

A REVIEW OF TELLTALE SIGNS OF SICK RELIGION

1. When religion encourages idolatrous worship of the self, supporting the view that faith in God depends upon what God can do for me; is narcissistic, small and petty, convincing us that religion is only about making ourselves comfortable and happy.
2. When religion becomes rigid, misusing Scripture to serve narrow agenda's based upon fear and ignorance, insisting on obsessive adherence to rules.
3. When religion becomes authoritarian, developing unhealthy patterns of submission, fear, dependence and guilt.
4. When religion becomes life-constricting, focussing on the trivial and puny and avoiding issues of human suffering and loneliness.
5. When religion is reality-denying, encouraging people to ignore their doubts, offering simplified solutions to complex problems, denying ambiguities and life's tragedies, escaping or evading real responsibilities for oneself and for others.
6. When religion puts down the humor and pleasure in life, emphasizing instead a deadly seriousness and aversion to play, laughter and enjoyment, or even encourages bitterness instead of serenity.
7. When religion supports dogmatic belief in God separate and isolated from personal caring for others in need, and foster judgmentalism instead of compassion and forgiveness.
8. When religion becomes so abstract and removed from daily human issues that it stresses things over people; it becomes unable to speak to persons vital words of acceptance and forgiveness, unable to promote genuine personal and social change, i.e. repentance from sin.
9. When religion generates within us a greater desire to control life's issues and to see life's blessings as coming from our own resources and not from a caring, gracious God.
10. When religion makes it difficult to see the relationship between science and religion, new technologies and faith, and thereby makes it harder to solve ethical problems.

SPECIAL THOUGHTS

A man went to a barber shop to have his hair and his beard cut as always. He started to have a good conversation with the barber who attended him.

They talked about so many things and various subjects. Suddenly, they touched the subject of God.

The barber said: "Look man, I don't believe that God exists as you say."

"Why do you say that?" asked the client.

"Well, it's so easy, you just have to go out in the street to realize that God does not exist. Oh, tell me, if God existed, would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed, there would be no suffering, nor pain. I can't think of loving a God who permits all of these things."

The client stopped for a moment, thinking, but he didn't want to respond so as to cause an argument. The barber finished his job and the client went out of the shop. Just after he left the barber shop he saw a man in the street with a long hair and beard (it seems that it had been a long time since he had his cut and he looked so untidy).

Then the client again entered the barber shop and he said to the barber: "You know what? Barbers do not exist."

"How can you say they don't exist?" asked the barber. "Well I am here and I am a barber."

"No!" the client exclaimed. "They don't exist because if they did there would be no people with long hair and beard like that man who walks in the street."

"Ah, barbers do exist, what happens is that people do not come to me."

"Exactly!"- affirmed the client. "That's the point. God does exist, what happens is people don't go to Him and do not look for Him. That's why there's so much pain and suffering in the world."

Author Unknown
as seen in Wit and Wisdom