

MY POSTS ON PSYCHOLOGY TODAY ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/why-religion-is-natural-and-science-is-not/201508/morally-indifferent-gods>

Christianity correctly teaches that strictly speaking evil is really choosing some form of good over God. Jesus said that loving your neighbour more than God is a sin. So Jesus' seeming goodness does not really prove that he really cared much for right and wrong.

There is evidence that Jesus didn't care. He promised like pagan gods to dispense his favours to those who did not deserve it.

Human nature needs an outlet for its dark side and that often takes the form of something that could pass for virtue!

Jesus was no exception. If he claimed to be God then he took responsibility for inspiring the evil doctrines of the Old Testament. He made it clear that they were justified!

Jesus told the Jews off for giving people who cursed their parents a light penalty and not the death penalty as required by God's law (Mark 7).

Jesus did not say that it was wrong to stone the adulteress to death. He said if you were any better than her it was okay to cast the first stone. That is saying the death penalty is right in principle even if not always practical or possible. Obviously if it is not wrong in principle it is not the worst sin if you go out and murder an adulteress!

The Jews brought the woman to him to test him if he would obey the law of God to have her stoned. They expected him to tell them to stone her and probably participate himself. It is believed that if Jesus permitted it he would have been breaking the law of Rome which banned Jews from carrying executions. It was a trap. The Jews were definitely very convinced Jesus would say yes. They were willing to implicate themselves as they were so sure. Clearly, Jesus must have been involved in stonings previously and the legal authorities did not know about it. Or Jesus had been heard endorsing stonings. He could have been complaining against Rome's interference with the divine law that such women are to be stoned.

Jesus said he advocated love your neighbour as it was in the law of God - the law is clear that this law does not exclude killing adulterers or homosexuals. He was not taking the command out of context. He said he was using the commandment as the law gave it. The command comes from Leviticus 19 the most murderous book God ever allegedly wrote. The rule is about how people should act from day to day not about how the law should be applied. So the commandment in essence means, "Be good to your neighbour except when the law tells you."

I don't see Jesus as a role model and feel that the religious attitudes of the pagans are still with us. Christianity is cosmetic.

TO LOVE OTHERS SHOULD YOU LEARN TO LOVE YOURSELF FIRST?

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/evolution-the-self/201508/love-someone-do-you-really-need-love-yourself-first>

If you don't have enough self-love, then when you engage with your family and friends you will be reasoning, "I am not good for them but I am still going to engage with them and inflict myself on them."

I think all love starts with self-love and the suggested saying, "To deepen your love and acceptance of another, first develop love and acceptance for yourself" is absolutely true.

Christianity says you must start with loving God. I did that and the damage I did my head is still with me to this very day.

AA by stressing the Higher Power is implying that if you don't improve you are not connecting with this power and thus to blame. Alcoholics have enough of self-blame without that adding to it. And what if one finds no succor and ends up thinking her or his alcoholism is God's will? If AA helps people, one will never know if the help would have been better without the Higher Power stuff. If I help myself recover that is my work and if I believe it is mine it will make me stronger than trying to depend on a God who may let evil happen to me for one of his mysterious purposes that he is forced to implement! That conditional faith is not good for me in the long run.

RELIGION IN THERAPY?

Response to <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/encountering-america/201507/should-we-talk-about-religion-in-therapy>

The therapist has to guide the client into identifying for himself or herself the things that can be affecting his or her psychological health adversely. If the client belongs to a religion that teaches a vindictive God what then? Is the therapist meant to help the client see that he or she needs to drop this religion or pretend to be a true believer while secretly thinking its view of God is harmful and disgraceful?

The therapist encouraging a vague view of the infinite where mindfulness and living in the now count is taking a doctrinal stance against religions that forbid such a view or who declare it insufficient. Christianity says the only right way to see God and to profit is from perceiving God through faith as three persons in a relationship. Most religions ban vague spirituality and deny that it is an end in itself.

What if there are ethical objections to encouraging a client to believe in a higher power such as an external God instead of believing that there is always part of us that can go into motion and help us to overcome the power of illness and unhappiness? The higher power is the deep forces within a person that can take action often when you least expect it. There is no magic in it.

Faith in divine revelation and the religions based on them leads to exploitation and ethical problems.

If somebody refuses to have an abortion to save her life and trusts in God to save her, she will still say that he is saving her if she is dying. She rationalises the dying as his way of saving her. In her heart, she is no different from the person who thinks that being raped is a gift from God. If she uses a doctor it is not because she believes in the doctor but because she thinks God wants to help her through the doctor. It is about God and extremism as much as it would be if she would not let the doctor in the door on religious grounds.

Man must be wiser than God when man is able to decide if God is talking to him and if others are able to decide the man is right. There is no real humility in a prophet no matter how well humility is simulated. If you want power over people and the feeling of power, there is no greater ego buzz than getting people to think you are God's spokesperson.

God and religion are simply masks. Man cannot claim to be God so man does the next best thing - claim to be inspired to speak for God. Though we are not to condemn something just because it can be abused, we can condemn religion for the harm it has done because religion is an abuse. Let me explain.

Hearing a voice does not mean it is God's and only God can know if he is really speaking. Even the person who hears cannot be sure but can only guess. If anyone claims to be hearing the voice of God and giving his message to others he is a liar. To think that you don't know where the voice comes from means it is not from you is arrogant. It is, "I don't know where this inspiration comes from so it comes from God." It makes no sense. By spreading your message you inspire a worse arrogance in others. The arrogance takes the form of "X has a voice in his heart or head and doesn't know where it comes from therefore it is from God." That is not logical. The more your faith in a prophet is based on hearsay the worse the problem gets.

God has no existence except in the imagination of the believer. Even if there is a God, it does not mean that the believer reaches out to him rather than an imagined God.

That means man wants to condone the terrible things that happen say when babies suffer by saying they are the will of God. It is man's will we are talking about and nothing else - despite appearances. In the scheme of things, a person can only experience a little of all the suffering that was and is and will be. It is easy to condone the suffering of creatures other than yourself when you are not those creatures and when you are a drop in the ocean.

God is not a trivial matter. We should be so disgusted by evil that we should all be among those who need us the most even if they are in the middle of the desert. Belief in a divine purpose relieves the pain we should feel for those people. You need proper and strong evidence to avoid being the kind of person who is using God as a placebo like this. Assuming the existence of God in order to make a client feel better is ultimately failing that client not least because God is too serious of a subject to be merely assumed.

RELIGION DECLINING

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/our-changing-culture/201505/the-real-reason-religion-is-declining-in-america>

I wonder if people are starting to see they are manipulated by religion. Religion markets itself as providing a reason to live and a reason to tolerate the terrible things that happen in life - it tells people God is with them helping them when it does

not feel like it.

That is cheating people. It assumes God has to make us happy eventually. But if God has to put up with evil out of respect for our free will and because he has a plan, it may be that he simply cannot help you or make you happy. Telling people that God will help and make them happy denies the fact that God's plan has to have its casualties. It does not let God be God.

RELIGIOUS VALUES WHEN THEY HELP OR HARM CHILDREN

<https://www.psychologytoday.com//blog/nurturing-resilience/201503/when-do-religious-values-harm-children-when-do-they-help>

I disagree strongly with the article saying "Who we are is acceptable and ... we are unconditionally loved. On that point, all religions agree, even if in practice many of their followers fail to live up to such lofty expectations."

That is simply wrong.

If a religion is man-made it will contain errors and errors in themselves lead to harm for many. The religion will command harmful beliefs and practices in the name of a God who supposedly commands the bad things for a mysterious but ultimately good purpose. So the terrible things are ultimately worthwhile. Man is not all good so how could any religion he creates be all good? Remember, the craftiest way for you to do evil is to get people to believe in doctrines that will set them up for inner turmoil such as eternal punishment and that God may kill their baby as part of his plan. That way it looks like you are not to blame for their torment and for putting them at risk. Get people to believe in the supernatural and in its mysterious ways - that gets them to turn off the reality check function. They will find it hard to see or heal the effects of their indoctrination.

And what is loving about some religions saying we have the power to be bad for all eternity? What about innocent until proven guilty? Even the worst of us is more good than bad inside. And Jesus even if he did stop stoning of adulteresses to death did not apologise for or repudiate the stoning of adulteresses prior to that. In fact he said the Law of Moses was indeed written by God like it claims meaning the cruel command to stone came from the God he put forward as a sign of perfection to be emulated and worshipped. He supposedly claimed to be that God! Jesus used the expression bad people. It shows that Christianity's foundational doctrine that he regards actions as bad not the people is hypocrisy.

Though the law cannot start banning thought crimes, it should discourage harmful doctrines. There is no use waiting until people are actually harmed by them. The risk is there.

RESPONSE TO Should atheists criticize religious beliefs?

Submitted by Patrick Gormley on September 14, 2014 - 3:52pm.

I find the argument that religious belief is a crutch and should not be challenged by unbelievers to be outrageous. It is enabling the destruction of freedom of speech. Do not insult believers by saying they really want that!

There is nothing wrong with inviting or helping a person to challenge their own beliefs. It is important to reflect your atheism and your humanism in your life. Do that and you won't need to speak up for them much. You won't need to annoy people or rub your atheism or humanism in their faces. Help them to see that we all use the perception that life will be okay and that is the only crutch we all have in common. It is in fact the only crutch we really need. Help them to see that the truth is important. They will agree with those pretty easily. Then you can move on to helping them challenge their own beliefs without offending or hurting them.

If they cannot stand hearing that their faith might be in error, they are suffering from religious addiction. They need help.

The religionist who listens to the person who tells her why she should wean herself away from religion may say, "I regret that you are taking my faith away from me." But nobody ever can take one's faith away. We never ever change anybody's minds. We give them the tools so that they will do it themselves.

We all have the feeling that we will be okay at some point in the future. We all have that crutch in common unless we suffer depression or something. This is not a religious crutch though the person might mistake it for a religious sentiment. Challenging that person's religious dogma then is not the same as challenging his or her crutch.

If the sceptic about religion is criticised for criticising somebody's crutch, then why does nobody care if the sceptic uses criticism of religion as his or her crutch? It may give her or him a purpose in life and makes him or her feel they are doing something about religious belief which they regard as a slippery slope to craziness and violence. After all, if you need religion as a crutch, you will invent new crutches for yourself every time you get dealt a blow in life. Depending on a

crutch requires the creation of new crutches in order to maintain your crutch. Lying to yourself (and thus to others - you have to manipulate others to agree with you so that you feel good when you think they believe the same nonsense as you do) becomes a skill.

Re: studies that some people who pray benefit from it

Prayer is an attitude of submission to the will of God and expresses the sense of having a relationship with him. Anything meant to magically control God is magic not prayer. A perfect God cannot be influenced because by definition he knows what he is doing better than we do. Catholicism wants you to get saints to influence God - thus it is a subtly occultic religion. The notion that prayer helps is nonsense. If anything helps, it is people's misunderstanding of prayer. Many think that saying prayers for others in order to feel good about doing nothing for them is prayer. By definition prayer cannot be proven to help anybody. It is really about asking God to do what he wants not you so how can it help?

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-secular-life/201408/does-christianity-harm-children/comments>

This article covers it all for me. It mentions and describes the core problems that Christianity brought to me in childhood. I remember the nightmares I had through fearing Satan.

Christianity is complex and is often not taught fully or properly and some Christians deliberately water down the faith. That is why those who say that Christianity is good for many need to ask themselves if those who benefit really understand it or know it. Christian guilt is a powerful thing. I never admitted as a child or teenager how miserable my faith made me. It felt like an awful crime - something unspeakable.

It offends me that the comments regarding the article say it is wrong but do not say why. A child being upset by somebody saying there is no Heaven is just a child thing. It does not compare to somebody saying that unbelievers are at risk of going to Hell forever at death - what would that do to a child whose parents do not believe?

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/why-religion-is-natural-and-science-is-not/201407/god-is-just-natural-disaster-away/comments>

MY COMMENT: If people's devotion to God increases after a natural disaster or a tragedy is it evidence that the tendency to see activity or agency where there is none has increased?

We all seem to have the ability to feel as if inanimate things are like people. We get mad at the car as if it is its fault when it breaks down. The car is often referred to as "her" or "she". I think that tendency is a trick of the brain for it helps a bit in guarding against loneliness and it is more comforting to blame the car for breaking down of its own free will instead of admitting the truth - things can go wrong and there is nothing that can be done and it's nobody's fault. Judging the car and imputing moral fault to it makes us feel less helpless for we see judging as necessary for dividing right from wrong and good from bad. We think that judging the car is going to make it work. When a lot of people talk about acts of God, they are really just demonstrating how their minds trick them that earthquakes are down to activity by some entity and not just pure random misfortune. They express their magical ideas through God language. We must ask ourselves is it not a form of child abuse to encourage a child to believe in God when there is a risk of the child feeling hated by God or let down when something goes wrong? What if her or his mum or dad dies in an accident? Children have a stronger tendency to magical thinking than adults have. A child will believe he or she is hated by God when things go wrong for the child takes the hideous experience as proof that those who say God loves her or him are wrong. The thinking of the child is less complex and more either/or than that of most adults.

Posted on Psychology Today Website 28/12/13 in response to an article showing that belief in Hell is generally bad for society and leads to those who think people can be bad enough to go to Hell countenancing violent measures for dealing with "bad" people such as capital punishment

The Bible teaches that people who die unreconciled with God make an irrevocable choice and will suffer in Hell forever. Jesus called this eternal punishment.

The first problem is that nobody has the right to accuse us of being capable of becoming evil forever. Even the worst of us has several good points.

The second is that if we may become so evil that we reject love forever then that is a case where the rule "love the sinner and hate the sin cannot apply". That rule is based on the notion that sinners have a good side and if we show them love they may give up the sin we find hateful and abhorrent. So Hell necessarily implies that hate speech and hate are acceptable. Love the sinner and hate the sin is suspect because can you really judge a sin and not the person who commits the sin?

After all the sin is supposed to show what kind of person we are dealing with. It is the person that is the problem not the sin.

The third is that if sin is so bad that it can take us to Hell forever, no sane person will be able to tolerate it in themselves or others. The teaching leads to violence if it is really taken seriously. Not all who say they take it seriously actually do.