

MY POSTS ON PSYCHOLOGY TODAY ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-secular-life/201608/losing-our-faith>

Real faith is faith in yourself. It alone can protect you when faith in God lets you down or when faith in others leads to disappointment and loss. To lose faith in God can and should mean you gain faith in yourself. Faith in God is faith in yourself in the sense that you make that faith and you feed it so you trust your heart and morals to respond to the God you are told is there in faith. But why not just have faith in yourself? Faith in God that is really faith in yourself is therefore based on a lie. You pretend it is about God and not you. And to imagine your faith can connect you to the ruler of the universe and give you a line to him is too much. Proudful faith comes before a fall. And faith in God can be an idol when it is about what you want to believe not what you must believe.

You cannot know if Mother Teresa loved God or faith in God. Faith can become an idol.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-secular-life/201608/losing-our-faith>

Religion says God cannot be detected by science for science is about matter and God is non-material. The problem is then why you can't say all things came from non-material cheese or coffee or anything you can imagine! You indicate that science could find God for it has found things we did not know 100 years ago. Even most believers would not write such a thing!

And to argue that we should believe in God because nobody can disprove him is an argument from ignorance. Your argument could make it rational to believe in Santa.

If you think unbelievers in God are arrogant, then if they adore science then they compensate for it in other ways. They hold that we should only believe in what there is good evidence for and what can be checked. It is worrying how most believers believe a huge thing, God, something that is terrible to get wrong, and don't care about evidence enough.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/spiritual-wisdom-secular-times/201608/need-spiritual-connection>

The higher power is that part of yourself where you get the energy to work on after a devastating defeat. It is not an outside help. You cannot trust an outside help as much as the help you experience that comes from within yourself for yourself. That is down to the fact that you cannot know anybody else the way you know yourself. The argument that you need to believe in a helpful God is odd. Nobody gives you help - you have to turn their efforts into help. That is what makes them help. All help is self-help. God allegedly uses evil and suffering to do good with them. So you could help yourself and be doing the wrong thing for you need to suffer or something. Self-help is self-assertion - it tells God if there is one that you will help yourself and if he does not want you to you will do it regardless. If God loves you and is your king that is a benign dictatorship and that is not nice.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/feeling-our-way/201608/why-i-prefer-victim-survivor>

This article is so good. The word survivor is even applied to people who cannot move on after something terrible was done to them. That just puts pressure on them to pretend they are okayish or okay and to be examples of survivors to others. As an atheist, the refusal to see people as true victims is offensive to me. The doctrine that God is always there and always offers help contradicts the experience of those who feel nothing supernatural is helping them. Many feel worse after praying and trying prayer and religion. It is no help to a rape victim when she reads the violence endorsed against women in the Bible by God. Faith in God effectively denies that they are victims and tells them they are survivors and if they can't see they are survivors then they are their own worst enemy. They are accused of giving the person who hurt them power over them and of thus being at least partly to blame for the damage done.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/inside-the-criminal-mind/201608/terrorism-criminality-in-search-target>

An article in the August 20, 2016, edition of The Washington Post, is titled "Few ISIS recruits grasped Islam." The Post quoted security consultant Patrick Skinner as stating, "Religion is an afterthought." In other words, religion is an after-the-fact justification for criminality. In an article in Gender and Violence (Vol. 1, No. 4), FBI special agents Thomas Neer and Mary Ellen O'Toole point out that people are attracted to extremist groups "not so much for ideological reasons, but in search of ways to fulfill their respective psychological needs."

The above is just an attempt to deny that a violent religion can exist. Anything man-made can be violent. There are examples of people who turn violent because of faith who were never criminal before they got religious. The doctrine that God uses evil to do good with it is itself violent for it softens how terrible violence is. The doctrine that the person doing

wrong is never the problem but their actions or sins is, is hypocritical and enables violence. In fact, actions only show what kind of person a person is. And if you feel forgiven for your atrocities by a God who does not exist or who does not care what you do you in some sense have your evil condoned. Real forgiveness requires dialogue with the forgiver and the forgiver must really exist. The good feelings you get when somebody prays for you and you know it are misplaced and feed your arrogant notion that God is going to fix things for you and fix you for you. Prayer is asking God to hurt you if necessary so it is not so nice after all.

If "Few ISIS recruits grasped Islam" as the Washington Post says how can anybody reason that you cannot become interested in ISIS unless you are criminal and not religious? If few recruits understand Islam then the rest of them understand it! What about them? The notion that religion is good for its people are not all violent is illogical. The presence of people who are bad in the name of the religion and who imitate the nasty example set out in the holy scriptures of the religion proves the religion is not wholly good. The innocent members are guilty by association. They are guilty of making it possible for the violent ones to emerge.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/how-help-friend/201608/do-we-discover-meaning-life-or-do-we-create-it>

Religion often gives bizarre answers to the question of the meaning of life. For example, for Jehovah's Witnesses you spend eternity on a paradise earth. For Catholics, you are told that there is great joy in Heaven but Heaven seems very mystical and vague. There is no guarantee that you will be with your loved ones for they could be in Hell. If many people who have not found THE meaning suffer because of that and commit suicide, the religion they grew up in must take some of the blame if its answers are nonsense or ineffective.

I have no problem with people paying back evil with forgiveness and love as long as this is not condoning disguised as forgiveness. Too often people run to a forgiving God and forgive the bad people for his sake. That is not forgiveness though it is like it. Real forgiveness involves dialogue and understanding and is about the people concerned. It is about loving and trying to love the bad person instead of forgiving to please God.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-guest-room/201606/the-worst-things-say-someone-whos-mourning>

Everything happens for a reason.

Others have it worse than you.

God wanted him more than you.

Heaven needed another angel.

God will never give you more than you can handle.

The article is correct that the above comments are judgemental. But do the comments matter as much as the attitude of the person saying them? No. The attitude is the problem. We have to realise that faith in a God who creates and thus controls all and who uses evil to work out a plan for good leads to the above comments and the judgemental attitude they express. I do not find God or religion helpful but offensive in the face of loss and death. I know a priest for example will represent the attitude which is why I wouldn't want to see one coming in the door when somebody I love dies.

Psychology Today on why Americans don't want an atheist president for they think he will have no firm values without religion - 2016

Christianity says you cannot take morality seriously if you do not believe in God. It keeps saying this despite the fact that it has been refuted over and over. To say that you get your moral values from God's authority is to say you are judging God as moral. It is to lie for it is still you that is deciding what is morally valuable while you are pretending you are not. In fact, as bad as morality is without Christianity, Christianity is no real help. It adds new problems. Christianity is moral relativism (the rejection of the belief that morality is right no matter what you think about it) which is why it can teach that it was okay to murder adulteresses, as God commanded, by stoning them until Jesus supposedly changed the rule. Now it is wrong. That makes no sense at all and any faith that requires you to approve of draconian laws even if they are now abrogated is still bad in principle. Remember how Paul wrote that if religion hates or seriously harms so much as one person its devotion and prayers and martyrdom are worthless! The tyranny and horrors of moral relativism are not solved by trying to limit the authority to make these relativist rules to God. Relativism is still relativism no matter how few or how many are involved in formulating its directives.

Should atheists try to convert believers?

Yes. But we must remember that if there is no God then it is those who are employed in his "service" who benefit. We

worship the creation of men. That is degrading no matter how good it may feel. And it is downright cruel to tell people to worship God and love God above all things if there is no God. We must not patronise believers by assuming they are too weak or unstable to need deliverance from their faith. That treatment will only encourage many religious critics to look down on and perhaps detest believers. The way to deliver them is not to convert them but to encourage them to re-evaluate and examine and test what they are told to believe and think in a logical evidence based way.

In my experience I felt addicted to believing in Catholicism and as devout and dedicated and strict as I was part of me did not really want to believe in it. I hated the critics of the faith for telling me to get real. A lot of what they said sunk in over time. It is not always fruitless for people to try and convert the stubborn. Even now I have strong traces of the conditioning that happens when a religion gets into your head but I repudiate the faith as man-made.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/tech-support/201511/4-things-empath-never-says-and-you-shouldnt-either>

An empath never says to a suffering person: "It could always be worse." That is insulting. It will not help the person gain a better perspective. For many, it cannot be worse. Or "Try to be positive. Maybe it was meant to be." This ignores the fact that the person may need a long time and a lot of support to get to a better place in life. But notice how religion says that God is right to allow so much evil for it could always be worse and isn't. The notion that evil is controlled and limited by God goes with the notion of a good God. The claim that terrible happenings could be intended by the Lord for a good reason is disgusting but goes with the notion of God. Even worse is the stronger claim that everything happens for a good purpose. Do people realise the harm they do to themselves and others with faith in God or attempted faith?

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/more-mortal/201510/why-do-people-believe-in-supernatural-evil-forces>

If people can't settle for believing that God loves them but need belief in evil supernatural beings who can get others to hurt them or get them to do evil is the sense that life has meaning which is gained through faith in God worth it? Does it show that people want to believe in a God who is both good and evil? Are they dealing with the fact that they think God is good by believing in evil beings? Is belief in Satan a substitute and perhaps a poor one for man's desire to honour a Jekyll and Hyde God? Do we have an answer for those who wonder how people can worship the bloodthirsty God of the Old Testament?

Psychology Today on Satan

I'm not sure anybody really gets comfort from the thought that the terrible things that happen to our loved ones are down to some scheming supernatural being. If he can do such things what may he do next? And if Satan exists, we cannot assume that he does evil to children and others for some plan. He could do it randomly.

Belief in Satan should lead to hatred of him and that is not good for us. It is hatred to accuse anybody of being in league with him unless there is proof.

Problem Quotes from a Psychology Today article on forgiveness

Forgiveness

I have some major problems with this article.

"Forgiveness should be differentiated from its close cousin, acceptance, which while important, is essentially, passive. For many, the healing power of forgiveness allows us to truly move on. It's a topic that is relevant in your life, whether you are religious or not, guilty or not."

Acceptance is passive. But acceptance implies that you think that God is not going to change things for the better. This contradicts the Christian insistence that we must assume the best of God.

"You forgive God, if necessary."

Surely you are better off without believing in God if you have to endure the pain of trying to forgive him? And if you truly trust a perfect God and are forgiving him isn't that a contradiction? Forgiving implies that the forgiven may not be trustworthy but you are taking a chance.

"You don't have to forgive everything or everybody — it is not appropriate."

Matthew 6:14 has Jesus saying that if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

That is pure blackmail and denies that it is okay to refuse to love everybody.

The point is that psychology is incompatible with Christianity and that can have serious repercussions.