

Religion_E

✘ Thoughts about religion.

by Roland Fakler© ✘

It may be consoling to believe in a “dear” god who worries about us and listens to us in our needs, and I do not want to deprive anybody of this belief. Why should we not all be allowed to believe what makes us happy? If the religions would have only positive effects, I would not at all ask the question of whether they are true or not. A religion that has positive effects is good; a religion that has negative effects is bad. For my sake, everyone may believe what he wants, if he causes no harm with it. One ought not to give serious thought to nonsense, however. If people believe in goblins, then they may live happily with it. However, for myself, I must say that I cannot believe such nonsense. For all I care, somebody may believe that the rain falls if he dances around a tree ten times, but he may not expect that I will dance with him. Religious people do not want the truth, but religious emotion. The majority of the people do not want knowledge but religious ecstasy and they achieve this by denying scientific facts and believing in supernatural manifestations.

Religion – and I am dealing here, especially with the Catholic-Christian religion – has not had only positive effects, but caused much harm. Therefore, I have to say what I

think, what I know about the beginning and development of life on this planet, and what conclusions I am drawing from it. It is dangerous to believe in a god, who perhaps exists only as a figment of our imagination. Why should people believe what they cannot understand and verify? Believing means not knowing, but, instead, thinking that something is true because former generations thought it was. Believing means to know nothing, but to suppose, to wish, to hope that there is a god, albeit unprovable. Blindly obeying an invisible ghost is no virtue but a sign of ignorance. One gets a completely wrong relationship to cause and effect by it. With prayers, one might affect the own psyche, but one does not influence world events. It is a weakness rather than a virtue to believe something unintelligible. A person who believes something because others believe it or because it has been drummed into his head (mostly by people who are unable to doubt anything, or because they are afraid of hell or the devil) is a weak person. I consider it a dubious thing if children are indoctrinated with unreasonable and untrue things with political authority. It is no virtue to believe in something because one is afraid to be shunned by the community. One must be strong to accept reality; the majority of the people, however, are weak.

When I listen to the daily news and consider human history, I cannot conclude that a wise god has created this world. Even less, can I believe that he rules our world? I think it

is much more likely that this world is created by an apathetic will that follows eternal laws beyond good and evil under the influence of coincidence and probability, and that humankind struggles, abandoned by all gods, as best as it can. What am I to think of a god who allows his wayward creatures to make war, to torture, to kill in his name? Giving a wayward creature free will is irresponsible. The history of the Christian religion is not a history of salvation but a history of evil. Not the Holy Ghost guides this history but human avarice and greed for power. It appears that, rather than ruling over the affairs of the world, god restricts himself and merely wraps himself in miracles. Everybody can use this god for his purpose. There are as many gods as there are believers because god has not created humankind but humankind has created their gods. What all these gods think one can read in the books of the believers. If nobody believes in a god anymore then that god no longer exists. That is what happened to Zeus and many other ancient gods and goddesses.

The need of humans for religion is so strong that they tend to surrender common sense rather than their religion. I interpret this need for orientation, worship and comfort of humanity, in a world that is not such as one might wish it to be, on the one hand with the situation of man on this planet, and on the other hand with the nature of the human brain which is oriented towards the outside, searching for support and orientation. Man

needed gods to explain the unexplainable, the genesis of the world, nature, illness, good and evil. Gods are useful for help when it is in need, during illness, and when facing overpowering enemies (God with us, death to the enemy). Through prayers, sacrifices, and observance of commandments, one tries to appease them and attain control over what is otherwise beyond the power of human beings (illness, fate, enemies, and death).

The gods served the people as an explanation for the inexplicable, for the formation of the world, for natural events, for illness, luck and accident, good and evil. The gods are sense-givers for human beings, preservers of justice and order, and legislators (the Ten Commandments of Moses are said to have come from god / the Babylonian King Hammurabi wanted his people to believe that his laws came from the gods). One must obey their will blindly because no one escapes their court. The wages are eternal life and the penalty is eternal damnation.

Common belief makes a community. For many, this might still be the only reason they go to church. Life is easier within a circle of like-minded people. The ordinary human being does not look for truth and self-realization, as would an educated humanist. The mass of the people wants to lose itself in the community, in a religious fervour; it wants to pray, to believe, to worship.

Community: In every society, there should be

something like a "church", an organisation that supports the disadvantaged of the society, and forms a framework for meetings and rituals. There is a need for a community in which one can raise thoughts about a correct life and proper actions. Newborns must be greeted, marriages must be arranged and the dead must be given a dignified funeral. Human beings are social beings who desire a sense of community and common experiences. Who will replace the weakening churches in providing community cohesion? That will be the question of the coming millennium.

Evolution: The thinking human beings want to know. Therefore, he developed science and research. The scientific truth about our existence on this planet is not comforting; however, it is not so dreadful that one has to push it away. Evolution teaches us that life has not originated as a goal-oriented creation but is the result of a very long incredibly costly, prodigal game of trial and error, coincidence, adaptation and progression.

If a wise god had created life, there should not be all the wrong tracks in evolution. Why had the Neanderthal man been created for example? Only to be extinguished again? As thrust for the evolution, I suspect a vague power from below, no superior, wise spirit from above. Although I believe in evolution and with it in the development of the human being from other animal predecessors, and in his connection with the animals; however, I

endeavour to show how far humans can distance themselves from the animals through their cultural development. You will only be a pig if you are a pig.

It is difficult for people to realize that no god is interested in them because that means they will have to take their fate into their own hands. However, what happens if belief in the gods declines? Then human beings have to take responsibility for their actions, and the future of the planet. Then human beings become legislators, and the measure of all things; all responsibility rests with humanity.

If humanity does not create a just world, there will be none at all, because a god, whatever that means, will interfere as little as he did during the holocaust of the Jews.

The church has contributed much to the mental immaturity of the people because it asks for blind obedience towards an unrecognizable being, a "sacred" and infallible book, and (in the case of Roman Catholicism) an infallible pope. The church has a relationship with the truth similar to Leninism: Truth is what is of use to it and untruth is what harms its power. Therefore, one must distinguish between actual truths, church truths, and the truth of religious faith.

Due to the various sources of information available today, human beings can free themselves from the infantile pictures that

priests, storytellers, and even some teachers have instilled in them. After all, religions are to blame for the unreasonable course of world history. Instead of teaching people how they can build a common, peaceful world, religions educate them to become a mere cog in their machine, exhausting their energies in monotonously reciting prayers, and in blind obedience to senseless rules.

Worldwide, children are indoctrinated with different fairy tales, and when they disagree, they bash in each other's heads because everyone considers their fairy tale to be the only true one. I disagree with teaching little children a fear of the tortures of hell. I consider this irresponsible idiocy because I recall the fears that I had to suffer as a child. Since I no longer believe in the devil, I have never encountered him anymore. Religions tend to give human beings a foretaste of a real hell in this world, caused by their absurd rules, a hell that does not exist in the so-called "hereafter."

Faith separates people into believers and non-believers, and it leads to the view by that believers to treat non-believers or dissenters as second-class people or not as human at all. The moral judgement of some Christians is limited to: good is whoever prays much and bad is whoever thinks differently.

The intolerance towards dissenters has its origin in the Bible, where Elias shows us how to deal with "wrong-believers." He led

the priests of the god Baal down to the river and slaughtered them. A very "good" example in an "infallible" book that certainly invites much imitation. If people today would still take the Bible seriously, they would have to lead the atheists, the Buddhists and the Hindus down to the river and slaughter them. Then they might have the feeling of having committed an act that pleases god.

Irony: Should people be allowed to wander around freely with the wrong god in their heads? Or should they, following the example given by Elias, be led down to the river and slaughtered? After all, one must not have the wrong god; one has to have the right one who is, of course, always easily recognizable by the "true believer." All gods are fantasies, only yours is not; he is the only true one!

Before the departure of the Jews from Egypt, god killed the firstborns of the Egyptians. What is the Bible trying to tell us here? That it can be a mortal mistake to be born as a son of the wrong parents in the wrong nation – even if one is innocent. Only human beings can invent a god who finds it necessary to kill innocent little children. At any rate, this cannot be my god. Believing means not knowing and not wanting to think for oneself. As long as people hold, the Bible (particularly the Old Testament) for an exemplary and infallible book there cannot be a rational world. In several hundred passages the godless are

insulted, as they were equal with the unjust, the lustful and damned. The Old Testament is quite suitable to pass on prejudices and patterns of behaviour from the Bronze Age to future generations (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth/slaughtering of dissidents / God is killing the children of the enemy / Abraham practices blind obedience on command from above and is even ready to kill his own son/extermination of whole cities through a "loving" god). Not judging the contents, the Bible is no masterpiece of literature. In many parts, it resembles the accountings of a bookkeeper.

It is dubious to think that a large majority of the people prefers to be guided by musty old texts, that are considered to be the truer and wiser the darker their origin and the more incomprehensible their content is. It is dangerous to consider any text infallible, but that is what infantile people wish to do: they want to have a book, which they can look up in every situation, and which they can read and say "Amen" – without thinking for themselves.

There is no hint in the Bible to tell me how I can develop a personality; yet, this is the main subject of any person's life. The Bible deals with people in a distant country, with a foreign culture, with stories, that have happened long, long ago. Therefore, I have no choice but to think for myself to master my life at this age and in my own country.

Christianity was the most intolerant

religion of all time. The problem begins unfortunately with Jesus, who sent all those to hell, who did not want to acknowledge him as the son of god. What would he likely have done to these "stubborn unbelievers," if he had real, earthly power?

Jesus: Even if one does not subscribe to the childish belief all the miracles, that Jesus is supposed to have worked, Jesus was, nevertheless, a charismatic personality. No other human with such a short lifespan managed to attract so many supporters. A great deal of this can however be attributed to the unchristian methods and lies of his followers who set out to Christianise the world. I do not believe that anybody is or will ever be a "son of god." It was in fashion about the year zero in history to pretend to be a son of god. (Augustus was adored as the son of the Apollo; Alexander the Great named himself the son of Zeus; the Japanese emperors pretend to be the sons of the sun-goddess...)

I believe that many people would have liked to be a "son of god" because it lies in the nature of strong people to want to be more than they appear. They want to enhance their authority that way. In addition, I can imagine that ordinary people tend to believe such unreasonable things because they wish to have a god they can worship. It is easier to worship the son of a god than a normal human being. If one considers that there have been people throughout history who had not only been the "son of god," but gods

themselves (the Pharos of ancient Egypt; some Roman emperors; the god-kings of the Orient), being a son of a god does not count for much. Everywhere where Buddha walked, lotus blossoms presumably have grown. It is a typical human trait to embellish the stature of an admired individual by attributing nonsensical but wondrous things to him. One can find it in every religion. There is hardly anything that goes beyond people's capacity to believe.

If I were a Christian I would, like Jesus, try to go into the hereafter as soon as possible instead of becoming established in this world. However, for me, there is only this world. Jesus was somebody and I am somebody else. Jesus is my friend, but he is not my master and ruler; for that, he was not great enough for me. I am not a camp follower but a self-motivated individual with a rational mind, acting accordingly.

Roman Catholic Christianity has as much in common with Jesus, as has a palace with a cottage. They call themselves Christians, but they are no Christians. They refer to Christ, but they make their morals. Their greatest concerns are about making a profit and collecting their pensions. They do not care that Jesus demanded just the opposite.

The Christians, who have lived the ideal of poverty, some protestant sects (Waldensians) and monks have been persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church and were annihilated. The most dreadful thing is, that the Christians did not learn anything from the torture-

death of Jesus but, to the contrary, they too tortured, persecuted, and murdered merited people (Jan Hus, Galileo, Giordano Bruno,...). Unfortunately, the religions which consider themselves the only true ones (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) caused many wars and misfortune through their dogmatism and intolerance. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are fundamentally based on philosophies that are just as intolerant toward the non-believers as are Nazism and communism.

The fundamentalists of these religions believe they have the right, or even the duty, to spread their only "true" religion in the name of their only true god, because it says so in the Bible and the Koran. Elias slaughters the priests of the Baal, and Mohammed wants to proselytize with fire and sword. These are fertile grounds for terror, violence and murder.

Religions today would still be as intolerant as they had been in the past, had they not lost power and influence. Ironically, Christians today behave more like Christians because enlightenment has made them more reasonable. They can no longer afford to harass dissidents. Tolerance had not come into this world by religion, but by people who showed common sense. Common sense tells us that people with different ideologies can live side by side only if they can tolerate differing views. Every reasonable human being realizes that living together in a modern society is not possible without

tolerance, but neither Jesus nor the Christians were tolerant. That remains a problem until today.

To be tolerant does not require giving up one's way of thinking, but only understanding that different people in different situations can think differently and achieve happiness in different ways. To believe that other religions adore the "wrong" god is as silly as to believe that others speak the "wrong" language because one cannot understand them.

There are many things we cannot know but only presume; however, everybody is entitled to believe what is best for his or her happiness. About what will happen to us after death we can only guess. That human beings have an immortal soul that exists independently from the body may be one of the oldest wishes of humankind. To me, this seems to be rather unlikely. Every creature is unique and body and soul are one. If the body dies, the spirit, consciousness, or soul will die too. The idea of reincarnation seems just as absurd to me. I believe that any living form is unique and only lives once.

1. My ego is the result of a unique genome which has never been and will never be in the same way again (let us forget about cloning for now).
2. My ego is the result of a unique historical process. That means I have been born at a certain time and in a

certain place. I have been formed by unique events. This ego cannot live on in another creature with other genes which has been brought up at a different time under different circumstances because this is no longer "I," but somebody else.

I personally believe that I am dead after death and this seems to me is not such a terrible condition that I must be afraid of it or have to repress the mere thought. I suppose that after death I will feel like before birth; i.e., I will have no feelings at all. This condition of non-being (nirvana), or a dreamless sleep – as I imagine death – seems to me a relatively pleasant condition when compared with some of the stresses and strains of living. Death will come early enough and will last forever, but we live only once for a relatively short period, and we ought to make the best of it. If life is worse than death, why shouldn't one be allowed to choose freely between both and choose the lesser evil? I appreciate having the freedom to decide when to die, and I have that choice.

The best method to defeat fundamental dogmatism is enlightenment. Enlightenment says that all religions are created by human beings, and not by a supernatural god. Human beings have created their gods after their own model because they wish to have gods and they created them, as they needed them. The god of the Jews helps the Jews, and the gods

of the Indians help the Indians.... Only that way can I explain the multiplicity of and differences between gods for myself. If there were only one true god, he would have to reveal himself only once to all humans to be recognized by them. I suppose that all gods, devils and ghosts in which people have ever believed have only existed in the imagination of the people, and there they have probably done more harm than good. I believe that there are neither gods nor devils, nor hell, neither witches, nor goblins, nor fairies in reality, but that these creatures have all been invented by the human imagination. I do not intend to abolish anything, but I intend to create a spiritual home, which consents to my common sense. If god has created my brain so that I cannot recognize him, who alone is to blame for that shortcoming?

If people stop believing in gods or the like, the world will not collapse but the lives of those who have garnered unearned powers, honour and wealth by it will be adversely affected, which is what they deserve. The founders of all religions were primarily concerned with attaining and exercising power over all societies for self-aggrandizement.

In the end, enlightenment allows people to deal with each other rationally. "Do unto others as you wish them to do unto you" is a principle that people will arrive at even without the intervention of a god if they want to be able to live side-by-side

peacefully.

The really “good religion” is one that manages to bring love and peace into the world without demanding that people sacrifice their rationality and common sense.

Summary : What is a good worldview?

- It should promote the qualities that are necessary for all people living together in this world: charity, readiness to help, tolerance, peacefulness, respect for life and environment and it should condemn the negative attitudes: hate, violence, destruction of life and environment.
- It should give people the strength to master their lives with all its difficulties and it should give them hope in hopeless situations.
- It should promote community and it should build a dignified framework for the stations of life: birth, marriage, death, festivities...
- It should not proclaim the absolute truth and it should not condemn dissenters.

Copyright © September 1999 Roland Fakler

Zählmarke 9 / ID3736000b24dc4652a5b8ee48f5d0ceeb / 11.01.2018
