

Religion - is it a necessary evil?

Most religionists and their sympathisers believe that religion even if flawed is a necessary evil for it helps with social control. Seneca said religion was nonsense but useful to the state for keeping many people in line. But think about that carefully. If that is all religion is about, or primarily, then why not try to control people with the truth? Using a false or ridiculous religion to control people will backfire in time. And it is not control that is happening. It is manipulation. If people think religion is useful for getting enough people to act a certain way, they mean it is primarily useful for the state. That is a threat to the fundamental human right to be governed by a secular state. And it leads to political exploitation of the people

A religion is something that binds people into a supernatural system of doctrine and morality that they are supposed to have faith in and they are to trust even if they meet evidence that urges them to rethink.

Religion is irrational. It sorts of knows it too when it tries so hard to suppress independent thought. It preaches doctrines centuries after the doctrines have been definitively refuted. Its ignoring truth and fact is itself suppression of independent thought. Its attitude towards truth has many negative outcomes including sectarianism. Also, religion when it faces refutation by science adopts a wait and see attitude. It refuses to admit that science often rejects such an attitude and it has the right to tell us when it is appropriate not religion.

Religion offers spiritual energies to supposedly help you heal yourself of sinful tendencies. But most people taking this help do not show any sign that it has really helped. In any other field, that would be a sign that religion is spiritual quackery, self-deception and ignorance.

If religion and faith in religion are necessary they are necessary evils.

It would follow that as all religions are different, that one religion cannot be as necessary as another. It depends on how much good it persuades people to do and how open to truth the religion is. Doing good without caring for truth means that you are risking not grounding your goodness in reality. You don't want to be unwittingly harming people.

Religion is based on faith and even a person who has never had any involvement with any public worship or organised religion can have faith. So it follows that religion cannot be a necessary evil. If there is a necessary evil then it is faith - whatever the best form of faith is.

Faith

Belief divides but faith divides even more!

Faith is a necessary evil.

Not all faith is equal in value. Faith in secularism and faith in God cannot be equal in value assuming there is value in them.

A faith that gives respect to evidence and reality is a necessary evil. It is still evil in the sense that it could be misleading.

Faith in the supernatural is never a necessary evil. Once you say there is some power that is bigger than nature, you give people the right to guess what that power is. For some it could be a magical intelligence that does magic randomly, or it could be psychic power, or it could be God, Satan or the fairy queen. You have no right to be dogmatic and to be dogmatic would be bullying. The guessing options could be infinite.

Faith in a perfect God of infinite love and power is never a necessary evil. If you have to choose between saying a baby's unavoidable suffering should not happen full stop and saying it should for its God's plan then say the first. The first is the necessary evil. The second risks refusing to see how terrible it is. Seeing a lot of evil in it is not enough.

In case religious faith is about what one wants to believe and not what one should believe and not about truth, believers should embrace faith reluctantly and after making a huge effort to check it out. This is hardly ever done. The end result of their non-action is self-delusion not faith. And they end up being taken for fools by their religious leaders.

If selfishness is a necessary evil then religion increases the risk of selfishness. Religion is hiding its selfishness behind prayer and God and faith. Religious selfishness would not be a necessary evil but a disgrace.

Religious tribalism is selfish.

Holy war is selfish.

Karma is selfish.

Rewards in Heaven are selfish.

Praying to feel relief when you suffer or see others suffer is selfish.

Making out that suffering is worth it in God's plan is selfish. It is easy for you to say even if you do suffer a lot. You cannot suffer as much as other people collectively do.

Hell-dodging is selfish.

Being silent on the truth in order to fit into your religious community is selfish.

Males having more religious rights and opportunities than females is selfish.

Justifying the evil commanded by God in the Bible by saying, "You don't know the circumstances - those people had to be destroyed. There was no option" is selfish.

Beating a child in case he grows up to choose or risk Hell is selfish. A parent who hits the child to keep him out of jail later in life is less bad for at least the parent knows this could happen. You don't claim that jail exists for faith says so.

To say a doctor had to do something terrible to somebody to stop them doing grave harm and even if that was justified and makes the doctor a hero IS ONLY ACCEPTABLE IF YOU ARE SURE IT IS TRUE! It is degrading the doctor otherwise. Why? Because you say he did a necessary evil. You need a very high and clear standard of evidence before you can say such a thing. Believers degrade their God by excusing him without proof or proper evidence and they degrade their followers too by getting them to worship him.

People often say when we had more religion in society people lived their values better. But it is not the values or not knowing them that is the problem. It is people not living them. If they won't do it but if too many drop their values then clearly religion is failing them and may be inherently prone to making them fail. If it does not make them fail but fails to help them then it is still to blame. You may not know exactly why religion fails but the proof that it fails is when it does. Religion preaching values makes it nothing special for society and human nature do it too. We all soon learn fast that we cannot go around stealing. If you want a religion for values then surely you are admitting that the values matter more than the religion? Which would you want if it meant the religious beliefs being dropped or the values? The values! You cannot say you need x or y or z if people stop living up to the values.

A religion like Christianity which signs up to doctrines such as St Paul's that the Christians are the only thing the human race can boast about (1 Corinthians 1) is certainly not a necessary evil but a system based on collective egotism.