



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on May 26, 2023

Latest Attack on Christianity: Forgiveness Is BAD, a “Religious Construct”

Seldom do our society’s Christophobes come up with anything new when attacking the object of their ire. Yet this rare occurrence might just have happened, in what can rightly be described as a jump-the-shark version of anti-Christian criticism: an attack on forgiveness.

At issue is a Monday *Independent* article titled “Miriam Toews: ‘Forgiveness is a religious construct, a means of maintaining the status quo.’” Toews, apparently, is a Canadian novelist of some repute who, having been raised in a Mennonite community, is still at close to 60 years old in a teenage rebellion phase.



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The *Independent* article’s author, Helen Brown, [describes](#) Toews (pronounced “tayves”) as an “award-winning writer of seven bestselling novels”; this includes 2018’s *Women Talking*, which last year was made into a film. It was when discussing this work — which concerns the rape of more than 100 women and girls in a Bolivian Mennonite town — that Toews flayed forgiveness.

The “novel zooms in on the 48 hours in which the town’s women have to choose whether to forgive their assailants or leave the only lives they’ve ever known and risk eternal damnation,” relates Brown.

She then continues, “‘Forgiveness is a religious construct, a means of maintaining the status quo,’ Toews tells me today. ‘In my community, forgiveness is all. But forgiveness can be permission. It can mean nothing changes. So, what good is it?’”

Yes, well, law *can* be permission, too; it *can* mean nothing changes (when perverted or misapplied). Anything can mean many things. But this doesn’t mean law is bad in principle.

As for forgiveness, the good news is that internet commenters right, left, and center savaged Toews’ claim, apparently viewing it as akin to the proposition, “Kicking puppies has redeeming social value,” “Putting cats in microwaves is a stress release,” or “Pushing aged women down staircases is therapeutic.”

For example, at [MSN.com](#), which posted Brown’s article, reader Michael Cox spoke for many in writing, “Many people miss the point. By forgiving you release the toxin of hate. It isn’t for the other person it is for you.”

Commenter David Hardy echoed this. “Anger does more harm to the vessel in which it is stored, then [sic] to anyone upon whom it is poured,” he wrote, paraphrasing Mark Twain.

Providing a bit more perspective, poster Steve C added, “Forgiveness is choosing to no longer carry your pain with you. It doesn’t mean you have to give the offender another chance at harming you.”

Then, Nathan Springhart had some rhetorical questions. “So, if not forgiveness, what does the author



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suggest as an alternative?" he asked. "An 'eye for an eye'? 'Wild-west' style gun duals [sic] as a means to settle scores? Mad Max vigilante 'justice'?"

A bit more perspective: The biblical injunction "an eye for an eye" is itself misunderstood, as it prescribed *proportionality* and constituted an improvement over the then-barbaric human norm. It simply meant, to paraphrase late Eternal Word Television Network figure Mother Angelica, that if someone stole your goat, all you could do was steal his goat.

You couldn't burn down his house and kill his whole family.

Moving on, commenter Eric Smith pointed out that forgiveness (though initially emphasized by Christianity) is now axiomatically accepted as necessary by the wider world. "Yuck, what a strange article," he wrote. "Most atheists and 98% of secular psychologists would say forgiveness is a healthy way of being."

And, finally, out of the 428 MSN comments — virtually all pro-forgiveness — there was this observation about Toews' claim: "That's exactly what the Bolsheviks used to say about forgiveness," pointed out poster Ela Talaj. Ouch.

In fact, it should be mentioned that forgiveness actually altered what had been man's status quo — of sheer brutality. Why, ancient pagan cultures might even portray the exacting of robust vengeance as epitomizing manliness.

Thus did Jesus Christ himself, when telling us how to pray, prescribe forgiveness in the short, 66-word Lord's prayer. To wit: "and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us...."

Yet something still need be said. The freeing from hatred's oppression has another positive outcome: It clarifies perception. For anger is like darkness: The more there is, the less you can see.

As I pointed out in the 2005 piece "[Forgiveness](#)," angry, vengeful people inevitably view the object of their hatred through colored glasses; they then may attribute bad motives to everything the person does.

But upon forgiving, I [wrote](#), "the darkness of that toxic emotion is lifted and supplanted by the light of a more ethereal perception. Then, sometimes, what had been unthinkable becomes apparent. We may see that the one we bore a grudge against for so long did us no wrong, or that he had only good or neutral intentions, or that the injury we fancied to be so severe is just so much spilled milk. Sometimes even, dare I say, we may find out that the fault lies with us."

"Of course, on occasion our harsh assessment may be vindicated," I continued. But for certain is this: It's unlikely we'll judge someone we're intensely angry at rightly.

As for Toews, she's reminiscent of the kind of developmentally stunted person [I wrote of last month](#): an "adultescent." Her *Women Talking* book could have been about the more than [1,400 British girls](#) beaten, sexually abused, and terrorized by Muslim rape gangs (but, of course, this story [wouldn't bring you awards, only cancellation](#)). Instead, she's still rebelling against those who raised her.

As Brown writes, Toews had as a girl sneaked off to "bush parties" to drink and get stoned. Then, still feeling oppressed, she "hot-footed it out of" her Mennonite hometown, Steinbach, Manitoba, and headed for Montreal right after graduating high school. How'd it go?

"There she shaved her head and pogoed to punk music," relates Brown, and by "22 she'd given birth to a son whose father fled the scene, leaving her struggling to support herself.... Next, she fell in love with



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a street performer who dressed as a radioactive Elvis and juggled machetes while wearing stilts. They had a daughter.”

Oh, he’s apparently not around, either.

Yes, rebellions can be messy — and don’t always yield something better.

No, I’m not a Mennonite (though I am a man of faith). I’ve no desire to be a Mennonite. And I surely disagree with some of their theology. But the point is that, as MSN commenter Nelms Graham put it, Toews’ “actions after she left home shows [sic] her lack of good judgement.” They also demonstrate the necessity of just rules — or, as some put it, “oppression.”

Fifty-three percent of under-30 women’s children are now born out of wedlock, a phenomenon associated with a host of social ills (among them, perhaps, writing adultescent books?). And say what you will about the Mennonites, but the young people remaining in their fold likely do better than that.

But the devil certainly would agree that God’s laws are oppressive. He also, no doubt, would endorse Toews’ position on forgiveness.



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