

True Evil

Religion is on the nose in our world. The Richard Dawkinses of our world are having a field day pointing out some of the absurdities of faith. But faith is never a matter of logic and provability, and the proving God argument is never one that people of faith will win. Our only response is love, compassion - after all that is the God we say we follow. That is our claim: God is love.

However there is a murkier side of religion that fuels the atheist's fire and I was exposed to it last Sunday morning. One of the more elderly of our congregation shared with me a letter she had received and gave permission for me to share it with you.

This letter had plastered over the envelope "*Concerning Money. This will be a first transfer of \$75,000!*" Inside was a six page letter, purporting to come from a man of faith and a clairvoyant. In the letter this individual claims to be in torment for all the souls of those locked in purgatory, and he, with the help of our parishioner, will be able to release some of them. He implies that some of the tortured souls in purgatory are our parishioner's recently deceased family members. He quotes Scripture (in Latin) and gives a description of Purgatory - a theological concept that most Catholics have ditched. And then he recommends a course of action. For only sixty dollars all our parishioner's bad luck will disappear, her loved ones will be released from their torment and will be around to ensure that she will be watched over by them: "they will offer you abundant love, a great deal of money and health, in brief everything that you require for happiness." Oh, and you get a candle and a special paten (holy plate) to effect the ritual release from purgatory.

If you ever were silly enough to deny the existence of real evil in the world, this letter serves to refute the denial. Dressed in religious clothing it seeks to take advantage of vulnerable people. It is the antithesis of what true religion is about. Sadly it is only one instance of the abuse of religion for personal gain. And much of the criticism of religion is down to such behaviour.

As I See It, true religion, true spirituality will always seek the good of the other. It will be about bringing people together in this world and is never about pie in the sky when we die. Heaven, hell, purgatory and limbo are never true spirituality's concern. True spirituality is about how we live today, in this world, with each other, with ourselves, with God's creation. Fortunately, our parishioner can recognise evil when she sees it, no matter how it chooses to dress.

Tony would be more than happy to chat about the above article.

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