

## **RELIGIOUS SPIN - HOW TO LOOK GOOD AS YOU SPREAD TOXIC FAITH**

Politicians only care if they can get good works out of a religion and don't care if the religion is true or not. Their attitude is the secret of how religion got to be so influential and powerful. If you are right to deny that a religion is evil that does not make it true. If a religion does remarkable good it can still be an untrue religion that just happens to be taken care of by a good morality. Or even luck. An untrue religion has to fight the truth and ignore it to survive. So when it speaks against evil it ends up with no right to do that until it is also admitting its own hatred for truth. Hatred for truth leads to hatred for those who have the truth.

### **How religion looks good even when it does great bad**

The not all bad argument is an insult and an excuse. It is a distortion of the evidence. It is in denial of the truth. Consider how "Sunnis and Shiites are still Muslims, and have the same cultural background. They kill each other for faith alone" (see page 252, Faith Versus Fact: Why Science and Religion are Incompatible). Consider how Catholics and Orthodox have nearly the same faith and the same rituals and a similar outlook but both slaughtered each other. Consider how Protestants slaughtered each other over the meaning of holy communion.

Today the religions sometimes apologise for the terrible things they did in the past. They apologise as religions. Thus they admit that religion is not necessarily good.

The not all bad excuse makers do not count themselves among the bad! How humble! They are innocent of enabling the bad in any way! Apart from their pride and self-righteousness, we have to observe how their doctrine that people are not bad but sins are has been conveniently forgotten! The bad must get some kind of "spiritual nourishment" from the hypocrisy of the good.

Every religion is accused of creating monsters, of harbouring monsters, of condoning the activities of monsters and finally of enabling monsters. You could substitute monsters for liars or fools as well. Religion chiefly gets its power and influence by saying, "We are not all bad." That is how it gets off the hook. As religion depends on human membership, each religion is the sum of the actions of its members. People in a religion not being all bad does not mean that the religion should exist. It could still be doing more harm than good. It could be a religion of lies or a religion of prejudice and intellectual dishonesty that scorns the truth it pretends to love. The not all bad thing is an excuse. It cannot excuse a religion that abuses women or that hates science so why believe it excuses any religion? The religion that carefully forms its members into good people and cares deeply about truth does not exist. For example, no checks are done to see if the magic rites for enabling sinners to transform themselves into saints. A religion being good is no good if it makes the dictator who blows the world to bits.

### **The disconnect**

Most members of a religion do not understand the teachings of the religion that well. A religion as popularly understood tends to be horrendously vindictive and superstitious. The leaders are responsible for that for in the real world you cannot expect the dogs in the street to know a religion as well as its pope might. A religions officials and its official teaching being praiseworthy means little when you consider the religion as a whole. It is ridiculous to regard Catholicism as wise over all if it has some wise popes and nuns and priests. It is ridiculous to regard a religion as good just because a few good people who claim to be members stand out. It is like you cannot see the forest for the little rose bush.

### **The not all bad argument is risky**

Your culture and the influences around you can blind you to the harm certain actions do. When you believe your religion and culture is good, it is easy for you to believe you are good for supporting it and being in it. Then it gets harder for you to see the harm you do or can do or you may see but water it down.

Mental illness or pressure from the culture can mean you end up doing evil things but are not morally blameworthy.

What if you argue that there is a downside to everything so why not stay in a religion that does harm? If you should set up a pharmacy though many drugs have terrible side effects and unforeseen consequences then why can't you be in a religion that has a toxic side as well? But you need pharmacies. You do not need religion. Even the religious people do not live religion 24/7.

## Talking about the good is about making the bad look okay

The Christian faith says everybody is a sinner and sin is essentially the prideful wish to be free from God. If we are sinners and the essence of sin is pride, then the most attractive sins will be the ones that make us look good though we are not. Religion calls faith a virtue. So the virtue of faith is intrinsically suspect. Some virtue then!

A perfectly good religion can be abused. Quite rightly nobody will blame the religion. But to say your religion is imperfect and open to abuse is a different matter. The more imperfect or ignorant a religion is the more prone it is to being abused and it must take responsibility.

People do good works - sometimes big ones - but are not really good. A good doctor is not really a good doctor if he has abused a child in his care even once. People point to the good works of Moses and Jesus and call the Bible the good book. That is treated as a justification for not being put off by the violence and the acceptance of violence commanded by God through Moses and Jesus. It is a disgrace. The good is irrelevant. To use the good as an excuse for embracing the bad is a further insult to the people corrupted by those scriptures and to their victims. There is no excuse for not being in a religion with scriptures that abhor violence. Or you could be a secular humanist!

Catholicism and Islam have done untold harm and when you talk about the harm people expect you to mention the good too. But this is using the good side as if the bad doesn't matter too much. The same people do not campaign for excellent humanitarian doctors to get off scot-free if they murder a patient. And to say that all religions have faults so you will stay in yours is hardly a ringing endorsement of your religion. You are only in it because you can't find anything better. You cannot expect such an attitude to be much good for inspiring those who look at you for guidance and good example. If you can't find a religion or belief that makes you good and happy it is your own fault.

People often point to a religion that has a negative reputation and say the members of the religion are not all bad. You will find likeable people in every group even in the Islamic State. Those who say, "Look how much good that religion does! There are a few bad apples yes but it is such an amazing religion" need to be reminded that they are trying to encourage people to forget the bad members. Evil regimes always use the "we usually do good tactic and some do bad" tactic and it works.

To point to heroes in a religion when people complain that the religion is harmful or potentially harmful is manipulative. The problem is not the heroes. It is the bad results of the religion we are talking about. Religion loves to take credit for goodness that appears anyway religion or not and the credit for heroes though you get heroes in every camp. The heroes are irrelevant and so not to be exploited as being an argument for the excellence of the religion. Their exploitation indicates that religion may be capable of much much worse!

Only a tiny minority of people in a religion are remarkably good. The rest are just as good as everybody else. The excuse, "I am in this religion despite the bad people for they are not all bad" is just an excuse. It is terrible how it seeks to get people to praise the religion and blame the "bad" religionists. It encourages those who suffer wrong at the hands of the religion to internalise the wrong and blame themselves. The enablers of bad people are the biggest problem. They portray the bad as victims and thus make them even worse.

Some religions have NOBODY who is exceptionally good!

There is something vulgar about people defending a religion that has members who engage in wanton terrorism that no other religion does however bad it is. For example, Islam spawns suicide bombers who love to take out civilians who are not a threat to them. It is not as bad as say Catholicism which with passive aggressive love, urges people to refrain from condoms though they will end up getting AIDS. The not all bad is used to excuse terrible religions and not so terrible alike. It is hypocritical and ignorant.

Most believers are actually civil not good. Civil means you may be a waste of space but as long as you don't break the law you are praised as civil. In fairness, most atheists are probably just civil too. It is no compliment to be called civil. Be good.

The "not all bad" philosophy is often an excuse for staying in a bad religion or pressure group on the basis that nothing is perfect. If your religion is imperfect you should be on the lookout for a better one even if it will not be perfect either.

If say Catholics or Muslims for example are violent, people will say some Catholics or Muslims are violent.

Note these things:

They admit that the violent are Catholics or Muslims.

They need to tell us if they consider a far bigger number of Catholics or Muslims harmful in the sense that somehow they are helping the violence to take place. Perhaps they don't get mad enough about the violence. People can be harmful without being violent. That question is far more important.

And how many members have to go bad before you decide the religion is bad?

### **Love the religionists but not their religion?**

Though people say you must hate the sin and love the sinner, nobody seems to say you should hate the religion and love the people in it when it is an error-ridden, bad and dangerous religion. Are those who say that a religion is acceptable for not all the people in it are bad really qualified then to assess? No.

To prefer to blame a religious person for the evil he or she does in the name of faith in religion and say it has nothing to do with religion is persecuting that person in the name of religion. It would be kinder to look at how the beliefs ruined that person. If religion demands that it be exonerated all the time, then religion is bad.

And loving the sinner and hating the sin is such a basic principle to religion that it can be considered its bedrock. But it is deceitful. Moreover it leads to people saying, "I love the sinner but do not forgive his sin." Good people should not join religion when it is founded on a bad and hypocritical principle. Hypocrisy is the seed of further and worse hypocrisy.

### **The few bad eggs can justify condemning a religion**

Suppose there is reasonably good religion x and reasonably good religion y. X has a few bad eggs and so has y. The bad eggs are sometimes enough to justify condemning the religion and urging people to depart from it. They justify departures when the evil they do outweighs any good done by the religion. They justify departures when the evil they would do if able outweighs any good done by the religion. We know Islamists and some Fundamentalist Christians would wage nuclear war just to destroy other religions. This justifies those who depart for there are signs and a real risk that the disease of religious fanaticism will spread to the majority and make them dangerous too. It is going to have a political impact and influence. If you support say a fundamentalist evangelical religious and social structure, you are creating the political religious crank of tomorrow. The disease of religious fanaticism will spread to make most members enablers of the violent view. Members usually let the bad people do their violence or make excuses for them afterwards or demand that they be forgiven. You can convert to a religion you would normally dismiss as crazy or stupid when you see it getting the superficial credibility that comes from a seemingly big though albeit superficial and hypocritical membership and by the fact that society seems largely to permit the religion.

A country asks one person to vote to see if it will introduce infanticide clinics or not. What if that person is you? You will feel horrendous about voting yes. You will nearly certainly vote no. But what if the vote was put to the whole country. Imagine that half the country if not more is expected to vote yes. You will not feel bad about your yes vote then. Something called diffusion of responsibility is at work. You don't feel as much to blame if others are involved. Yet you are still the same kind of person as you would be if the vote were given to you alone. Hypocrisy then is built into human nature and is stronger than any desire for God. In fact claiming to be God's pal is boastful considering how hypocritical human nature is. It is trying to put God's stamp on your pretence. If you think God is ultimately in control of the universe that means that if you murder babies you think you share the responsibility for the deaths with God. That is diffusion of responsibility too.

### **"My leaving the religion will not help"**

If a religion has a violent history, some violent members and violent scriptures then it is the height of arrogance to reason, "O I would never get involved in sectarian violence." The violent members once told themselves the same thing. And you are unaware of how easily people can be corrupted or misled. And you are involved indirectly in the violence for no law forces you to support this religion or let your name be on its membership rolls. To be arrogant and proud when people suffer and die or have done because of your religion insults them. You have taken the baby steps to corruption.

If you claim to be in a bad religion because it will improve or leaving will make it worse, then prove that. You would need to be arrogant to think that your presence in a religion is indispensable to improving it. It is too serious of a matter to expect people to take your word for it that you have good intentions and are not a hypocrite or a coward. Anybody who sits on a fence can say staying in helps or avoids something worse. The religion is bigger than you if it is corrupt and your staying is only asking for to be corrupted. And unless you are pope or something you cannot do much about the corruption.

To stay in a harmful or lying religion while claiming that you feel it will change for the better is just an excuse unless you have strong proof that it will change or you are doing something serious to change the religion. It was the ordinary Catholics of the Dark Ages that empowered the Church's reign of terror and some of them told themselves that the evil Church would change so it was worth staying. When the Church was murdering and butchering and persecuting truth, some

kings/rulers and some of the populace said, "They are sinners and not a reflection on our holy religion." They told themselves that to feel good about the fact that they were complicit in all that. It is like how Eve tried to blame Adam for what she did.

The Church ran a few hospitals and orphanages and bragged about some of the saints and that made the populace willing to overlook the bloodletting.

Your staying in a religion is bad if it is not going to change anything. And if you are honest, you will stay in the religion even if your support helps make it worse! And in a small way it does - there is strength in numbers and in big membership lists. Your membership is support.

You do not see humanistic or secular organisations trying to justify evil behaviour (and enabling evil to happen is evil behaviour!) done by members the way religion does. For example, the humanist cannot say that she let the child molester run rampant for she had the feeling that he would miraculously see the light. The secular politician will not let terrorists roam free while claiming that he is saying prayers that will prevent them from doing any harm.

## **Finally**

We conclude that a religion from a loving God will produce something better than civility. It would be arrogant to attribute your civility to God. It suits you to be civil. There is no remarkable goodness in any religion or non-religious entity in the sense that you can find a person better than Mother Teresa in any camp. And any goodness comes from within not from religion. When you join a religion with a dark side you must take responsibility for helping that dark side to exist. The "not all bad" argument is a reason for rejecting religion not accepting it.

What bad people in your religion do makes it right and a duty for others to say of you, "Not likely that she is as bad but maybe?" It may be a slight maybe but it is still there. And if it is not it should be. If you refuse to admit this you only compound your indirect role in the evil of the religious bullies and religious terrorists in your religion.

A religion being mostly filled with good people is only mostly good. It proves religion can be bad and if something is mostly good then it is true to call it partly bad. You cannot ignore the bad members and the bad side and thereby condone them by saying the religion is essentially or totally good! You close off any discussion if people are willing to be corrected if they are contradicting their religion. That cannot happen if you treat them as outsiders of their religion and it creates a new us versus them fiasco.

Religion is stronger and gets better commitment when it is demanding and nasty. That says a lot.

People tend to believe lies they hear over and over again or they think they believe. If that is the reason for religion's success it makes it to blame for the harm it does as a religion and also to blame for the harm done by that tendency. People who are conditioned to let themselves be conditioned by lies only end up as prey for sharks other than religion.

Those who praise your involvement in a harmful religion while saying all people in it are not bad are actually one-dimensional. They won't challenge your faith and allegiance and so are to blame for the spread of the disease.

Real goodness is rooted in an extreme respect for human life. Extreme as in you will not give up promoting whatever helps life thrive and thrive happily. If religion is not needed to help people become good it is superfluous. The person who is not religious but who goes among the lepers to be the "god" that cares for them in the absence of divine love is better than the whole system of doctrine and scriptures and authority that makes up the religion. The religion that is superfluous is to blame for the badness in its flock for it pretends to be able to treat it with prayers and sermons and sacraments and it cannot. To make people think they are helped when they are not is to hinder not help.

Religion when it claims to connect you to absolute goodness and give you power to overcome your dark side must live by and be held to a bigger standard than a secular body should be. It never is and it does not want to be. It would not last if it did.

It is stupid to point to religious people as religious people and say any problems their religion causes are one thing but the most important thing is that they are not all bad. Not all being bad is not enough. They need to be good as well. Moreover they should be seen as good people not good religious people. Good is natural and letting a system of religious belief steal it is in fact bad. The goodness they have has nothing to do with the religion which is why it is only fair to look at the harm the faith does.

All guns could in fact be loaded. We know that despite that they might not be. But if we carry on as if we know they are at least we are safe and protecting others as well. It about survival. If we refuse to believe then soon there will be many many

murders. The same goes for any religion you can name. Treat its beliefs and ideology as a threat and more people will be safe.