

The Bible & Religion

Jews, Christians and Moslems base their religion in the same book. Yet, the faith and practice is very different for each. Half of the world today uses the Bible to define and support their faith. Western civilization is the history of conflict between these three religions.

Today's world is on the brink of destruction simply because one book has so many fans with different faiths and religions. We cannot expect peace on earth unless we can resolve the conflicts produced by Bible believers.

You would tend to think the conflict would be between Bible believers and unbelievers; but the world is bleeding to death over internal Biblical affairs. The Bible-based religions do have conflict with outsiders, but they tend to be more political than religious; therefore, subject to peaceful solutions.

The religions of the Bible, however, are very divisive and without any prospects of peace.

Why is it impossible to unite Bible believers in one purpose for the common good? It seems the Bible has been a source of contention from its beginning, and the more press it gets, the more conflict and warfare it produces.

Can we really fault the Bible for all the problems that it causes? Some believe we can, therefore they advocate retiring it to antiquity and finding other sources for faith and practice in today's worlds. But can this actually be accomplished? Is this the best way to solve the Biblical problem?

I think it is safe to say that if we could remove all the religious superstitions in our world and replace them with practical philosophy, we would have peace, plenty and prosperity. Mankind, however, is inherently religious, and I don't think it's possible to cure this unless we could locate and remove the religious gene from man's nature.

Notice: I did not say that man's evil nature (wine, women, etc.) is the problem. Rather, it's his religious nature. Religion is the cause for most of the suffering and death in the world because it is the source of warfare. Empty stomachs rarely cause armies to march.

Man is nature's highest and most complex creature. His brain and body give him capabilities beyond any and all of nature's creatures.

Faith is what makes man a creature capable of life based on processing knowledge instead of instinct.

The same thing that makes him a man is what gives him the capacity for religion. He can use his imagination to create a God as well as a Santa Clause or Superman.

He can worship anything he chooses, anyway he chooses, and do anything that he is capable of.

I personally believe that we could make a case against all religion as problematic for human life, but I don't think that the Bible can be blamed, even though it is the source. You can't fault a source for all the many indifferent uses and abuses of it.

We cannot blame Abraham, Moses, and Jesus for all the bloodshed in their name.

We can't blame the Bible for all the religion and superstition in the western world. We don't hold a man responsible for what he said if he is misquoted, nor do we blame the manufacturer when the product is misused.

How can man blame God and nature for all the sorrow and suffering from his own misuse? How can we fault God for what He says if we misquote Him?

We mortals should not blame Mother Nature when we suffer from the consequences of life. We should learn what we can from nature and how to obtain the good and avoid the evil.

The essence of religion is to control nature and serve human needs in earthly life; but science can also teach us how to control nature for benefits in earthly life. Religion becomes a master directing lives in opposition, while science remains a faithful, dependable servant, pointing everyone in the same direction. Religious creeds ask us to believe differently about the laws of God while scientific theories ask us to believe the same about the laws of Nature.

Religion is also necessary for life after death when the body dies and nature ceases to be the mother of life.

This is why religion must be (supernatural) able to control nature or else it would serve no purpose in flesh life. It must also be spiritual and provide hope for living again after natural life.

Since nothing spiritual is subject to empirical study, as with Mother Nature, we must use our imagination in the abstract, as with math. Obviously, this opens the door to speculation and superstition in spiritual things.

The Bible is used today to support and justify hundreds of different religions, each with hundreds of different faiths, resulting in life and lifestyles so different and divisive as to keep the world in warfare continually.

How can one book be responsible for so much bloodshed through past millenniums and keep the entire world on the brink of destruction?

Part of the answer rests on the fact that it was not always one book. A Bible is a library of many books. Sometimes an additional new book may help to

understand an old book. People may visit a library and not know how to study any of the books.

The Bible, a Religious Source (Judaism)

Let's take a chrono-historical journey through the library looking at man and religion, not God and theology. The Bible begins with Moses and the children of Israel about 3,500 years ago in North Africa.

The twelve tribes of Jacob were already a very religious people before Moses brought them into the Sinai desert and gave them religious laws for observance in the Land of their Fathers - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The people had suffered much under bondage in Egypt, but very little death and bloodshed. Then under Moses and the New Religion, death would reign as never before. There would be wars and rumors of wars. Thousands would die from within and without as Moses ruled the people for 40 years in the desert.

The religion of Moses gave the people immunity from the hazards of desert life, and even gave them power over nature for all their needs. Joshua brought Israel into their inheritance, often using nature in supernatural ways to conquer and occupy the land.

The Diaspora began in 721 and 587 B.C.E. There was very little peace during all those many years. There were tribal wars between the descendants of Jacob and civil wars when the Kingdom divided. There was continued terrorist activity from all the displaced nations. If you were looking for a peaceful religion, you would not consider Moses' religion.

The Moses religion continued among the captives of Judah in Babylon. However, it had to be adapted for life outside the land and without the throne of David.

The captives of the tribe of Judah became known as Jews. Some returned to restore worship in 515 B.C.E., giving the Moses religion the name Judaism. This religion continued in Judea until 70 A.C.E. when the Priesthood was destroyed by the Romans. It later revived to become Rabbinical Judaism, which survives today.

Needless to say, we still do not see a religion compatible with peace, plenty, or prosperity. The Greeks conquered Judea in 325 B.C.E. and the Romans in 63 B.C.E., thus proving that the God of the Jews could not save them.

It seems that the more zealous the Jews are in Judaism, the more sorrow, suffering and death they experience. Why would anyone choose Judaism for a religion? Yet they multiplied under the Greeks more from

conversion than birth.

The Scriptures of the Jews were canonized into a Hebrew Bible and translated into Greek in 250 B.C.E. This was the Jewish Bible in the days of Jesus. However, when first translated, it only included Moses; then other books were added.

The reader should note that we are able to speak of some facts and dates by using other historical sources and that the writers included history from the literature even though it may not have physical historical confirmation such as Moses and the parting of the Red sea.

Christianity Begins

This brings us to the religion sponsored by Jesus in 33 A.C.E. that is called Christianity, because Jesus, a Jew, claimed to be the long expected Messiah who now was called Christ in the Greek Bible.

The hope of the Jews under Roman tribute was peace and prosperity, which they associated with the reign of Messiah. This is why there was such good news in Jesus and why there was much disappointment when He died, coming short of restoring David's throne in Jerusalem.

There were many different Jews who made messianic claims in the first century. Some gained several hundred followers but were put down by the Romans as soon as they became a threat. Jesus was very different from other "Christs". He was a teacher, not a soldier. He called disciples to learn about his kingdom so they could be His apostles when He died.

Other Christs drew attention and opposition from the Romans, but Jesus provoked opposition from the rulers of the Jews who had the Oracles of God, and were responsible for the Jewish religion.

Jesus' claim to be The Christ was not His undoing; rather it was His challenge to the religious rulers of Judaism. Other Christs were political, leaving the rulers in charge of religion. But Jesus made it clear that they had no place in His Kingdom.

Jesus was the most unique Jew to ever appear in the history of the Jewish Bible as a Christ. He did not fit the role of the Christ, the anointed prophet, priest, or King. He should have been a man like Moses or David, but He was the very opposite.

The only thing which attracted attention to Him was His signs and wonders that proved He was of God, but some believed He got His power from Satan.

He appeared upon the scene at the wrong time but that doesn't matter. He would have been rejected

anyway. You cannot call the chief rulers of religion or politics thieves, hypocrites, and snakes without provoking them to anger and opposition. This, and this alone, was His undoing.

The Roman occupation had revived hope for a Christ among some, while others had long abandoned any hope of salvation. This cynicism increased with every false Christ, leaving many to conclude that military overthrow of the Romans was their only hope.

They still trusted in Messianic salvation, but they believed that they must start the conflict and then God would (save them) aid them in completion.

Revolution did occur in 66 A.C.E., but it did not succeed as it did against the Greeks in the Maccabean insurrection of the third century, B.C.E.

The death of Jesus, the Jewish Christ, was a disappointment to all His followers, just as death was to all the followers of false Christs. When other Christs died, so did the movement; but something very different happened in the case of Jesus, making it possible for His followers to continue His Messianic Movement.

About 120 of Jesus' disciples claimed that he had risen from the grave. They showed up at the Jewish feast of Pentecost 50 days later and persuaded 3,000 Jews to follow them, even though they never had seen the Risen Jesus for proof that He was alive.

This was a strange and mysterious change from the death of other Jewish Christs. Death was the litmus test for all Messianic claims because it prevented or cut short any objectives, leaving the followers to scatter and the movement to end.

Death for Jesus did the same to His (Gospel) (Messianic) movement, but news of His resurrection revived the hope for His followers, who continued the movement, although they had never understood it or agreed with Jesus about it. These Jews, disappointed in their Master, were revived to believe again. They were very successful to revive faith in many and to call some to faith who never heard of John the Baptist or Jesus the Rabbi.

The Messianic movement continued to multiply in spite of Jewish opposition. Some of the chief rulers insisted that the following had hidden the dead body to revive faith and continue the movement. Some claimed that the followers were ignorant and unlearned Apostles deceiving the people to follow a false prophet (Messiah).

Those Jews who believed in Jesus were called The Sect of the Nazarene. They were all Kosher Jews keeping the faith of their Fathers with much zeal. Several years after Pentecost, non-Jews began to believe their message

about Jesus but were not allowed into this Jewish community.

This is the origin of a new lifestyle for those joining, as well as a new name for the movement.

This is where Jesus' believers were first called Christians. This is where Christianity departed from Judaism to become a separate and distinct religion of its own. This is where Christianity became an uncircumcised religion separate from Judaism.

The movement had begun at Pentecost, where it included the Children of Israel from every tribe, not just Judah Jews. They went into all the world (Diaspora) making disciples from those in Judaism. These disciples in no way changed their religion or their faith and lifestyle.

However, when non-Jews joined them they had to forsake their religion and lifestyle, but could not be circumcised and worship with the Sect of The Nazarene. This is where Christianity left Judaism, and disciples were no longer to be circumcised and live the religious life of the Jews.

This is where Judaism lost its authority over Jesus' disciples. There could be no death warrants from Temple authorities for Gentiles. The religious killing and persecution would subside as Judaism faded out and Christianity went to the Gentiles.

The rulers of the Jews only had religious authority over the Jews' religion. Therefore, they had no power at all over the uncircumcised, even though they joined the Messianic movement. It all depends on how we define religion. But in any case, the Pentecostal disciples did not change religion. The pagan Christians did change religions, but they did not convert to Judaism with the Disciples of Jesus. They embraced and practiced a new concept for Christianity, taught to them by the Apostle Paul.

Three hundred years later Christianity merged with the Roman Empire to become a state religion where Judaism and all other religions were illegal. This is the beginning of politics in the hand of Christians and the shedding of blood with carnal weapons by the followers of Jesus. This is a first, but not the last.

Civil war followed between Eastern Greek Christianity and Western Latin Christianity. Later Muslims would join the bloodshed, but Christians have continued to kill Christians even until modern times (the Irish Liberation Army).

During the Middle Ages only one church was responsible for the Christian religion, and most warfare was against other religions, as with the Crusades. But the

Reformation put Christian killing Christians again, as with the Spanish Armada. Obviously it is the politics that makes Christianity a war machine, because Christians never resisted persecution or fought anybody during the 300 years prior to Imperial Christianity.

The internal conflict is theological, as seen when heretics die at the stake, but politics brings on external conflict, with carnal soldiers and carnal weapons to determine who rules in the Kingdoms of men.

A Backward Glance

This brief chronology allows us a historical view of the Biblical religions of Judaism and Christianity. Islam does not come in during Bible days, and therefore, it is more difficult for them to establish their religion within the Bible.

Obviously, Hebrews have an advantage because they are the authors of the Old Testament Bible, which concerns their religion. Hebrew descendants also wrote the New Testament, which concerns the Christian religion.

New Testament literature first began with Paul, the last of the Apostles, when he wrote the first epistle to a Christian church.

After Paul's death, four Gospel histories were written on the life and times of Jesus before Christianity began. This historical literature was written some 80 years after the things which it talks about, while the Epistles were written to current people concerning current questions and events.

We have no creeds for the Christian Religion until 323 A.C.E., and then some 25 years later a Christian Bible was canonized from the apostolic literature of the first century. The Gospels were placed first, and became the Christian story beginning with Jesus the Christ.

This literature allows us to see Jesus born in flesh and blood at Bethlehem, become a teacher of Judaism, make Christian claims (Messianic), die on the cross in rejection, be born again from the dead on Resurrection Day, send a message to the Hebrew people by His Hebrew Apostles, who would later be called Christianity.

All New Testament literature was written in the first century of the Christian era by Hebrew Jews and was textually connected to the Hebrew Bible, seeking to identify Jesus as the Christ who fulfilled all the Messianic text.

In 354 A.C.E., the Empirical church succeeded in giving Christianity a Bible. This is the origin of our Christian Bible today. They took the Jewish Bible, and then added the Christian faith with its Christian literature.

Jerome later translated this Bible into Latin. Then the Roman world had a Bible for its Christian religion.

Jews and Christians do not get their religion from the same literature. Christians insist that Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism, while Jews emphatically deny it. Since Jews do not believe that Jesus is the Christ, they still expect Him to return and fulfill the Messianic hope for Israel.

Two thousand years of Judaism and Christianity have sponsored much suffering and many wars, along with some strange concepts from the Bible; but if we blame The Bible, we will never discover where these doctrines really come from.

The Bible and Theology

There are Jews and Christians today who see no significant difference in Judaism and Christianity. They see no need to differentiate between the Jewish Bible and the Christian addition. Some Christians, trying to be tolerant, seek a common ground with other religions, creating a new religious faith for Christianity which has no Biblical basis.

Recently I heard an interview of a Jew and a Christian who live and travel together to give their religious testimony. They call themselves the "God Squad". They receive honor and praise and agreement from Jews and Christians alike. They merge the two religions into compatibility using only their own opinions- not of the Bible.

They have no Biblical textual literary evidence for the faith that they present; but they are not alone.

Judaism began as a book religion insisting on literature support for the faith. Likewise, Christianity began the same way, using the same literature to support their faith in Jesus.

The only way for Jews and Christians to have the same faith is for the Jew to agree with Christians that Jesus is The Christ, or for Christians to agree with Jews that He is not.

The only way that they can practice the same Religion is for the Jew to become a Christian and deny all the benefits of His circumcision, living as do the Gentile Christians, or for the Christian to be circumcised and live Kosher, as do the Jews. We can find two religions in the Bible. But we cannot find two Gods. Rabbinical Judaism today is grounded in the Torah where there is no mention of Rabbis or synagogues. Christianity today is grounded in Jesus, the Rabbi, and the testimony of His Apostles,

where there is no mention of ruling over the Kingdoms of this world.

To study the Bible for religions, we can find at least two - one in Moses and one in Jesus. But how do we account for all the conflict in religions, and why would anyone want to join and participate in either?

In studying the Bible for theology, we can only find one God, although we find two covenants. Theology is the study of God, not religion. The Bible allows us to study God long before we study Moses and Jesus and religion.

Just as anthropology and zoology are the study of man and animals, theology is the study of God. How could one study man unless there is a man to study? How could one study animals unless he has access to animals? How can anyone study God unless there is a God to study and there is access to Him? The 66 books of the Bible provide mankind with its richest source for divine study. How can the doctors of divinity today find so many faiths and religions in the same source?

Personal Conclusions

I have asked far more questions than religion's history is able to answer. On that basis, please allow me to share a few insights from my theology study.

Obviously, a study of God in the Hindu religion would be very complex and difficult, since that religion has over 300,000,000 gods.

To study polytheism, as it was among the Greeks and the Romans in Bible days, would also be limited. Some had no literature to study, and the literature that existed was fantasy and legend.

The God of the Bible provides us with His testimony of Himself and with much interaction with mankind. I can find only one God in the Bible: the Creator God in the beginning, the God of Abraham, Moses, David, etc... and the God and Father of Jesus the Christ.

Note: many who believe in God do not believe that He is Jesus' Father - but I am quoting from the Christian literature based on this premise.

Islam began some 600 years after Christianity. They claim the God of the Bible, but they call Him Allah. To study about Allah, I would have to study the Koran - the book of that religion. I understand that it is mostly about the religion, and how to live it, rather than a literary revelation of the nature and person of Allah. All I know is a few quoted verses of the Koran and the character reputation of Allah from the teachings of his devotees.

From what I know of Allah from Muslims, he is not the God of the Bible. But, neither do I hear Jews or Christians give a Biblical testimony of God from their Bible.

The Bible claims to be a true witness for the one and only God. If there exists other Gods, you must find them elsewhere.

I have studied the God of the Bible in the literature, where He is revealed, for over 50 years. I believe the record He gives of Himself that begins in Genesis and ends in Revelation. The person of God that I find, His nature, His character, and His purposes and promises are rarely revealed by His devotees.

When I attend a funeral and hear the eulogy of a person I knew well, I can compare the characterization of that person with my own knowledge of him or her. Often the deceased is not the one I thought I knew; but those present, who do not know the history of the deceased, can only believe what they hear.

This is also true for God (who is not dead) whose testimony rests upon the words of survivors. Christians should personally know the God they call Father, as well as His Son, whom they call Savior.

According to the Epistles written specifically to Christians, Jesus is the author of Christianity. This religion is available to anyone and everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, and makes no requirement relating to the outer man of the flesh, such as water baptism and carnal circumcision; rather, the Spirit Baptism and Spiritual Circumcision that relates to the inner man of the heart.

How can such a religion shed so much blood in the name of a Savior who shed His blood for them?

I can only suggest that the charismatic rule and leadership of the Spirit of God over His Spiritual Kingdom for 300 years ended when the church took responsibility for ruling over the kingdoms of men. Such was never in their calling or commission.

We still see God in the lives of anyone who will walk in His love and light; but we see the church lose her light, depart from her purpose, and plunge the world into the Dark Ages.

We can't blame God or the Bible; we can only blame the religion of those who walk in darkness.

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