

CAN A CASE BE MADE FOR CHRISTIAN RATIONALITY?

Keith Ward wrote *Is Religion Irrational?* As a Christian he says it is rational.

We should not make up our minds before considering the evidence but after it! Ward proves that his book is obfuscation for it totally ignores the need for evidence in support of the doctrines of his sect of Christianity.

Today's top atheists are accused of creating a blanket condemnation of religion. They are said to refuse to admit that there is a lot to be learned from religion for they categorise religion as irrational and they refuse to admit that some religions are not that bad and others are bad. They are said to have the tendency to misrepresent religious teaching to make it look silly.

Keith Ward, Christian theologian, says all that. But not all atheists go that far.

Christianity teaches that our reason has been distorted and warped since the fall of Adam and Eve which is why we are prone to sin and to refuse the happiness of a relationship with God. The fall need not have effected our reason. God then must have done a miracle to make sure that it would. CS Lewis said that we can't really know anything if our mental faculties and our reason are unreliable. Once you ditch reason you cannot use reason to argue that reason is or can be reliable! The Christians say that if our reason is caused by blind forces and a material process in the atheist Darwinian way then we cannot trust it. But we know by experience that we can. It doesn't matter how it was made or came to be - we can trust in it. Therefore it is irrational to say we need to believe in God in order to trust our reason. Christianity undermines reason. If atheist Darwinism undermines it too then it at least is not as bad. Go for the lesser evil.

Ward says that people pray and go to Church not as part of a scientific experiment but to worship God (10, 11, *Is Religion Irrational?*). Clearly then they should be testing their religious experience all the time to make sure its valid and not a delusion or that they are mistaking feeling for faith. So they would have to make sure they have the right disposition to worship God. Faith is a head job not a heart job. The wife can believe in her husband's integrity without feeling it. Ward has just let it slip that religionists are being irrational. Surely there is nothing wrong with worshipping God (assuming!) and treating him like an experiment?

On page 19 Ward states that it is accepted that it is wrong to experiment on people without their consent. Yet he believes in a God who uses even sinners in his plan against their will. God is all powerful. Even when we sin, he has let that happen (since he is all-powerful nothing can happen without his power allowing it, nothing can happen without his permission) and intends to bring good out of the sin. Is a man who accepts such a violation of our right to choose when it is God who does the violating, any better in his heart than a man who would do it himself? Would you trust his Christianity if it rose to power?

Atheists object to the notion that God comes first if there is a choice between doing his will and helping people. If you can do both you have to adore God. That doctrine is the first ingredient of extremism and intolerance. Christians will object that we have nothing to worry about because if we serve God and give him all our love we will look after his children. But that is not the point. They are saying that hypothetically people should be sacrificed for God. They harbour the evil under all the seeming virtue.

Ward, though a theologian, misrepresents faith in God in order to dodge atheist criticisms. For example on page 25 of his *Is Religion Irrational?* we encounter the surprising statement that we do not worship God to tell him we think how wonderful he is. Instead we worship him to become aware of eternity and the eternal mind of God. It seems he sees worship as an attempt to feel eternal and sense God and mentally become a bit more like the all-intelligent God. But that is not worship. Real worship is telling God how wonderful you think he is. What Ward offers is really people wanting the buzz of acting and thinking like God. How humble! Such puffing up leads to religious addiction and fanaticism. It is godless in the sense that it is using God to bolster up your own ego. It is not about God as such. Ward is trying to encourage believers to become godly for their own sakes not God's sake. He wants them to be selfish in a bad way. And if they become selfish like that then clearly they could cause a lot of trouble for all war and religious prejudice is based on egotism being fanned into flame.

Ward says on page 31 that belief in God makes a difference to life and maybe the biggest difference of all. Again he is lying. If God exists it is claimed that we cannot exist without his help and he loves us immensely. Thus we should find that it does more than make a difference. God is more important than that. It should make all the difference. Ward is afraid to say this because nearly all of us do not consider God to be that important. Even the pope does not live and eat and drink and breathe God all the time. If he did he would be praying instead of playing the piano.

And if God is perfect goodness then its incorrect to say that belief maybe makes the biggest difference. There is no maybe about it. To say that God alone matters is to suggest that those who don't worry about God much are in a grave state of delusion and they are disordered.

In social terms one religion may seem more okay and easygoing and helpful than another to the atheist . Ward does not mention that the reason many atheists see all religion as dangerous is because of the sinister implications that are present under the nice surface. The mad Muslim terrorist has the guts to show his religion's true colours. The Catholic nun has not.

Ward looks at Marx's take on the fact that religion tells people there is a god caring for them and there will be a heavenly paradise for them to enjoy forever. Marx thought this was all about manipulating the poor and the suffering to accept their lot so that they would not make any trouble (page 41). Ward says we need not necessarily think that. Indeed such manipulation can and does happen. Ward says religion and belief in God give us hope that all our efforts will not be in vain. For him the atheist believes in a short and ultimately purposeless life. The really good person will do good regardless of hoping that it will be in vain or not. This is a major Humanist perception. If Christianity opposes it then it deserves our opposition. The Humanist serving others believing that he has only one life and there is nothing but non-existence at death is making a bigger sacrifice than the Christian who is confident that he or she will live forever.

Ward says if God gave us goodness on a plate that would not be as good as the goodness we work for and battle evil for. He accidently refutes the Christian Heaven where all tears are wiped away. If it is true that goodness we develop is better than goodness we get on a plate then ideally we should have to work on it forever meaning Heaven should not be perfect ever. Also, it is good to reach a high level of goodness through overcoming evil. The Christian who thinks evil will not an issue anymore for him when he goes to Heaven cannot be as good a person as the one who would struggle against evil for all eternity. Thus the Christian Jesus and the saints are only insulted when the Churches say they are in Heaven!

If evil has a divine purpose as believers say, then perhaps we may never finally wipe it out. Perhaps we will just overcome problems to meet new problems for all eternity.

Ward says on page 61 that if you believe in God to make yourself happy that will fail. Such belief would not be real and would fade away. It would be like kids who do not believe in Santa but try to make themselves believe that they do in case there is a Santa and they get no presents. He is right that the belief would not be real or lasting. The reason for the belief is not reverence for truth or God but one's own emotional wellbeing. The Churches should teach Ward's principle more. It is because most people imagine they need to think there is a God to be happy that the belief is so prevalent and criticising it is thought to be what a sociopath would do.

Belief in God and goodness are said to be the same thing. If it is good to be heterosexual then God would be the perfect heterosexual if he could be meaning he cannot be a homosexual just like we cannot both be gay and straight. Thus to imagine God allowing gay sex or not taking it seriously as a grave sin would be really to have the wrong God.

Ward promotes Christianity - a manmade faith that masquerades as divine. He as good as admits it is manmade when he says that in the earliest Church there was no standard of doctrines and there were no creeds. There was no New Testament recognised as an authority (page 92). He states on page 96 that our reason is so weak that our questions about free will, ultimate moral principles and the self-existent idea of God are unresolved. He adds that we cannot depend on reason alone to have faith in God that means we will be continually in a state in indecision. At least he is showing that he is guessing that God exists rather than believing!

Ward says on page 96 that religious faith should be taught to children. He says they need to know how good it may be for them and get some idea of what it means to others. Children tend to believe what they are told. He says that they will take religious faith as true as a matter of trust. But wisely he says he hopes they will outgrow this and think for themselves. He rejects the thought that children should not be taught religions so that they can make up their own minds later. He points out that they can't make up their own minds if they don't know what religion is about.

The atheist and secularists object to religion being taught as propaganda to children. Children should be taught about religion but not taught religion.

It is scandalous how Ward wants children to be taught there is a God. Children think in simpler ways than adults. For the child, a bad event such as getting sick or a parent dying etc or the dog needing an operation is a sign that God is withdrawing his love. He is punishing the child by withdrawing love.

He says that God gives revelations leaving man to interpret them. He states that all revelation is interpreted revelation (page 104). He say that God works gradually on people to help them interpret it better. He regards the commands by God to exterminate nations as a poor understanding of revelation and as the Jews grew in understanding they began to see God as

What Ward is doing here is cherry-picking the Bible. If you want to hold that a book is God's revelation and his written word, the least you would expect is that the book will not look like something man-made. A man-made scripture could command grave evil. A man-made scripture that doesn't has more right to be mistaken for the word of God!

Christian cherry-pickers like to say that they embrace the CORE values and the CORE doctrines of Christianity. Ward by claiming that the Bible teaches that God is tolerant is indicating that this is a core doctrine and the command from God to kill is not. But how could you call the tolerance a core doctrine when the Bible both says it is right and that it is wrong? If you really treat it as a core principle, you will not consider any nasty bits of the Bible as God's word. That is not an honest approach. It means that people will be able to manipulate Bible teaching as they please and turn Christendom in a Babel of contradictions and confusion.

Cherry-pickers often extend their understanding of core principles to history too. Mormons for example read in their scriptures how Joseph Smith found the gold plates in a stone box on a hill. No box has ever been found. They will say that the core issue is that there was plates and the box story is not as important. It is not central. But it is important. No box means no plates - period. If proof turned up that Jesus was a devil-worshipper, Christians might say that the core principle is that his teaching was still good. Talk about core principles is just a smokescreen for rationalising.

Having core principles or doctrines does not mean that other doctrines and principles become optional. In fact it means that though they may be less important they are NOT optional. For example, if your core principle is that stealing is wrong that does not mean you can permit somebody to dodge minor taxes. You would be undermining the core principle.

An interpretation of a revelation is not the same as a revelation. In fact the interpretation becomes what matters. And as for God helping us to understand the revelation why has he done such a poor job with all the countless disputes and sects of Christianity a Babel of conflict? In fact this stuff about God helping is the very thing believers use as an excuse to hide the fact that they pretend their interpretations are the word of God. It is people making their own interpretation the word of God that has led to all the sects and fanatics going about.

Keith Ward errs or lies on every major point. His distortion fools no one. He has persuaded us that religion is indeed irrational.