

## 22 Ways Religion Promotes Crime

by Kalin - Saturday, September 04, 2010

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## 22 Ways Religion Promotes Crime

by Kalin Ringkvist

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75% of America is Christian.

75% of prisoners are Christian.

10% of America is Atheist.

00.2% of prisoners are Atheist.

- Federal Bureau of Prisons, 1997

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In "The New Criminology", Max D. Schlapp and Edward E. Smith say that two generations of statisticians found that the ratio of convicts without religious training is about 1/10 of 1%. W. T. Root, professor of psychology at the Univ. of Pittsburgh, examined 1,916 prisoners and said "Indifference to religion, due to thought, strengthens character," adding that Unitarians, Agnostics, Atheists and Free-Thinkers are absent from penitentiaries or nearly so.

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Steiner and Swancara surveyed Canadian prisons and found 1,294 Catholics, 435 Anglicans, 241 Methodists, 135 Baptists, and 1 Unitarian.

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1. Religions often teach the concept of hell, where there is eternal suffering of an unimaginable degree. This concept is taught to very young children, and in order for them to accept the idea that some of the people they care about will burn in hell for all eternity, they must turn off their compassion for those people. Even in religions that teach that hell is only for people who have done really horrible things, it still forces people to turn off their compassion for other human beings. Once a person, especially a child, learns to turn off their compassion and shrug their shoulders at eternal suffering, then being able to do the same thing for real-world, short-term suffering is much easier.
2. Religious individuals often feel as though God is guiding them in some way. This may be through prayer or just simple emotions, but it allows individuals the ability to decide that their emotions and desires are sanctioned by God, so when they gain the urge to do harm, they are more likely to convince themselves that they are justified because they have such strong emotions that they feel are given to them, not by the neurons firing in their brain, but by God.
3. If there is something morally wrong in society, or with an individual, the religious person has the ability to chalk it up to God's "Mysterious Ways". This can diminish a person's desire to make a difference because they believe it's all part of some great plan.
4. Religions often teach that it's not easy for a person to have morality without the concept of heaven and hell to motivate them. This teaches people that they do not have the mental capacity to be good without an outside motivator.
5. If people are taught that heaven and hell are necessary for a moral society, then this implies that there is no inherent logic to being moral, and implies that there's nothing to be gained here on earth by being good, and implies that there won't be immediate emotional consequences for wrongdoing.
6. Religions often teach belief in God and prayer as a moral issue, so a criminal can believe that they can atone for anything simply by worshipping harder.
7. Religions often try to establish arguably irrelevant things as moral issues, such as masturbation, homosexuality, or blasphemous thoughts. This fills a religious person's mind with a whole list of things they can't do, and wastes precious moral willpower that could otherwise be used to resist the urge to lie or commit crime.
8. When things like masturbation, homosexuality, or blasphemous thoughts are given such attention as moral issues, a religious person may gain the idea that they are on par morally with other things such as burglary or rape, and they see a world that is full of masturbation, homosexuality and blasphemous thoughts, and they are able to think, "well, what's one more sin in a world of sin?"
9. The concept of hell teaches eternal suffering, essentially a punishment, or an act of vengeance against anyone who is either a bad person or somehow angers God. This can set a precedent for people that states that it's morally acceptable to make people suffer in order to get what you want.
10. Religions teach people to believe in a very specific set of spiritual concepts, and believe that these concepts are absolute truth. However, they see other people all around them who do not share their beliefs, and often have other belief systems that are equally beautiful. So the only way for many religious

individuals to maintain such an absolute belief in their own concepts and to resist the potential joy found in other belief systems, is to turn off their empathy for anyone who does not see things the way they do, and refuse to imagine things from other people's perspectives. When you are less able to see things from other people's perspectives, you are less likely to feel compassion for them, and therefore more capable of doing things that harm them.

11. People are often told that religion will "draw them toward goodness", and some people take this to believe that it happens automatically so they never come to realize that it takes real willpower, and they don't learn to work with their own emotions, because they keep expecting it to happen simply by worshipping or reading a holy text.

12. If a person already believes they're going to hell, and if they think that there is already no way to redeem themselves, then there is nothing left to stop them from committing whatever wrongdoing they might want.

13. The concept of original sin reinforces the idea that we are helpless to stop our criminal urges.

14. Religions teach people to follow, whether that be the church, preacher, the holy text, etc. and can leave individuals with an inherent desire to allow others to tell them right from wrong, which makes them more susceptible to propaganda and pressure from peers.

15. People learn from what they see and imitate others around them, especially people who are built up as being greater than they are, such as God. This reaction frequently can be entirely subconscious. So when they see God causing suffering in this world, and doing some of the horrible things that He does in religious texts, it may instill an individual with a subtle, subconscious desire to commit similar actions.

16. When individuals are taught to submit to and put their faith in a God as their guide, this can make them feel helpless to make their own decisions and reduce their confidence in their ability to resist criminal urges.

17. If a person is harmed by an accident purely by chance, it is usually less traumatic than if another person purposely causes the injury. So if a person has had a particularly difficult life, as the majority of criminals have, then they have a much higher likelihood of being emotionally traumatized by the unfortunate things that have happened to them because they believe that it was done to them on purpose by a God instead of by an act of simple chance. The extra trauma simply adds to any potentially unstable personalities.

18. The concept of evil can often be used as an identifier for individual human beings. It's easy and convenient to believe serial killers are possessed with an intense and unbreakable evil brought forth from a higher power. The problem is when this concept of evil is placed on people who are not so horrible. When you accept the idea that a supernatural evil is at work on this planet, it is easy for you to believe, for example, that your wife who cheated on you and broke your heart is in fact, evil, and this can lay the foundation for a person's justification for revenge. When we believe that people are evil it reduces our confidence in being able to affect a change in that person, because we believe their bad deeds come from an all-powerful, supernatural source.

19. Sometimes when a person is feeling emotions that may lead them toward crime, they will talk about it with someone, and even attempt to receive professional help. A religious person is more likely to seek out or be directed towards religious help and are more likely to wind up discussing their problems with individuals who do not have psychological training in crime prevention.

20. There are numerous logical arguments not to commit crime or other harmful acts. This is not to discredit the emotional and spiritual arguments against crime and wrongdoing, but if you look at the long term personal effects of committing a crime, and analyze it based on pure, “cold-hearted”, even selfish logic, you will still find that committing most crimes just doesn’t make sense. However, sometimes, our short term emotions or spirituality tell us otherwise and we may have a desire to, for example, take vengeance on someone or steal something we really, really want. A religious person is less likely to be devoted to “cold-hearted” logic, and therefore less likely to have thought about the real-world, long-term consequences of their actions.

21. It’s clear in our society that violence and crime interests people. It’s no wonder our movies are full of violence, and violent news gets significantly more air-time than peaceful news. This is because violence interests us and fascinates us. If we are made in the image of God, then doesn’t God also have the same fascination and interest in violence? Wouldn’t that make it acceptable to commit violence, since it is entertainment for our Lord? Some will claim that nobody thinks this way, but when you think about it from a blindly devotional standpoint, it makes perfect sense, and even if only one out of every thousand religious individuals feels this way, the consequences for society could be devastating.

22. When people are taught that the afterlife is eternal and is so much more important than the earthly realm, or that our world has no purpose without it, this devalues our world and it’s people, and makes it easier for a criminal to justify his actions, because when compared to eternity, it’s pretty easy to argue that a simple crime is insignificant.

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Here's a [blog post](#) I made about this article to clarify some of my thinking.