

RELIGION HURTS, HOW THIS BOOK SEES MUSLIM RELATED VIOLENCE

From Religion Hurts, Why religions do harm as well as good by John Bowker, a book review

This is a beautifully written attractive hardback published by SPCK London 2018.

In the introduction, the author mentioned how after the terrible religiously linked attacks in the United Kingdom in 2017 which he refers to as “made by people who had some connection with Islam” people were asking if religion does more good than harm.

I would say it depends on the religion. One religion or one holy book may do more harm than another. But we must be clear that good works no matter how great cannot be used as an excuse for saying the bad is in any way okay or does not show the dark side of the religion.

He wrote that the attackers had some connection with Islam. A religion should be assessed by the influence it has on people even if they are poor members or potential converts. It will not do to state, “The attackers are not Muslim at all!” That is no help and is denying the obvious, religion just can't be all good. It is clearly trying to use the deaths or injuries as a way of saying, "No Muslim or whatever would do that." It is using them as propaganda for the religion.

“Thus when in Manchester, in May 2017, a suicide bomber with unequivocal Muslim connections killed 22 people in addition to himself and injured more than 200 others, many Muslims said that it was the act of a degraded individual and that it has nothing to do with the real Islam: Islam, they said, is a truly peace-loving religion. Many non-Muslims agreed, including Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the UK Labour Party, who said repeatedly in his election campaign at the time that the act was ‘a perversion of Islam, a complete perversion of Islam’.

To this I wish to say that to call it a perversion of Islam is one thing, but to call it a complete perversion is absurd when the religion in its Sharia law and holy book do glorify unnecessary violence. And as violence or praising violence leads to disorder it is best described as not a perversion but an outcome to be expected. And nothing manmade is ever a complete perversion for there is something dark in everything we do.

The author writes, “Yet there are other Muslims who take the opposite point of view, and who insist that the truly faithful are those who obey the command of God in the Qur’an to fight against, and if necessary kill, those who attack any Muslims.”

He writes, “Which – if either – of those two accounts of Islam is correct? Or are both? Clearly, the answer we give makes massive difference, but no serious response is possible unless we understand the long-running, complicated and often fiercely contested arguments among Muslims themselves”.

In other words Corbyn go and mind your own business. The point is we cannot dogmatically say if Islam is violent or not for it cannot say it itself. The door is open for violent disciples of Allah. That is the point.

Next we are told about Jihad which comes from jahada or he struggled. Muhammad told his troops they came back from the lesser jihad when they were entering Medina after a battle. The greater jihad is considered a spiritual battle within oneself against sin. Oddly enough in a religion that was into polygamy, hitting women, and has a low standard of sin this spiritual battle cannot be what we think it is. In Christian cultures, the Christian needs constant training to love God more and more and with all their heart and to be humble, chaste, generous etc. The greater jihad is best understood as being about believing the religious things and the claims about the Qur’an. As holy war is commanded, it follows the greater jihad means overcoming any aversion to holy war. Why else would the spiritual and bloody jihad be so linked that they even get summarised as jihad? It is one jihad with two sides not two jihads.

Qur’an 22:39 is quoted, “Permission [to fight] is given to those against whom war is made, because they are wronged – and truly Allah is most powerful for their aid – [they are] those who have been expelled from their homes, in defiance of right – [for no cause] except that they say, ‘Our Lord is Allah’”

Here Allah gives permission to fight. In other words, he makes it their choice. There is no concern if it is the wrong choice for many wars thought to be just and wise turned out to be anything but. And the promise is that Allah will help in the battle. This show exactly why faith in wartime is so dangerous. Those who praise faith in peacetime don’t know what they are talking about.

When the Christian God has not clearly promised to support Christians in war and the Muslim God has vowed to guard Muslim fighters that is dangerous. The feeling that God is with them has fueled Christian violence, imagine what they would be like if God gave them more than a feeling, a vow to help.

He points out how many Muslims would side with the Qur'an for saying there was Adam and Eve and dismiss evolution as bad science. Even those who wait for a solution to the conflict expect an answer that shows the Qur'an to be correct. He tells us that Jews and Muslims have dismissed the science that an animal must be stunned to be humanely killed for meat. The question is if councils should ban halal meat being dispatched to Jewish and Muslim schools. If you regard animal welfare as a hugely serious matter and hold that those who hurt animals are edging close to hurting people then you have to hold that this makes the religions undesirable and believers should disband.