

As an autistic child,
I experienced religion very
differently from my family.
The notion that
I was born a
“sinner” sank into
my consciousness.
It ruled my thoughts.
Thinking of myself as being
born “dirty” consumed me.

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I evaluated all my thoughts and actions relentlessly looking for the sin in them.

I obsessed over the abstraction that my sins were shameful.

Some sins were obvious— not to steal and not to lie.

But others were very complicated.

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I took everything more seriously than everyone around me.
I panicked about my own thoughts.
One scripture said that hating someone was the same as murder.
My literal mind was tormented by this as my fleeting emotions became as serious as killing people.

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Religion was a tool of conditioning adults used to constantly remind children that they needed to see themselves as inherently bad and to not trust their own instincts or logic.

They used it to shape our behaviors.

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I loved my Sunday school teachers. They were sweet old ladies. They loved me, too. Still, they contributed to a lifetime of trauma and feelings of inferiority because of my gender, too.

The ways I was different felt sinful. My doubt was sinful. My anger was sinful.

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Conditioning did not impact others as much as it did me. I internalized far more shame, guilt, and self-doubt. This was partially because of how I was wired and partially due to sensing how different I was. Many of my peers grew up to raise their children in the same way they were raised. They are happy.

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I see “autism ABA”
as being the same.
To imply that “autism”
needs intervention is
to imply autistic people
are “born sinners.” It’s
worse because only autistic
kids are put through it.
OCD is unrelenting suffering, and
autistics are very vulnerable to OCD.

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With or without intervention, autistics will already internalize that they are different. They will already doubt themselves constantly because they're not the same as others. They will already feel like they are on the wrong planet. Society strongly values "normal."

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I advocate against
autism interventions
because I have barely survived.
Several of my autistic
friends didn't.
This is not to say that religion or
spirituality are inherently bad,
but to illustrate
the risk of conditioning autistic
children as inherently "bad."

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When autistic people say ABA (and often other intervention) is abuse, this is why. We are already conditioned by society to see differences as being “wrong.” We believe it is critical to work against social messaging that implies existing as autistic needs intervention. We advocate for radical acceptance instead.

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