

USING INTERPRETATION AS AN EXCUSE FOR WATERING DOWN THE EVIL OF VIOLENT SCRIPTURES

Believers make excuses for the evil commanded in their holy books. To believe that a book is God's word because man gives reasons why it must be so and because man excuses the bad bits is really making man's thinking the foundation of your faith. The excuses are invariably speculative. They pretend to lead you to God.

The Bible God teaches good things and bad things. You might understand this as God giving a mixed message about violence and so on. Suppose you are right that it does, You might interpret the Bible as a book of peace and say it commands that we never be violent. But that does not change the fact that there is a mixed message. A mixed message shows a reluctance and a failure to condemn violence correctly and thoroughly and clearly. It is still a seed of violence and violence starts in the heart. A peaceful religion contains the seeds of violence when it has scriptures that at least occasionally command violence in the name of a good God because it is leaving its scriptures wide up to a violent interpretation. A really good scripture gives nothing at all that can be interpreted or misconstrued as endorsing evil. Really good people discard such scriptures immediately. They do not even try to excuse them or think of excusing them. They will not risk excusing evil. There are certain things you never look for excuses for.

If a scripture can reasonably be interpreted as allowing or even worse, endorsing, violence and cruelty it is to blame for any suffering that is caused. If you accept that a scripture is God's word then conforming to your (maybe violent) interpretation of it becomes a duty. It is not a choice. You do not have the freedom to choose where duty is concerned. You obey. Some say that the solution to this is empathy - trying to understand how those who you might persecute feel and think and why. But empathy is hard to achieve where you have a strong sense of duty. Plus one purpose of duty is to by-pass thinking things over and making a choice. You just carry out the duty.

The Bible and the Koran deny that they are written only for theologians. They are addressed to the ordinary person. The authors were well aware that ordinary people have limited understanding and have limited time to think about religious matters. The holy books themselves do not expect those who will kill for their faith to have a complete understanding of the books. No honest person who believes God wrote the Bible for example could complain if somebody knows the Bible in an average way and then decides to murder adulterers by stoning just as God commanded. Theologians are liars. They try to undermine the fact that the texts should be and are intended to be interpreted as the average person would interpret them. They come up with far-fetched and complicated excuses to cover up the nasty teachings and that is only if they have to. Usually they just tell people the sweet stuff. They manipulate the people. No Catholic priest tells a child preparing for full membership in the Church by confirmation, "You need to be very sure this religion is true. Thus you must think about all the murdering God commanded in the Bible before he became man in Jesus Christ. If you think it is wrong then find another faith." The Bible and Koran were written to a generation that knew less than ours and which was more accepting of violence and religious extremism. They sanctify and embody and endorse extremisms and no lies by Pope Francis or anybody else that claims that religion does not justify violence change that. Telling lies only serves to make religion corrupt and that will lead to violence in itself.

Those who know religious scriptures endorse violence, often still insist that those followers who dish out that violence, are not "real Christians" or not "real Muslims" or whatever. They go as far as to argue that they have nothing to do with Christianity or Islam at all. That is extreme. You need something to do with a religion in order to claim to wage war in its name. There has to be something there. When confronted with the violence they say it is poetry and not to be taken literally. That is just scripture-twisting. It is dishonest and makes words mean nothing. No jihadist is going to listen to their nonsense. And they shouldn't expect them to listen.

You cannot trust your peaceful interpretation of a book you say is infallible such as the Bible or Koran or Book of Mormon when there are disagreements about whether violence is needed or not in its pages. It takes the wind from your sails. You cannot convince others. You cannot tell them to agree with your peaceful "interpretation".

The book Christianity is Not Great says that God communicated badly and witches and others were killed by religion because of it. It says God did nothing to help. It says the believers who answer that we don't know if God did help but should believe that he did. God never said he had a reason for being so vague so we have no right to guess that he did. You don't want to be condoning all the evil and bloodshed and death over a guess. It is too serious for that. It is different if God said he was sorry but he had a reason that we would not understand and explains why we cannot understand.

If a religion is really good for you, it will have nothing in its holy books that risks being interpreted or misinterpreted as a yes to violence. A good God would not write in such a way. The need for interpretation can be avoided at best and minimised at worst. To promote such a book or religion is to take part in the creation of violence perhaps retrospectively.

Remember that a violent revelation allegedly from God say the Koran or the Bible (the Bible in fairness is far worse than the Koran) asks for interpretation. Thus if a violent interpretation is possible then the writers and promoters of the scripture must take responsibility even if their own interpretation is peaceful. A peaceful interpretation is not truly peaceful when the book gives mixed messages on violence. It is just a cover-up for the truth.

Those who say that there are many different interpretations (of doctrine and scriptures and revelations from God) of a religion within the religion and then who deny that violent interpretations are the valid ones or allowed and then claim that the religion is non-violent are hypocrites. If you interpret a holy book of violence as being about peace you are either psychotic or a liar. And you should say, "I hope my interpretation of peace is right but I apologise if it is wrong and I take responsibility for the error and for accidentally enabling those who engage in violence in line with the correct interpretation. It is only my interpretation and a violent one could be right or the intended one." And you should hang your head in shame for you would not engage in such acrobatics to defend anything else. Also a religion of violent scripture will have followers and the followers never claim to be perfectly in line with their religion so why should a Catholic advocating for abortion against core Catholic teaching be called a Catholic and a Muslim who is pro-Islamist terrorism be called a pagan not a Muslim? A religion is followers so it has to take responsibility and each member has to take some responsibility for what the terrorist followers do.

It is odd that Bible fundamentalist is applied to certain Christians. But there are atheist and Muslim Bible fundamentalists too. Being a fundamentalist is not necessarily about being a believer but how you interpret the scriptures. You cannot help how you interpret - if a scripture commands violence and you see that then the scripture is evil and dangerous. The "Oh its not the scripture but your interpretation's fault" is disgraceful.

To accuse the violent Christians or Muslims of misinterpreting their religions means your peaceful interpretation is just another opinion. It is not right just because you say so. And who should listen to you if the Christians and Muslims who serve violence know their religious history and scriptures better than you do? If a violent interpretation of a book allegedly from God is reasonable and if a peaceful interpretation is reasonable, the religion is still to blame for the actions of the violent interpreters. Take the scripture A Course in Miracles. It preaches love and peace and unlike the Bible never commands violence but the problem is that it preaches moral relativism. Thus though the followers are people of peace they are still to blame if some member goes out with a machine gun and reasons, "I feel that God wants me to kill. Morality is mere opinion so why not? Good and evil/right and wrong are whatever people say they are." They are to blame for they are a community that stands for moral relativism. The gunman is not an island. His religion being a major part of his environment formed him as did other influences. If followers of A Course in Miracles are to admit responsibility, how much more are those who elevate scriptures above all other books and call them divinely inspired when those books command torture and violence and lies in the name of God? If religion results from indoctrination, it is intrinsically and inherently violent for indoctrination is violence. The wife who is treated well by her husband who merely wants to program her mind this way is still being abused and mistreated. Indoctrination creates an inherent alienation of other human beings - it is a kind of racism based on us versus them or us not them. Religion is not a harmless picnic.

If a book can be easily interpreted or understandably misinterpreted as commanding murder even if you are not the one commanded then it belongs in the fire. Remember a book giving reasons to kill is bad enough but a religious one that says it is a command is attempting to give a reason merely by commanding. A command is a reason. The good interpretations are so manipulative and stretched they have no ability to be persuasive.