

Dupery Through Hope is Worse than Dupery Through Fear

Those who say that evil is so terrible that it refutes God or God's love are accused of saying that a life of suffering is worthless. It is argued that to think life and facing evil are not worth it leads to despair. That is not true. In fact it is only BECAUSE life is worth it that we can complain if there is too much badness or pain or suffering in it. That is why we can have hope and this hope has nothing to do with there being a God. It just is there.

When you hope that there is a God and that you will get to Heaven to enjoy eternal life, that indicates that there is some lack in you that you need to fill with hope. Fear is always behind hope.

Catholics claim to have evidence from miracles and the historical records of the Bible that their faith is true.

But evidence can never indicate how we are to interpret that evidence.

For example, you might find evidence that Jesus Christ was seen alive a few times after his alleged death on the cross. That still does not tell us that we should interpret this as a resurrection from the dead or as a miracle. If he rose from the dead, how do we know that some now extinct alien race didn't raise him? Or perhaps he never really died. Nobody is better at begging the question than those who presuppose what the conclusion will be. Those who assume Jesus rose miraculously by an act of God will study the evidence and end up imagining that it defends their position. Those who assume that the appearances of Jesus were deceptions or jokes will come to that conclusion from studying the gospel evidence.

Nobody has the right to threaten or intimidate you to accept the religious interpretation and yet we read in the gospels that unless we believe that Jesus rose from the dead we will not be saved. You can't help how you interpret something. You may say that you interpreted the evidence for who Jack the Ripper was and changed your mind upon seeing the latest book so you can help your interpretation. No. You are confusing the changing of your interpretation with wilfully changing it. You did not change your interpretation with the book. The book changed it for you. Jesus Christ cannot be considered to be a true Prince of Peace or to truly love you if he would damn you because of your interpretation.

We do not see people rising from the dead so it is natural for us to approach the gospel accounts assuming that a real resurrection was very unlikely to have happened. Indeed if we respect ourselves that is the approach we must take.

We should approach the gospels and try to have no preconceived ideas about whether Jesus rose from the dead or not. This is the open-minded approach. It is also sceptical in the sense that you refuse to think Jesus rose.

The gospels evidently condemn this fair approach. That is enough to make us realise that we should not take them seriously.

Nobody can deny that if we are born into a Catholic family we will tend to be Catholic ourselves. Nobody can deny that if you change the word Catholic to Muslim or Mormon or Hindu or whatever that the same is true. People like that are more concerned about themselves than the truth, than about God and than about other people. God should know we have this extremely strong bias to follow the religion of the community we were born and reared in. Thus if he has a true religion it has to be the most attractive and holiest religion of all. It has to contend with the bias outsiders have to follow other religions and help them overcome it to embrace the true faith. He punishes people for not trying to find the true faith or for not thinking about finding a better religion. God would be simply vindictive for punishing them if outsiders failing to be impressed by their knowledge of his religion was understandable. And Christians would be vindictive as well for saying that such a God exists when they have no proof.

A religion being very believable or plausible still does not necessarily make it the true religion. To claim to be the true religion is always a mark of the vice of pride and arrogance. You can have strong evidence that X killed Jane though it may be the case that X never did it.

A person who satisfies the tendency to follow a religion just because he or she was born and reared in it is not believing. They only think they believe. What they have is a habit of saying they agree with the faith and the habit of following the practices of the religion. For such a person to say that homosexuals and adulterers and heretics and so on go to Hell forever to be punished for all eternity is simply the conditioning talking. It is their feelings talking. So they are being vindictive whether they realise it or not.