

wrong religion or (God forbid) not religious at all? Is it really a benefit to feel superior to others because you are “saved” and they are not?

Religions that teach alternative medical practices, emphasize prayer instead of treatment, or shun medicine all together bring with them obvious harm. No matter what your faith, odds are that you’re not going to pray away cancer, diabetes, or leukemia.

Religion may also give you a sense of priorities that might be less than globally accepted. Mother Teresa has famously come under criticism because it’s said that a significant amount of the money donated to her was used not to feed the poor but to glorify God and convert people to Christianity.

And if you think that your religious beliefs are fine and it’s other people that have a problem, just remember — that’s what everyone things.

If you’re interested in reading more about the danger from belief in pseudoscience and the supernatural, visit the excellent Web site whatstheharm.net.

To download additional tracts or purchase a copy of Ask Yourself to Be Moral, please visit blog.iamanatheist.com



WHAT’S THE HARM IN BELIEVING?

A Question of Moral Atheism

from blog.iamanatheist.com



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to them through deep feelings, what if they sense a divine command to commit a crime? If someone is taught that some people speak for God, what protects them from an unscrupulous or crazy person who claims to be God’s representative?

Religion can bring comfort, but it can also bring completely unnecessary negative emotions. Why should a teenager feel guilty for having perfectly normal emotions and desires? Why should an old woman have to live in sorrow knowing that many of her loved ones are not only gone but likely burning in Hell? Why should a young bride feel that she has to hide her true ambitions and subjugate herself to a man because of a divine command?

This also works in the other direction: Why feel guilt for anything when you know God has forgiven you? Any group that divides people into “us” and “them” brings with it the risk of bigotry, and religion is no exception. Isn’t it doing harm to teach your children, as some religious people do, that some other children should not even be spoken to because they are the

WHY BOTHER TRYING to change people’s mind about religion? It makes them happy and they’re not hurting anyone.

It’s definitely true that religion makes some people happy or provides them with a measure of security or comfort. If that was all that religion did, perhaps there would be a good argument against trying to lead people away from it, but unfortunately that is not the case.

The first and, perhaps, most prevalent type of harm that stems from some religion comes in the form of bad thinking. Many religions encourage belief without justification and discourage questions about certain subjects. Even if the religion itself is completely benign, teaching people that there are facts that should not be questioned can make them vulnerable to deceit, fraud, and poor reasoning for the rest of their lives.

Religions that teach unquestioning obedience to a religious figure or text also put their members at risk. If someone is taught that their holy text is God’s word, what if they misinterpret it as telling them to do something awful? If someone is taught that God speaks

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A Question of Moral Atheism

IN BELIEVING?

WHAT'S THE HARM



QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM: INSTRUCTIONS

We appreciate your interest in helping us spread information about moral atheism! To make copies of this pamphlet for your own use or to share with friends, follow these simple steps:

1. Print pages one and two of this document, one on each side of the same piece of paper (if you don't have access to a duplex printer, print page one, put the page back in the paper tray upside down, and print page two — depending on the type of printer, you may have to experiment a bit).
2. Cut the printout in two, using the thin rules across the middle of the page as a guide.
3. Fold the two pieces of paper in half, making a pair of small pamphlets.
4. Keep one of the pamphlets to read, and give the other away to an interested friend or stranger.

That's it! If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, we invite you to share them by leaving a comment on blog.iamanatheist.org. Thanks!
