

RELIGION 2. What is wrong with religions? Dogmas. Lies. Control. Why do religions force followers to abandon thinking? Why threaten 'infidels' with hell? Why claim 'holy men' perform miracles? Why teach God cares for a minority only? **D**ogmas, lies and control of the faithful.

Nobel Prize winner, physicist Steven Weinberg said: "Religion is an insult to human morality and dignity. With or without it, you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, it takes religion."

Blaise Pascal: "Men never do evil so completely and gladly, as when they do it from religious conviction."

Ruth Green: "There was a time when religion ruled the world - the Dark Ages." Douglas Adams: "Religion is interesting - I'm just stumped people take it seriously."

Voltaire: "The Bible: written by fools, commanded by imbeciles, taught by rogues - and innocent children are forced to learn it by heart." Seneca the Younger: "Religion is regarded by common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful."

Lucretius, Roman poet & philosopher, author of the poem: On the Nature of Things, said: "Life is too difficult, humanity too weak, labour too exhausting, pain too frequent, joy too rare - indeed, the world is too imperfect - for there to be a God."

In his poem Lucretius identifies superstition (religio in Latin) with the notion that the gods and/or supernatural powers created our world or interfere with it. He argued that the operations of the world can be accounted for entirely in terms of natural phenomena.

There is this story of the philosopher and the theologian in a discussion; says the theologian: "A philosopher is like a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that is not there." "Quite possibly," retorts the philosopher, "but the theologian would find it."

The antithesis to Western religions is Buddhism, especially Zen Buddhism. The Buddha denounced tradition, scriptures and dogmas, and replaced them with the teaching of ethics.

Buddhism is an educational system where everyone can achieve Buddhahood, but each person is responsible for their own progress, without the help of any gods, prophets or saints.

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On the other hand, what is right with religions? At the core of all religions is a simple, universal message, which nevertheless is distorted by doctrines, scriptures and traditions.

*"In principle every religion calls on its followers to live a moral and ethical way of life, to cultivate purity of heart, tolerance and peace, and to gain mastery over the mind."**

**S. N. Goenka, teacher of Vipassana meditation*

One aspect of religion must not to be underrated: A religious belief has the potential to give a person peace of mind and happiness. Letitia Wright, an actor, was suffering depression ... she stayed in her darkened room, stopped eating and refused to communicate with others.

When she was invited to a Bible study class, she became a committed Christian. "Ever since then," she said, "everything's just been really, really positive in my life." In that instance all dogmas, lies & control are irrelevant; all that counts is one's personal belief that brings peace.

*The Wright Way, by Cosima Marriner
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see also BELIEF