fear. The attempt is made to make fear feel less bad perhaps by pretending it is not there and using spiritual distractions to help. The fear of fear is at the root of it. Fear is violence in its most basic form and all violence goes back to fear. The superstitious person of fear and the person who maims and murders for he fears the other only differ in how they deal with the violence of fear. The violence of fear in itself is the same in both.

Later in the book he lists opinions on what the deepest human need is.

Freud – the need for love, pleasure and pleasing work.

MY COMMENT: Religious people are trying to use gods and God for that. It does not matter to them what they worship as long as its something. They make a big deal of some religious ideas out of cultural pressure and a need for control over others.

Adler – power for it helps you avoid feeling bad about yourself as a person.

MY COMMENT: The religious gets power by letting God run things. Power is power as long as you control it and access it by consent. The person with untrammelled access to somebody else's wealth is not really any different from one who owns the wealth. Passivity to God is not passivity at all but another way of claiming power. And the responsibility is given to God hence the attraction of faith.

Jung – "individuation and wholeness of personality".

MY COMMENT: Assumes that nature matters and it is good to follow what kind of being it has made you. In fact there is nothing inherently special about anything nature has done. Nature is only what came together and is not about a plan or goodness or what is best. The assumption is that some divine plan has set up nature.

Maslow – "self-actualisation as a result of peak experiences of a transcendent kind".

MY COMMENT: Feelings that you are bigger than the universe and any problems it gives can happen to atheists too. They don't imply a need for God or religion. They imply they are not needed. Making an idol of your experience means turning it into a validation of your ideas about God and religion.

Frankl – “the fundamental human need was a sense of unconditional meaning.” The latter by the way as Collins says elsewhere talked about existential frustration which usually appears in the form of angst and boredom.

MY COMMENT: Does violence to the fact that not all humans are lovable or that not all human traits are lovable either. Religious people may be using religion to get away from their sense of angst and boredom. This is only putting a layer of snow over the manure heap. It only makes things worse. If a sense of unconditional meaning is not achievable, partly achievable or too fleeting then a deranging and impossible demand is being made of human beings. Its a cruel form of abuse. And it is plain that nobody goes about with a glowing sense of the absolute value of existence! Maybe a narcissist can do that but that is a problem too as narcissism is a dangerous personality disorder.

Collins cites Karen Horney who wrote *Neurosis and Human Growth* as saying that parents harm their children possibly for life and this happens intentionally or unintentionally or both. One example is the damage that ridiculing the child's independent thinking can do. Also, “too much admiration or the absence of it,” is a potent force for damaging and scarring the child.

A neurotic person may be created by such behaviour. It is in childhood where it begins. The person is then alienated from her or his true self and this prompts a deep sense of anxiety and hidden anger toward the powerful adults who are doing the wrongs or being indifferent to him or her.

The sufferer then may as Collins says,

1 be compliant which says implicitly that if you love me you will not hurt me. MY COMMENT: If God makes all from nothing then we do what we do and choose what we do with him not in spite of him. This forces the believer to be hand all over to God. It is rooted in fear so as long as you cooperate with God he cannot hurt you.

2 be aggressive which says I have the power to stop you hurting me.

3 be resigned which says that if I keep to myself then nothing can hurt me.

He interestingly informs us that when Jesus called us to repent he used metanoia which is the word for literally making a 180 degree turn. This shows us that repentant people are few and far between for nobody's repentance is that sincere and deep. Religion with extra moral concerns, eg failing to have a proper relationship in God in prayer, gives you more stuff to repent of and thus it only leads to people getting lazy and demotivated. Too many sins to repent and repentance being too hard mean that people will end up hurting us for they are too put upon to work up the energy to be better people to us. Collins would blame sinning without allowing yourself to be redeemed for existential angst but we see here the Christian scheme makes it inevitable. The religion can be a placebo for an illness and anxiety that is still there. Nobody says a placebo is necessarily a cure! This account explains how some believers seem to be well-adjusted.

If you are burdened by sins against God you will burden others for if you would hurt the God you think is there you would hurt the person next to you.

Collins says that Jesus said when he banned anybody bringing sacrifices to the altar when they had not tried to reconcile with a brother as saying that “reconciliation with the person who has something against us must take precedence over attendance at the Eucharist.” The Eucharist is a core part of Catholic Christianity and expresses the idea of a creator God who is able to change bread into a man without the bread seeming to change. But the Eucharist itself is about forgiveness which is why God is offended by Masses and prayers from those who do not resolve to forgive others or who do not forgive. Christianity is noted for division and schism and thus unforgiveness so it follows that Christianity is not really Christianity but a cultural social construct calling itself religion and calling itself Christian. The letter of James says you cannot have religion without good works. A religion that does not help others is not a religion.

Collins says that asking for forgiveness and apologising as in saying, “I am sorry that you feel hurt” is not asking for forgiveness or apologising at all. You are not admitting that you did wrong and are not admitting that you do not deserve to be forgiven. If it were not for how the person would feel you would have no problem with what you have done. The formula is, “I am sorry that I hurt you, it was my fault, and in humility I ask you for the gift of your forgiveness, which strictly speaking I don't deserve.” Note that you are asking the other to believe you don't deserve it. You are saying you believe you don't deserve it. So the message is that saying you are sorry for hurting another's feelings is not humble and has no concern for justice. It implies you think moral mores are not real but just preferences. In other words stealing does not matter but only how you feel about stealing does.

Collins mentions a psychiatrist who said that there is no devil or supernatural realm and that the devil is just a projection of the dark side of human nature. The devil then is the dark side of the human mind. It is possible to believe that there is a devil but he does not bother with us meaning that the only "devil" we have to worry about is the "devil" in ourselves that is part of us. If being bad is part of the hardware of being human then it can hardly be condemned. You don't condemn an orange for being the colour orange. If you do you are the one with the deranged righteous hypocrisy towards the other. You are no better than if you condemn a good person if the bad person cannot help it.

Collins quotes Cardinal Estevez who said that Satan fools people by making them think that they do not need God. I wish to unpack this. Needing God is not the point. God can look after you without you realising you need him. He is bigger than our mistakes. In a sense needing water does not matter as long as you get the water and even if you don't even see you need it. A baby needs water but not in any psychological or belief sense. The needing is practical and is not inherent in human nature. The need is not part of us. The Cardinal should then just say that Satan makes people think they do not need to believe in God. This accuses those who are not strongly committed to religion or God of being evil and if they are not dangerous they too easily can be. This is hate speech.

A priest we are told went to a possibly possessed woman during a conference and as nobody was sure if she was possessed the priest did a simple exorcism just in case. It was decided after that there was no indication of any demonic influence and she was just depressed.

It is obvious that exorcism of any kind to a vulnerable and disturbed mind is irresponsible and dangerous. It is probably the reason some mentally ill people are so convinced they have a demon that they act it and may as well be really possessed! There are reasons to believe that a demon made by belief like that may never "depart". It is not like a person and cannot be evicted like a person can.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls the wearing of charms "reprehensible". Is that because you want the magic to protect you at somebody else's expense? Clearly yes for car crashes have to happen and you are trying to deflect them on somebody else so that you are safe. Prayer intends to do the same thing.

Collins refers to Jesus saying in Matthew 12 that a possessed person can have their house nice and swept and this can attract a new horde of demons to come and abide and the original demon that was there can return to this wonderful home. People say he means that the person has prepared herself or himself spiritually for the return of the demons which means they fill their inner house with evil. If so then possession victims are to blame and are not really victims. And they are to blame if exorcisms fail which they often do. Another idea is that the person really is swept and tidy as in holy and virtuous but that does not stop the demon. Jesus clearly only brought up this topic for possessed people can act normal a lot of the time and it was clear that the demons were NOT gone from the people he exorcised so he came up with a foolproof excuse for that.

Collins quotes Jesus saying you must not be anxious about your life for God will look after you for your body is worth more than food or the clothes it needs. He does not tell us that the Catholic version of Jesus wants you to worry about getting sacraments and joining the Church! So if Collins and Jesus mean that you being worth more than your clothes does not mean being more than the social construct of Christianity and a brother or sister to Jesus!

Collins disgracefully reveres a nasty evil Bible text by quoting it approvingly as an example of Christian victory. He shortened the text 2 Chronicles 20:15 to hide how it gives us a God who encourages war by promising to help his people against the enemy.

"Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's.'"

On Irish television in 2019, Collins said, "I have to be very tentative when giving these examples, but some people who will have persistent thoughts of committing suicide, for example, they could be - mark my words - could be oppressed by an evil spirit...The Bible says that the evil spirit is a murderer, so he'll often want people to kill, and one of the people that you can kill is yourself. ...So although people could have suicidal feelings for other, psychological reasons, sometimes they will want to commit suicide because of this spiritual power impinging on them."

Collins irresponsibly has led to people thinking that the reason they should kill themselves is that the demon is the straw breaking the camel's back. The end result is the person is dead and not because of a demon but because he or she thinks a demon might have some part to play in her or his torment. Jesus did say the evil spirit is a murderer so the blame for this must ultimately rest with him.

Satan may lead people to death but he did not make death or he is a God. God kills not Satan. Jesus is clear that any being

killing is by default bad. He calls Satan a murderer. That is interesting for he also said that sin and evil have a power to turn anybody who subscribes to them into slaves. He said that anybody who does wrong is a slave to sin. This calls for fearing sinners for a slave to evil can do anything for evil has the upper hand. It calls for fearing and mistrusting others for all sin and many sin more than others! These teachings clearly do harm and call for harm indirectly and it is clear who the real devil is, not Satan but Jesus! Satan is even slandered and given that Jesus said that unfair judging shows exactly what you are not the other person we need say no more.

Cardinal Lustinger was born Jewish. He became Catholic and was Archbishop of Paris. Of the opposing Nazi regime he said, "At the heart of the opponent's ideology was the persecution of the chosen people, the Jewish people, because they were a messianic people. When as a child I spent time in Nazi Germany, I had understood: Nazism's aim was more than Promethean; it was Satanic."

It was not just Promethean like people taking from gods to put themselves in their place but not as gods but as superior human beings. It was religious. If Satan and Satanic are only in the heads of Christians then the religion must take the blame for the Nazis. We need only indirect endorsement which is worse than direct for it is stronger and more manipulative.

People like Collins (and Jesus) are at the forefront of this evil. Fear the devils among us not the ghostly ones!