

“Like Communism, Religion is perfect in theory, not in practice.”

– The “Good” Reverend James Ferda (Yup, I just quoted myself)

I truly believe that religion is a mockery of faith. (Now that I have infuriated you, take a breath and read on). Most of us, at birth, are indoctrinated into a religion. From it, we are told not only is it the one true faith but any others are doomed to hell and we are obligated to turn others toward our religion. Now, I know this last statement, in its entirety, is not the same for all religions but you get the idea. This is where I see the devil in the details and how I truly believe that if God's real, then the devil had his hand in religion.

I will not question the existence of God in this article. When you hit the ground bungee jumping and walk away without a scratch, you learn not to doubt that something out there loves you.

I'm Catholic myself so with this background, we will focus on Christianity. Sorry, every other religion. Insert sad face here.

Obviously, we see in Christianity people believing in Christ and instead of this belief uniting us together, we see a plethora of branches from one idea. I have recently discovered the animosity some Protestants have for Catholicism and vice versa. Yes, I know of the Reformation but what surprises me is that it still exists. Just look at the teaching of Christ for example: the man took the Ten Commandments and condensed them into two. Love God with all your heart and treat others as you want to be treated. Two rules — yet people somehow use the teaching of the Bible to condemn others. For example, Christian animosity towards gay people. Gay people are constantly judged and condemned by preachers and people because certain books of the Bible said it's a bad thing. Yet the subjugation of women and the slavery were all normal and fine. I'm not even going to go into the legitimacy of the Bible, such as how, for the longest time, it was kept alive by oral tradition. Thus, the speaker may have changed some things. Or, the multiple versions that exist because of mistranslation. That's another day, here's a hint: you're not going to like that article either.

Now, if Christians actually would follow the two simple rules Jesus gave them, we would see there is no reason to ostracize gays. If you look at the many Christian groups, the groups are only separated by two things; how to worship and some differing of the text of the Bible. During the Reformation, 1517-1648, we saw the rise of the Protestant religion for varying reasons. Catholicism had Mass in Latin, which forced people to not only go to church but to submit to the church in all ways because the church basically held the keys to heaven. There were many other reasons; how the church put saints on pedestals, how the Catholics view Mary, how a priest is needed for God to hear you, how the church fleeced people for all they were worth and how the rich would buy their way into the church's favor and thus into heaven. In general, really bad stuff, yes stuff - that's the technical term. The Church of England was founded because Henry the Eighth really wanted to get a new wife. Catholics were subjected to the same tortures and tribulations that they had previously put Protestants through; burning at the stake, beheading etc. Death and destruction was brought about because of differing views on how to worship. Yes, a good and caring God really cares if you bow or genuflect.

“If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern”

— William Blake (by the way this is where The Doors got their name.)

This division over small semantics that lead to holy wars is still seen today with the Shiites and Sunni sects in Islam. Ironically, not one bit of it is because of religious views but political ones. After the death of Muhammad, there rose a question of who would take over after his death. One group said one guy and the other said someone else; thus immense hatred followed. Christians today laugh at this simple division and yet Christianity is so completely splintered over petty semantics. So, who are we to judge? If only Jesus had told Christians something about “he without sin cast the first stone.” Sadly, if Jesus had, it was lost with many other messages of peace and understanding that modern Christianity has “misplaced.” Modern Christians have chosen to drown out these words of wisdom with saber-rattling ideas: warriors of Christ or how Christianity is under attack and is involved in a holy war with Islam. I get it, two major world religions locked into a first-one-to-blink war that could consume the world. Sounds scary! Thank God the Cold War was nothing like that and it was just surrounded with paranoia and misconceptions.

In essence, what I'm getting at is faith isn't bad until people and their egos get involved. Religion is a man-made institution “inspired” by God (insert apprehension here). Here is where we really bring this belief into question. Since we're basing all this on the concept of God, we have to believe in the devil. Look at all the destruction religion has cause from the crusades, wars and in general day-to-day hatred with a tinge of animosity toward everyone who doesn't believe strictly what you believe because obviously your religion is the one true faith. Honestly though, who would join a religion that claimed to be second best in the eyes of their God? So, if religion brings death, destruction and hatred, we can see the corruption and manipulation religion has on faith. All these traits in the previous sentence embody what we are led to believe are evil. So, we can see the Devil is in the details. These small and petty details are still creating animosity, mistrust and hatred between people who have beliefs in the same things. Even if you view all religions together, they all have the same basic concepts: of being a good person and loving God. So, again we see details and semantics creating divisions where there is no need. We are all told we have the one true faith, others are wrong and we must convert them. If that's not a recipe for destruction, what is? The devil's greatest trick was letting us think he didn't exist — in the details.

As I finish writing this, I can already hear the pitch forks being sharpened and the townspeople gathering their torches. If I've said something to anger you, well, in all honesty, good, I hope it cut deep. I hope I put a crack in your foundation, though you'll never admit it because if I didn't, what would be the point. Maybe for once instead of outward you found yourself looking inward and in doing so were shaken or enraged by what you saw. Truth is a double edge sword and I have no doubt I will feel the other side of the blade for this but some things need to be said. Maybe if I nail this to a church door, people would listen.

Authors Note: For those who did not get the reference, Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, did this.

“If a man is not ready to take risks for his opinions, then it's because either his opinions are worthless or he is.”

— Ezra Pound