

## The Rhetoric of Chiasmus #9

### Religion

*Religion - any religion - is a touchy issue. Criticize or denigrate some and you could wind up dead at the hands of those believers. My purpose here is not to criticize or denigrate, but simply to ask questions and to provide a different perspective about some of humanity's core beliefs.*

I was born into a deeply Catholic family. We went to Mass every Sunday; we ate fish only on Fridays; we fasted during Lent; we said the Rosary as a family every so often; we went to confession almost every week; and so on and on. By the time I was leaving my teenage years, it seemed to me the rituals had assumed more importance than the beliefs. The whole process seemed dull to the point of death - a feeling I couldn't fully express at that time, especially to my parents. Surely, I thought, **a religious life is good only if there is life in the religion?**

Now, much later, I understand how many value religion from various social, emotional and political perspectives. For believers, I also understand religion's value as a *belief system*. Everybody has some sort of belief system. But, I've also learnt this: **A religion's ideals do not necessarily produce an ideal religion.** Further reading and contemplation over many years have convinced me that **it's not always the religion in the people that's the problem; more often, it's just the people in the religion.** One need only to review the history of war over the previous two millennia for verification.

Hence, after due consideration of the whole issue, I finally sloughed off the mantle of religion as being, essentially, counter-productive to humanity's progress towards being a truly rational species. But I remain tolerant of everybody's right to believe in something. In fact, **our tolerance for others should be as religious as the religions of others should be tolerant of us** - that is, the *non-believers*, among whom I now place myself, categorically.

I must admit, though, I'm now more vocal about the perceived inadequacies of religion, specifically with clergy and administrators who are complicit in child sexual abuse which permeates so many different religions and institutions. Because, I think **those who molest just live to prey; those molested just pray to live.** I can testify to the latter which occurred when I, as a victim, was very young.

In a lighter vein, for many years I've been intrigued by the way religion binds its members into strict rules; yet they are continually told **all humanity really does have free will even though few have the will to be free - really.** Isn't that right? Well, sure, free will exists in a sense, but if you don't toe the religious line, you won't reach happiness in the hereafter, will you? In other words, **after here, life comes to death for all; but death comes to life hereafter.** But *only* for believers?

Seriously?

So then ... all those early humans and Neanderthals who died thousands of years before *any* religion came along have all gone to ... Hell? Or what? And *why* would any supreme entity act in such a capricious and stupid fashion? There're no categorical answers except what your *beliefs* tell you. So, I've come to the conclusion that **the meaning of life is *not* a question to be answered; any answer must always be questioned.** By continually doing so, humanity *might* reach a stage, in a millennium or two, whereby all religion withers away completely.

I truly hope so. **Not only because many see humanity's progress as just a dog-eat-dog world, but because, from the beginning of *this* millennium, it seems as though it's now also a god-eat-god world out there....**

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