

## Why Religious Faith is Insincere

The view that if somebody has harmful religious beliefs that it is none of our business as long as they are sincere is wrong. If it would be our business if they were insincere then the fact that they are sincere makes them more dangerous. It is even more our business then! At least if they are insincere they know they are wrong and on the side of wrong. The whole point of it being our business is stopping the harm. It is not about interfering with their intentions as intentions for we can't change anybody's intentions for them.

Belief in God endangers morality or our insight into good and evil. If you suppose that the belief has no relevance to right behaviour then it follows that emphasising God like religionists do is bad. The more you emphasise, the worse it is.

The world tends to shy away from suspecting religious leaders and pastors of insincerity even when those people get great social prestige and even money because of their claims. But it is in fact worse to accuse them of delusion/cognitive dissonance than insincerity. Your delusions are harder to deal with than your insincerity. The deluded person believing nonsense will fool more people than the insincere person. The best servant of the lie is one who tells himself the lie is true and that he believes it.

## BLIND FAITH IS NOT FAITH

Belief is perceiving something as probably correct on the basis of evidence.

Faith is belief in a person. Its just belief with the personal touch. Trust is another word for faith. Christians hold that faith has an effect on our actions - we will practice what we believe in if our faith is genuine (James 2 in the Bible).

Believing a person is not the same as believing in a person. The latter implies a relationship exists.

Faith without evidence or with bad evidence is not faith at all. It is just a guess. It is about what you want to believe not what you believe. It is about feeling something is true. That is not faith or belief. If you agree with the marvellous philosopher Spinoza that belief and comprehension are the same thing (page 61, THE END OF FAITH, RELIGION, TERROR AND THE FUTURE OF REASON, Sam Harris, Free Press, London, 2005) then belief requires evidence to be real belief and the more evidence it has the stronger it is. You cannot have understanding without evidence guiding you and without you looking at it.

It is undeniable that people care about what they feel is true more than what reason says is possible or probably true. If people had a weaker tendency to copy one another, religion would have less power. It thrives on people going to Church and getting their babies baptised for their friends and family do it. The Roman Catholic Church for example would not have so many followers if these followers were not motivated more by factors that have nothing to do with the Church being true or false. If your family and community and friends are Roman Catholic you are more likely to follow the Church in imitation of them. To go to Church and believe because others around you seem to believe and you want to fit in and not be the odd ones out indicates that you are only using the Church. You are deluding yourself if you think you believe.

## BIBLE COMMANDS BLIND FAITH

Christianity claims that God wrote the Bible. Its the word of God.

The Bible, to be fair, does allow reasonable faith - faith that is based on good evidence and reasons - but more often it forbids it. It totally contradicts itself. A book that errs in the most elementary thing, belief, cannot be God's word in any sense at all.

Hebrews 11:2 says that faith alone can guarantee the blessings we hope for or give evidence for the existence of realities in the invisible world.

This means belief and not belief and repentance together as the word faith usually means to Christians. The following verses tell us that. For example, they say that it was by faith that Abraham obeyed God. If faith did not mean mere belief but also avoidance of sin this revelation would make no sense. You don't say it was by obedience to God that Abraham obeyed.

A bit later we read that Sarah conceived in her old age because of her confidence that God would keep his promise to give her a child.

Hebrews tells us to bend evidence in favour of faith and that is an invitation to fraud. It also says that mere belief alone is necessary for salvation (Hebrews 11:6) which is blackmail.

Jesus said that he was his own witness and the Father was his witness to that he was from God. He said this fulfilled the requirement of the law of Moses and God that the evidence of two witnesses was needed for a person to be believed (John 8). But Jesus did the speaking for God and the speaking for himself. God was not much of a witness in that case and we know what is wrong with Jesus being his own witness. Jesus was really asking for us to drop concern for real evidence. If Jesus says something is evidence, it is evidence even if it is not.

Jesus' miracles were meant to be seen as signs from God that God approved of his mission and teaching. Jesus did not prove that the Devil could not do miracles which looked good but which were meant to do secret harm so his miracles were not evidence. Jesus was commanding faith based on insufficient evidence. He accused himself then of lying when he said his works proved his mission and of sin when he did his so-called miracles and rose from the dead. They must be the Devil's works after all! Wanting to believe in miracles or believing in them is a sign of the following attitude, "I will not believe even in the noblest religion imaginable unless it shows me that miracles may have happened to indicate that its doctrine is good and true." That is not a sign of faith. It is a sign of mercenary hypocrisy and superstitious lust.

## INSINCERE RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Irish Church Missions, ICM, based in Dublin is a Church of Ireland ministry to Catholics with a view to bringing them to correct beliefs in Christianity. It does a good job of refuting Catholic false doctrine using reason and the Bible. ICM in response to Pope John Paul's document *Ut Unim Sint*, wrote to every Catholic priest in Ireland and sent them material to show them that their beliefs and claims about the Mass and Mary and other controversial doctrines are false. Not one priest left the Church over learning the truth. Talk about suiting themselves! They engage in self-service and dress it up as the service of God.

Religious people should be well aware of the placebo effect. If people think sacraments help or that prayer works, religion wants them to say it is God that is helping and not the placebo effect. This is sheer manipulation. Suppose it is true that taking communion makes you a better Christian, Catholics insist that for this to happen you must believe that it is the body and blood of Jesus Christ. They say that if you don't see it for what it is, Jesus, you miss the point and miss out on many of its benefits. What they are trying to do is manipulate you. Without belief, the placebo effect will be weak or nothing will happen at all. They are trying to trigger the placebo effect in you and then get you to fool yourself that it is God at work and not a mere placebo. It takes some arrogance to hold that the healing power of your positive attitude is really the power of God. Religion when it is dogmatic is dogmatic for it wishes to do exactly that. If communion has power it will work regardless of what you think of it. You do not need to believe in an antibiotic for it to help you. Religion's obsession with belief is a sign of conscious manipulation of the vulnerable. It takes pains to warn that unbelievers will be punished but it never explains why belief matters. This is bullying.

Belief that is without evidence is not belief at all. And so is belief that decides to ignore the evidence against it. If religion wasn't into that religion would not exist.

You cannot really believe or think that something is probably true when you have no decent evidence for it. You just feel that it is true and you know that feelings are not evidence. Feeling that God exists does not mean that he does or even that you think he does. You can feel something is true to distract yourself from the fact that you know or believe that it is not true. Blind faith does not exist – it is just feelings.

Religion says that faith is superior to reason. That means for Catholics, for example, reason and experience must be told to go to Hell when the Church tells you what to believe when the voice of the Church is at variance with the other two. They start off with faith (this faith is really an assumption and is not real faith) not reason or experience. You cannot prove the faith unless you start off with the latter pair so they are really people who don't believe in anything. They do not believe in the pair when instead of being willing to hear them they just twist them. Even if they have evidence it does them no good.

Religion offers you counterfeit faith.

That is what religion makes the world suffer for. Artificial faith. What could be more evil than doing that?

It is astonishing to meet hellfire and brimstone believers who hold that God will damn people for all eternity at death for the simplest things. Yet the same people make little effort to make sure they are really in a faith that will get them saved from such a fiery fate. And they sin and are confident they will still go to Heaven. They are convinced others will go to Hell for sins they commit themselves. They act as if their children and parents will go to Heaven even if they are blasphemers and if they laugh at their faith. They don't go to the madhouse with worry. The doctrine of Hell does no good - it forces believers to rationalise and make excuses and fall into self-deception. It is an example of the omnipotence of self-deception

and its intolerance of the truth. If the rationalising believers in hellfire are really people of faith then their attitude is proof that you never know if a person really has faith or is engaging in self-deception. But you can know. Inconsistencies such as theirs show they are only telling themselves they believe. That is all they are doing!

Few people examine their faith to see if it is true. And those who do not do a very good or thorough job. Christianity is a complicated religion and hard to defend. Roman Catholicism especially so. You can believe that A never committed the murder of B and still study and test the evidence that A murdered B. If you are confident that A didn't murder B you will not be afraid to research. Fearing the truth means you suspect that your belief is wrong. Yet many are led to feel that thinking critically about their religion is traitorous. The hatred Christians spew against those who think critically about Christianity proves how they don't want anybody else saying what the Christians know or suspect but won't dare admit. If you won't think then you don't believe in your religion at all. If you thought it was true you would not be afraid.

McGrath told us that the Catholic Church used to use reason to get to faith and then reason was dumped once that goal was achieved. The Catholics would have said it was like throwing away the ladder when it was climbed. McGrath says it is like sawing off the branch one is sitting on. Catholics claim that faith does not conflict with reason and needs reason to exist. But if that is true then it is unlawful to throw away the ladder or cut off the branch. The faith cannot be reasonable any more when it dispenses with reason and chooses to forget it. It shuts out reason which is shutting out the possibility of discovering that what one believes is wrong and must cease being believed.

Faith is seen as God speaking to me now to help me believe and have a relationship with him. If so, then there is no need for the kind of faith that uses and then discards reason. Such "faith" is just worried about doctrinal information rather than the relationship. McGrath said the problem was that few people reasoned their way to faith properly or carefully so this understanding of faith condemns the faith of the majority as anti-rational. Even if it is right it is still irrational for it is not based on the right reasons.

A bit of examination is no use. We all know that every group has its answers for our question which shows that we need to go into theological matters until we can go no further. What if we have no time or sufficient money? Spiritual matters come first. God told us to suffer and maybe even die for the truth. The fact that you would need a lot of time or money just proves that the clergy do not like you thinking too much. They could make it easy but do not. They want to stand between you and real belief.

Incidentally, religion forbids doubt which does not prevent you from seeing the evidence for or against your religion but which seeks to stop you from seeing what it implies so that it is looked at with one eye closed and the other open.

Religions like Christianity which make Gnosis or knowledge of faith make you tell yourself a lie that you know your beliefs to be true. How can God or faith be trusted when it is a lie? The result is not even belief much less knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

Religion advocates irrational faith and encourage people to lie to themselves that its rational. Religious faith is all based on self-deception. And the real purpose of self-deception is to deceive others by being a convincing liar. The person who tells us they believe or have faith in religion when they merely feel that it is true, is a liar.

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