

Religion and Voluntaryism



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“One Voluntaryist’s Perspective” is an original column appearing most Mondays at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found [here](#). OVP-only RSS feed available [here](#).

What is the relationship between voluntaryism, the philosophy based on the voluntary principle, that all human relations should happen voluntarily, or not at all, and religion? Are they ships simply passing one another in the night? Well, that depends on a few things, like the nature of the religion in question, and how that religion is disseminated. Let me explain.

Process of Dissemination

A thousand and one different religions have been practiced in the world since time immemorial. Many have been outwardly peaceful, and many violent. The former relies on persuasion to gain adherents, the latter on force. If all human relations should happen voluntarily, then religions that practice violence run contrary to voluntaryism, and by extension, to reason.

It should be noted that even peaceful religions are often forced onto others. For example, children are often compelled to join their parents’ attendance at religious gatherings. If the child is too young to stay home alone, then they are likely too young to protest attending, in which case attendance is not compulsory. If a parent is coercing a protesting child through either threats of punishment or promises of reward, now or in the eternities, then that parent is in effect forcing religion onto their child, and thus running contrary to voluntaryism. The alternative for religious parents who don’t want to force religion onto their children is to raise their kids in such a way that their children desire to go with them of their own free will.

Nature of the Religion

Some religions are violent by their very nature. These religions require such things as human sacrifice. While it may seem that such religions are uncommon these days, we mustn’t overlook the biggest and most dangerous religion found over the last several thousand years, all over the world: the religion of statism. Statism is the belief that the

individuals or successors of the individuals who violently or fraudulently monopolized the provision of law and order, or the legal use of force, in a given society, did so legitimately, as a matter of right. This belief is not only demonstrably false, but is to blame for the death and destruction of millions upon millions of individuals and billions upon billions of dollars worth of wealth. Statism is the worst offending religion of the human race.

Final Thoughts

Religion and voluntaryism are not necessarily incompatible. Religion has and can be disseminated peacefully and received voluntarily. However, the religion of statism is inherently violent and illegitimate, and its adherents are always either forced or defrauded into its religious practices. While many religions are compatible with the voluntary principle, statism is decidedly *not*.

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