

"I CAN RESPECT NOT JUST THE RIGHT OF ANOTHER PERSON TO HOLD A BELIEF BUT RESPECT THAT BELIEF THOUGH I DON'T SHARE THAT BELIEF"

The penultimate hypocrite, Tony Blair said, "I have my own [Catholic] belief, I can still respect, not just the right of the other person to hold [a] different belief, but also respect that belief."

Respecting the right of the person to differ is enough. We should all be mature enough to agree to differ. But to go as far as to say that a belief even if evil or stupid should be respected and celebrated is ridiculous. You can respect the right of a person to hold a belief but that does not require you to respect the belief by encouraging it and refusing to politely challenge it. In fact, to do that is not to respect the person at all. It is to be fake.

And if Blair celebrates Islamic opposition to the worship of the communion wafer Blair prays to he is contradicting his Catholic faith.

Respecting belief is a buzz thing today and the do-gooders love it. But it necessarily implies disrespect for persons. Here is how. If you respect a person's belief that is not the same as respecting the person. The person is not their belief. You must respect the person by refusing to laugh at or ridicule their belief. You should not feel right if a person says they are respecting your belief - what about you? I do not want people to respect my hair just because it is hair. It is because they are not disrespecting my hair but using it to disrespect me. Things such as beliefs are not respected for their own sake but for the sake of people. It is really the people who are respected. If belief should be respected then belief is sacred no matter how stupid or bad it is.

Would Blair hold that a person has the right to reject God so we should not encourage anybody to accept God into their lives? No. He does not really believe that belief should be automatically respected. Nobody does.

Suppose we should respect beliefs. Then are we to respect religious beliefs above other beliefs? Do religious beliefs deserve better respect than other beliefs no matter how precious they are? That implies that a religious belief system comes before people. Its bigotry. Or is it a case of us knowing that religion easily erupts into hatred and bloodletting and so we are afraid of it?

If we should respect beliefs then some interesting things are implied.

We should respect assumptions.

We should respect weak beliefs.

We should respect strong beliefs.

We should respect knowledge and certainty.

Obviously, we could apply a grading system here. Assumptions would be entitled to less respect than weak beliefs. What you know would deserve the most respect.

God supposedly has told the Church what he knows. The Church claims that the faith it teaches is divine knowledge. From that it follows that a religion claiming to have the truth simply has to demand that it gets respect to a degree not afforded to any other religion.

An opinion means something you assume or believe a little until you get further light - to say something is your opinion is to invite somebody to challenge you. So that is why respecting opinion is left out - it usually means that you don't challenge or contradict anybody's opinion.

Nobody seriously thinks we should respect assumptions and the barely-there beliefs of others.

But it is implied by the notion of respecting belief. Life cannot function if respecting belief is taken seriously.

To have your own belief that differs from that of others suggests you are in some way against what they believe. To accept a belief is to automatically reject beliefs that do not agree with it. The notion of respecting beliefs that differ is ludicrous and hypocritical. Its impossible.

Religion is based on the notion that some book or person or whatever is an authority on what should be believed in religion. Even Theosophy which says it does not teach any doctrine is teaching the doctrine that doctrine is unimportant! It teaches that doctrine and claims to be a religious authority in teaching it. This authority is obeyed by the theosophist. The liberal religionist actually treats his faith as authority in some things. What about the things he ignores his religion in? Then he is still following an authority be it society's fashionable opinions or the secular and liberal state. He is simply disloyal to his religion. You can't say its your authority and then obey authorities that contradict it. If that is not hypocritical then nothing is.

We can respect the people who have wrong beliefs and be sensitive with them but we cannot respect the beliefs for we oppose them and want them destroyed. We seek to destroy them not by antagonising or upsetting anybody unnecessarily but with understanding and patience and good-will. We politely challenge their beliefs with questions and they will doubt. They cannot expect us not to work against their beliefs for that is denying us the right to be people of integrity and we cannot expect them to not work against ours. They should if they think they should.

Never argue. Talk and discuss and do it nicely even under the worst provocation. Atheism is love and only being happy and spreading that happiness to others can spread Atheism.

The notion that you must respect the beliefs of others regardless of how wrong and dangerous they are, is really based on the following. "There are good people in every camp. It is disrespectful to them mention faults in the philosophy or religion no matter how kindly you do it."

It is never right to judge a religion true or good or to be given an exemption from critical evaluation just because there are good people in it. That has nothing to do with it and if they are good people they will still be good if their specific form of religious faith is taken away. In fact, if you say something that destroys their faith, all you have done is bring them to a place where they can prove and perfect their goodness. Be proud. Truly good people welcome the challenge. If we don't have the courage to trust them enough to challenge their faith then we don't really think they are good people. We think they are bigoted and fearful and therefore dangerous.

If a religion gets the message that it will never be criticised or challenged or debated just because it has good people in it, it will soon prove dangerous and arrogant. Nothing deserves that amount of protection and special treatment. That kind of attitude in society led to many in the Catholic priesthood and religious life abusing children sexually and otherwise with impunity. Nobody dared speak out.

The suggestion that we should not try to refute a religion's doctrines for there are many good people in the religion is a strange one. Even Communism has good people in it. Yet we will reject its tenets. We will urge that people take the freedom to criticise it. Suppose a religion is blatantly evil. What about the people in it who we class as bad who are merely misguided but mean well? Should we keep silent for their sake? Certainly not! The Christian Bible is full of criticism of religious practices that were not approved of. An angel criticised John's wish to give him worship. Jesus criticised the Jews a lot. And he criticised their religion. If a religion can give criticism it has to be ready to take it too.

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 affect 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.

Religion conditions people to believe when they are children or when they are vulnerable. If you respect their faith, in fact is is really their conditioning you are respecting. Conditioning is a form of mind programming that makes you think you believe but it cannot help you to truly believe.

Conditioning is a form of violence and is easily perceived by outsiders to the religion as violence.

Believers usually claim that God and religion are huge matters but they are idiots - well idiots up to a point anyway. They are idiots for they have not thought about these things enough. They are not afforded the serious attention they deserve and the thinking caps are left down too often.

The modern insistence on respecting religious belief is really religion trying to create a culture where it avoids getting criticised or debunked by scholarship. The person for example who shows that religion is lying about its powers and benefits is considered to be a sociopath.

Respecting belief is really about promoting not tolerance but skin-deep tolerance.

It is nearly always criticism of religious beliefs that people try to censor. Why do they? They will say that religious beliefs are somehow sacred, that criticising them causes bigoted stereotyping and may even cause some of the offended to resort to violent retaliation. It sounds like that the censors are talking about themselves. They are afraid there is too much truth to any stereotype they will get and they wish they could destroy anybody who condemns or mocks their religion. Censorship is an advertisement for a religion but not for religious benevolence.

If people want you to respect their beliefs and opinions, they must do nothing to censor you - if they really respect belief and opinion, they will respect your opinion and belief that you should gently and kindly guide them into the light. In fact censorship does not lead to any belief being respected, it only leads to fake respect that is just a cover for resentment.