



Research Article

WHY RELIGION DOESN'T ASK THE DEEPER QUESTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Religion's impact on society today is obviously enormous with many countries having adopted theocracy throughout the centuries as the law of the land. The influence of religion comes to mind when one considers its flaws. Religious association has its share of critics regarding its effects as well as its compatibility with science. This article shows that not only is religion incompatible with science but is incompatible with philosophy. Books like the Bible and the Koran do not answer the deeper questions in life like the nature of reality and the nature of the mind.

These are subjects which have been studied by philosophers in both the East and West, the notions that have a significant impact on our lives and thought up before the newer teachings of Christ. This article will compare mainly Eastern philosophical notions, along with some Western ones to the lessons in the New Testament, a supposedly more advanced tone taken than the violent and aged Old Testament. This all missing from biblical texts is why religion doesn't help one personally beyond hope, comfort and a sense of community, as we will see.

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INTRODUCTION

For a start, there is no common theme in religion to agree upon for religious philosophers. Not that theology is considered a real philosophy anyway. There is a difference between religious philosophy and philosophy, namely logic which is pretty important as it provided the foundation for, science. Also, Christian related theories are going to differ from an Islamic apologetic's theory and good luck telling him he's wrong. That's why there is confusion as to the amount of books in the Old Testament. Are there 39, or 46? If Matthew's insistence on obedience of orthodox Jewish law to be followed or is Paul's view of detaching from the law for the sake of salvation to be followed?

Theologian Alvin Plantinga admits that the messages such as those in *Genesis* are ultimately "unclear" and have been for hundreds of years. Phillip Moller in *Theological Studies* also contends, "We could hardly maintain that theological interest among Catholics today is focused upon the problem of the inspiration of the Scriptures. To be honest, we must admit that the average Catholic exegete, while not denying or questioning the inspiration of the Bible, simply leaves it aside in his exegetical work; he seems unable to make it relevant to his own labors." (Moller, 2013)

As we can see, theologians themselves admit to the vacancy of just what believe in and defend. It has been that way since

Copernicus and Galileo disproved Church notions inspiring the scientific revolution. Notions held by the Church 400 years ago of the sun revolving around the earth due to the book of Joshua's indication of a geocentric model. Such discoveries led to the scientific revolution and the thinking of the time, explained by Encyclopedia Britannica: "It may not be too much to say that science had replaced Christianity as the focal point of European civilization." (Brush, 2019)

Dr. Richard Gerber notes in *Total Health* the reasoning behind the switch in the paradigm of a worldview from a religious viewpoint to a scientific one when he noted, "Divine explanations for the nature of health and illness were no longer deemed necessary." (Gerber, 1999) Hawking and Leonard Mludinow now share the sentiment that there was no need for a god regarding questions of reality and the universe in their book, *The Grand Design*: "It is possible to answer these questions purely within the realm of science, and without invoking any divine beings." (Hawking, 2010)

The questions as to what actually encompasses Christianity continues to other notions. Even the first two hundred years after Christ, the holy spirit was incomplete in definition. (Clint Tibbs admits in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, "there was no clear statement of the theology of the Holy Spirit."). (Tibbs, 2008) The concept of angels, beginning in Greco-Roman times, also has seen the spread of its meaning. In his *Angels: A History*, David Albert Jones gives a fairly accurate description of what many religious today would perceive angels as. "We all know what they look like. They have wings and halos. They appear in children's nativity plays. They wear long white robes, apart from cherubs, who are like naked fat little

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children. They live in heaven on clouds but come to earth to guard or guide.” (Jones, 2010)

The Bible’s description of Heaven (with two trees on each side of a main road made of gold) along with its indications of what hell looks like are just as ridiculous, both subjects having their own evolution. That’s why the Holy Roman Church asserted that children not yet baptized do not go to limbo over 1500 years after Augustine asserted that the unbaptized child is damned to hell. This vacancy is the reason why Roman teacher Justin and other Christian teachers were being accused of “kisses of peace” with women, and cannibalism in a “body and blood” of Christ ritual in the beginning stages of the religion.

Western Philosophy

The reason why all this happens is because there is only so much that can be gathered from the limited scriptures. Philosophically, there is not a lot to work with, and according to *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “the first thing that should be said about Christian belief is that it does not constitute a philosophy. That is to say, it is not a metaphysical system...” (Edwards, 1972) Theologians will say they are philosophers, and have a right to speak on philosophy, but theology is religious philosophy, and there are differences between theology and philosophy, namely logic. Epicurus talked about happiness that Jesus didn’t mention. Lucretius talked about the nature of the mind, Aristotle talked about political philosophy, they all did this before Jesus.

Specifically with Aristotle, he wrote about, according to *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “logic, metaphysics and philosophy of mind, through ethics, political theory, aesthetics and rhetoric, and into such primarily non-philosophical fields as empirical biology, where he excelled at detailed plant and animal observation and description.” (Shields, 2008)

Aristotle’s ideas would have a giant impact on the Renaissance era intellectuals. (Allain, 2018) One would think that the philosophy and teachings of Jesus would be as deep or as influential as what logic would be to the sciences. Although Aristotle’s views on certain subjects like slavery were ridiculous, there is a lot that he got right. He opened the door to a lot of important questions that religion just doesn’t do. While Aristotle wrote of subjects like political theory (favoring equality) religion doesn’t even bring awareness of stuff like economics. Not exactly a study of slavery in any critical aspect, it doesn’t question the economic model of the time or socioeconomics at all. With verses like 1 Peter 2:18-25 “Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh” and Matthew 21 “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s,” it is easy to see why the Bible is largely left alone.

Religion is centered on faith and dogma, but philosophy denies dogma and befriends speculation instead of faith. (2013) This is pretty important, as the limitations in religion are the reason why psychology professor Jefferson Fish asserted, “Knowledge of what the world is actually like better equips one to make moral judgments than do faith and dogma.” (Fish, 2010) It is the speculation, the inquiry that leads to a more equipped human. Faith and dogma will not get one there.

Eastern Philosophy

Another universally recognized section of philosophy the Bible seems to ignore is Eastern philosophy, as Siddhartha Guatama was coming up with notions regarding the nature of happiness and the nature of suffering 500 years before Jesus as was Lao Tsu’s Tao Te Ching, or way of virtue. They discuss how to be virtuous that the Bible mentions in one-liners. Since such Eastern notions are so popular in modern times, doesn’t this warrant that such notions are worthy of being included in our daily lives?

These Eastern philosophies discuss another form of happiness not of the hedonic kind and not found in the Bible or Koran, books which don’t necessarily encourage obsession with the worldly, but the holy books certainly do not discuss any deeper sense of reality or perceptive viewpoint, they do not address eudaimonia, or transcendence. They do not discuss beyonding oneself even though the Koran hundreds of years after Jesus has the same locality and hedonism as the New Testament.

For a start, spirituality has been described as distinct or separate from religion multiple times (Ehrlich, Van Der Veer, 2009) and USC Keck School of Medicine as well as University of Maryland Medical agree that spirituality is not religion. (Ehrlich, 2011) A vacancy in religious texts shows that this is the case. Where in the Bible is there something like Buddhism addressing happiness, studying its nature, revealing a deeper meaning that involves a sense of purpose and contributing to the greater whole? Where is there something like what was discovered in multiple psychological studies regarding wealth not bringing happiness? (Lyubomirsky, 2010) (Stark, et al. 1975)

Regarding hedonism specifically, Shirley Wang’s report on the studies of researchers for the Wall Street Journal regarding happiness and its effects includes her assertion, “The pleasure that comes with, say, a good meal, an entertaining movie or an important win for one’s sports team—a feeling called ‘hedonic well-being’—tends to be short-term and fleeting. Raising children, volunteering or going to medical school may be less pleasurable day to day. But these pursuits give a sense of fulfillment, of being the best one can be, particularly in the long run.” (Wang, 2011)

These reports aren’t coming out of religious study because there is nothing to study. The vacancy allows for the absence of dissecting the mind, unlike Buddhism which, according to American Scientist editor Michael Spzir has identified tens of thousands of what he calls mental afflictions and how to overcome them. (Spzir, n.d.) This is not coming out of theology. Reports like these have somehow escaped theism. This is because Eastern philosophy demands work to be done spiritually (Morgan, 2014) with actual concrete tasks like detaching oneself from what is perceived to be suffering.

An example of such detachment is Buddhism’s path to nirvana, encompassing eight aspects to constantly practice including right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, all regarding four noble truths dealing with suffering and detaching from the worldly. Seen as an idol by Christians, the religion discourages notions from the Buddha.

Instead of spirituality, the Bible focuses on shallow hedonism, with subtle mentions of wealth. The hedonism, materialism

and worldly mindsets of Christians are easy to point out as a result of this spiritual vacancy in scripture. Ego based on what others think, desire of luxury, financial security, lack of awareness and pride are rampant in a culture that never focused on properly addressing such issues, all the time unaware that the worldly is temporary, illusory, non-transcendent and not meaningful. This lack of awareness from not asking the deeper questions has its consequences, as we will later see.

Regarding the limited worldly viewpoint, a few examples of Biblical analogies to wealth and its relation to joy or empowerment includes Revelation 21:15 where an angel measures heaven with a gold rod, or in Revelation 21:21 where heaven's gates are made of pearls, and its "street" is gold.... Psalm 9:18 reads, "For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever." Psalm 37:21 states, "The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth." Proverbs 27:24-27 reads, "For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation? After the hay is harvested, the new crop appears, and the mountain grasses are gathered in, your sheep will provide wool for clothing, and your goats will be sold for the price of a field. And you will have enough goats' milk for you, your family, and your servants."

2 Corinthians 9:8: And God will generously provide all you need. Jeremiah 29:11 reads, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Psalms 35:27 reads, "Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favour my righteous cause; and let them say continually, 'Let the Lord be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant'." Proverbs 10:22 reads, "The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it."

Isaiah 45:2-3 reads, "I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel." Deuteronomy 8:18 asserts, "And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day." Luke 6:38 reads, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

Psalm 84:10-12: "A single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else! I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God than live the good life in the homes of the wicked. For the Lord God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. The Lord will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right. O Lord of Heaven's armies, what joy for those who trust in you." 2 Corinthians 9:6-8: "Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. 'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.' And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others."

Proverbs 22:7: "Just as the rich rule the poor, so the borrower is servant to the lender." Proverbs 13:22: "Good people leave an inheritance to their grandchildren, but the sinner's wealth passes to the godly." Proverbs 21:20: "The wise have wealth and luxury, but fools spend whatever they get." Proverbs 3:9-10: "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce. Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine." Proverbs 10:22: "The blessing of the Lord makes a person rich, and he adds no sorrow with it."

Wouldn't such painfully local verses call for apologists thousands of years later? Even the New Testament briefly only mentions leaving the "treasures of this world" for something else. Although Jesus instructed one person to give away all his wealth, he did not go into detail of why, what would have been gained, and the transcendence that would occur if focused on detachment from the worldly. The Koran does the same thing. It has Allah wanting people to not seek what is worldly yet does not add anything beyond a one-liner of Allah being loving or Allah being capable of something. It doesn't give what any Buddhist would know regarding the nature of the mind, the nature of reality, the nature of inner suffering, how to rid oneself of ignorance. There are no guided steps, no way like in Lau Tsu's way of integrity. It's almost as if they're designed to not encourage critical thought and instead encouraging leaving it all to a deity.

John Torpey explains the relationship between religion and economics in the periodical Social Research, "One does not engage in religious practice without some set of beliefs in a higher power or powers capable of bestowing sought-after rewards, even if one may also be doing other things—such as displaying wealth and prosperity—at the same time. Otherwise, why call them 'religious' at all?" (Torpey, 2010) Professor of religion Carol Zalesky also noted of this resource-religion relationship, "In their classical forms, all great religions have considered it perfectly fine to pray for goods". (Szegedy-Maszak, Marianne, 2004) One cannot blame the practitioner. Doesn't Jesus mention money more than any other subject in the New Testament? Didn't he speak on the subject in 11 out of 39 parables?

Let's say the biblical authors meant something else with the mentioning of wealth. To assume that most of the individuals not educated would perceive such passages as anything other than pursuit of hedonistic desires is either a failure on the part of authorship, or a good strategy if one wanted to control the religious masses with trivial distractions. Also, if the biblical authors meant something else with a hedonistic mindset, this same mindset is encouraged every Sunday by preachers, especially ones like Joseph Prince and Joel Osteen, making it difficult to imagine the authors of the Bible meant anything other than such a mindset.

CONCLUSION

The unfortunate thing about this is that the religious person is stuck in a limited viewpoint due to the strict boundaries of their religion. Not only is the Buddha is seen as a false idol, meditation is out also due to its nature that lies outside of Christian or Islamic knowledge. One is just stuck to just what the Bible asserts and encourages. So, one might as well forget about critical thinking in this regard, and is exactly what an authority figure like Rome would want which gives credence

to a number of scholars who think Christianity was created for control.

A metanalysis on 63 studies measuring religion and intelligence concluded that religion has “a negative correlation with intelligence.” Another metanalysis was done on over 80 more studies had the same conclusion. The reasons for this include not being open-minded and trusting intuition over facts. (Chamorro, 2013) (Zuckerman, et al. 2019) According to Nigel Barber PhD, “Atheists are probably more intelligent than religious people because they benefit from many social conditions that happen to be correlated with loss of religious belief. When one looks at this phenomenon from the point of view of comparisons between countries, it is not hard to figure out possible reasons that more intelligent countries have more atheists as Richard Lynn (2009) reported.”

Barber continued, “Highly religious countries (Barber, 2012): Are poorer. They are less urbanized. Have lower levels of education. They have less exposure to electronic media that increase intelligence (Barber, 2006), experience a heavier load of infectious diseases that impair brain function, suffer more from low birth weights, have worse child nutrition [and] do a poor job of controlling environmental pollutants such as lead that reduce IQ.” (Barber, 2010)

Without philosophical questions, the Bible is a book full of notions left behind by many, but the price is paid for the dogmatism encouraged throughout the centuries: Scientists now also know religiosity is related to lower IQ test scores (England, 2018) as well as lack of open mindedness to notions outside of intuition. (Young, 2018) One can also count on religion being related to lower intelligence later in life. (Ritchie, et al., 2014) This is why individuals often replace religious ideas when one does not work for them according to religious author Karen Armstrong, (Armstrong, 2011) and it is why people in most developed countries turn away from religion. It is also why a Gallop poll revealed 77 percent of Americans believe that faith has lost its influence, and why most Americans own, but don't read a Bible. (Gibson, 2000) It is why Northwestern University's Daniel Abrams and other researchers published a study that contended religion might go extinct in different nine countries. (Palmer, 2011)

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