

# The Future of Religion

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## God

Who is god? God is truth, knowledge, reality, creator of the universe, is everywhere, all powerful, and knows everything.

## Religion

Religions are man-made organizations that try to link us to god. Historically, religion started out as close to true religion and god as we might expect -- because religion was the center of knowledge. Unfortunately, every religion was eventually highjacked by the clerics and rulers and used as political organizations for controlling groups of people in order to “protect” that religion. In order to avoid conflicts with outdated religious laws, some countries adopted the principle of the separation of church and state. Since religions are by nature political, this separation was never completely achievable and all religions remain potent political forces.

The temptations of rulers to claim divinity and enjoy the benefits and power associated with religion were too irresistible and convenient to pass up. This also applied to clerics who either went along with these rulers for convenience, or were forced to go along with this transition from religion to sovereign governance. Thus today’s religions contain many of the elements of totalitarian institutions that use every means possible to control its population. Some of these elements are brain washing, behavior control, strong policing, use of fear and punishments as well as rewards, real or imagined. These negatives are balanced by positives, such as organized education, military protection, a smoother functioning society, laws to follow, definitions of morality, etc.

Why couldn’t at least SOME religions stay faithful to god? As civilization advanced there was a competition for knowledge between religions and secular institutions of learning such as universities and research centers. At first, religions had greater influence because they claimed mystical powers that no university or school could claim. Especially among less educated populations, such claims were effective because those peoples had insufficient knowledge for realizing that such mystical claims were false. The secular centers of knowledge started to gain an advantage when more people came to realize that the knowledge-based results were provable and reproducible, whereas mystical claims were, except for psychological or “placebo” effects, empty promises. In order to protect and to salvage the concept of mystical powers, religions introduced the concept of faith; without faith, you couldn’t even be a member of that religion. Thus theologians decided to keep the mystical claims and outdated and incorrect concepts to preserve their status quo, and diverged from learning institutions in the way in which they sought truth. Faith not only allowed religions to hang on to outdated and incorrect principles, so that they did not have to admit that they were wrong, but also to impose rules that favored their survival without any justification. It would be very informative to gather the statistics on what fraction of the faithful (including the clerics) actually believe in all the tenets of a religion. I am sure that, that fraction is not 100% because some of those tenets are so irrational but, it is also not zero, attesting to the power of brainwashing and the fear of retributions, as well as the convenience and advantages of following time tested social structures and the reward systems that those structures have created.

All this sounds as though all religions are evil organizations that should be abolished. After all, the number of humans killed in religious conflicts probably outnumbers those killed in any

other single type of conflict. However, when all the good that came from religion is balanced against the negatives, it may very well turn out that religion produced a net good in human evolution. Especially in early human history, religion provided a unifying political force that produced well organized societies with well defined goals. Without providing a net evolutionary advantage, religions would not have survived this long. Religions helped to formulate basic social rules, they united large groups of people into a single "faith", provided education, and provided hope and answers (not necessarily correct answers, but correctness did not always matter) to mysteries and unknowns. In fact, religions HAD to seek ways to benefit mankind just for their own survival. In underdeveloped societies, religion may provide an organizing political force and help that society survive. In developed countries, religions are a net negative because necessary organizing political forces are already developed secularly. Thus, as more and more nations join the "developed" category, religions, as they are constituted today, will decline. This does not mean that religions will disappear; rather, it means that religions will evolve.

## The Future of Religion

This brings us to the main point of this article: what should be the future of religion? Religion is still needed in some parts of the world, and even in developed societies, there is a distribution of ethnicities and religious beliefs so that it will not even be possible to eliminate religion even if it were decided that religion is not necessary in developed societies (which is subject to debate). But it will probably benefit religions in the future if they were more truly aligned with god (truth and reality) and were able to rid themselves of outdated and incorrect beliefs that accumulated because of historical reasons.

Will stripping these false beliefs destroy all religions? Will eliminating all heavenly rewards and hell's punishment cause religions to lose their power and appeal? Not if they are replaced by truth and real benefits, as true religions should. God is truth. Therefore, the main task of all religions must be to seek the truth and to teach. Religions can organize schools for people of any age, that can compete with, and perhaps even integrate with, secular schools to improve the quality of education. Churches should join research centers that finance exploration into the cosmos and research into dark matter and dark energy. Reading the bible should be replaced by discussions of whom we should vote for in elections, and how to be socially responsible citizens. The Quran is a terrific account of history, but Sunnis and Shiites should unite to ponder how to modernize sharia laws so as to preserve individual human dignity, especially for women, and individual freedom, while guarding against the speed traps and pitfalls of modern society. God did not speak only to Moses, Muhammad, and Jesus; god talks to every one of us every day. One day, god will tell us what dark energy is. It is an insult to god that he be limited to talking to only a few designated humans that lived thousands of years ago -- god is all powerful and can, and does, talk to everyone at all times. God did not suffer on the cross, only humans did that, and to even think that thanking god for suffering on the cross for us (a questionable benefit to mankind) might beget rewards from god is ridiculously simple minded because it lowers god to the level of human thinking. It is the cleric, who has the courage to admit past erroneous beliefs and seek god's new truths, who is the true champion of religion and be closest to god.

Will removing all false beliefs and promises destroy the financial foundation of religions? No, because replacing them with truth will create more productivity than relying on faith, which has no intrinsic value. Superior education and honest work will find their own support. All the church celebrations and traditions can be preserved and still adhere to truth. But how about the miracles that Saints or the "Virgin Mary" provided for providence and protection for all these years? Such providence has never actually materialized in recorded history, so ignoring the mystical beliefs doesn't make any material difference. The festivals can still be held, in honest honor of a great mother of a great thinker.

Will religions eventually lose all political power? The basis of political power (aside from the military) is the control of the minds of people, and there is no better way to do that than to have the truth and to disseminate it. The search for truth will unite all the religions of the world because, in the end, there is only one truth. That is the proof that there is only one god. The cult of faith is the greatest obstacle to truth, so that once faith is removed as the basis for religion, the transformation from a self-serving political organization to a true religion and the return to god can proceed.

The return to god will be difficult -- some might say impossible, because of thousands of years of religious evolution, protectionism, and brain washing. All existing religions today evolved to survive, just as plants, insects, and animals evolved to survive. Removing false practices from religions will create enormous temporary dislocations in some societies and finding solutions to such dislocations will take a lot of work and effort because knowledge and truth are not always obvious. Muslim fanatics, historical conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites, the brainwashing techniques of every religion, the established but outdated traditions of Buddhists and Jews, etc., will be difficult to change. But if everybody were educated with the same set of truths, this transition to an honest search for god will naturally follow. The elimination of all traditions is not being advocated by anyone. Just the elimination of provably false beliefs and the replacement of unproductive religious practices (such as the interminable incantations of Buddhist monks, numerous torturous sacrificial rites, facing Mecca and praying 5 times a day, overly restrictive dress codes for muslim women and orthodox jews, etc.) by truth and education. That will bring us all closer to god.

In the end, however, we must consider the question: are today's religions obsolete? If faith, all the mystical powers, the concepts of the after life with heaven and hell, a god we can pray to for miracles, and clerics with special access to god, are all eliminated, what is left of existing religions? Theologians must have confronted these questions a long time ago, and realized that these unrealistic concepts had to be retained in order for their religions to survive. This is why faith is so emphasized in most religions -- faith is how the clerics make people believe in preposterous concepts; once a population accepts faith, controlling that population becomes much easier. Buddhism and similar religions form a group that do not define the above concepts in such material terms and may be able to survive because there is nothing that can be proven false. Moreover, they are freer to evolve and incorporate modern knowledge. Modern society will force religions to evolve at a faster rate.

An important development is the separation of church and state among most christian countries which has greatly reduced the amount of religious violence and allowed rapid economic development because of the increased freedom. Many muslim societies have not adopted this principle, and in those societies there is more violence and less freedom and more poverty because of the more arbitrary nature of law and the need to preserve false, non-productive concepts. In the long run, the only way for muslim religions to survive is to accept the separation of church and state. This will inevitably reduce the power of the religion and allow more people to leave it. For this reason, muslim clerics will try as long as possible to hold on to political power. Their biggest enemy is education and economic development. History has shown that, as economies and education advance, the non-religious proportion of the population increases because they can survive without help from religion. Thus the most promising route for freeing a large portion of humanity from religious tyranny is economic development, without which education cannot follow freely.

Christianity has shown that religions can survive after separation of church and state. Once it survives, it becomes free to evolve into forms that may be able to survive indefinitely. Without this separation, there is a virtual guarantee of violent conflicts until either the church takes over the world, or it is eliminated. Neither choice is a happy one for humanity, and even members of that religion. Because of technological improvements, we expect the world economy to gradually improve, so that religions that do not accept the separation of church and state will gradually be marginalized. This will be a long and violent process because it

takes a long time to raise the economic well-being of such a large population whose freedom is suppressed by their religion and whose economic development is sapped by violence.

This article is full of criticisms of religion because, although they claim to represent god, they do not in reality, and they claim false powers and promulgate laws that benefit the religion but harm mankind. However, there have been many well intentioned humans who have sacrificed their lives for religion, and have contributed immensely to human welfare. In these cases, religion benefitted humanity. Needless to say, religion can be very beneficial to mankind. Thus the task of changing religion to eliminate its false beliefs must also preserve these beneficial properties. There are numerous historical examples of false beliefs that provided more benefits than the losses that result from the fact that they are false. Clearly, the task of changing religion to fit the principles of honesty is a complex one with many controversial routes from which we must make difficult choices.

## Faith

One tenet of religion that must be eliminated is that of faith -- god does not require faith because he is truth and everything about god is real and can be proven. Use of faith as a major component of religion gives rise to numerous abuses and problems. Women are marginalized in muslim religions, birth control is taboo in catholicism, and Jesus is a god in christianity. Forbidding birth control is a transparent ploy to increase catholic populations which does not serve the over-populated world of today. It is quite possible that Jesus would be embarrassed to be deified if he were to come to earth today, and he may be just as dismayed at the pope living in a castle and the priests assuming high social status (referred to as reverend, holy, father, etc.), advertising religions like TV commercials at every religious sermon, and parroting obsolete ideas. Jesus was not a fictional deity but a real human being, and his ideas transformed society as few humans ever have and should be honored as such, for tangible accomplishments, not a fictional god with no reality behind it except questionable imaginary claims. Mary did not have an immaculate conception (see section 5.2) but was a mother like all mothers; motherhood is a sacred state created by god, far superior to any immaculate conception or any other human figment of the imagination.

## Heaven and Hell

The concepts of heaven and hell have created untold misery to humanity. Suppose that you believe firmly that heaven and hell exist, and that your religion is the way to heaven (if the religion doesn't help you go to heaven, why join it?). This means that those that don't believe in that religion will have little or no chance of going to heaven. Therefore, it stands to reason that all such miserable "infidels" must be eliminated in order for more humans to end up in heaven and to reduce the number that ends up in hell. Untold numbers of religious fanatics have carried out this logic to its ultimate end, massacring fellow humans. In fact, killing infidels in the name of god becomes another sure way to get to heaven, and away from this miserable earth (especially for those in underdeveloped communities). Therefore, not only has god never given us any concrete indication that heaven and hell exist, there is historical evidence that these concepts can lead to violence and misery.

## Holy Scriptures

The use of the bible, quran, torah or talmud, buddhist incantations and other "sacred literature" as the ultimate law or truth is now obsolete and anachronistic. They were handed down from god only in the sense that everything written by man is from god. They were written, in many cases, thousands of years ago and reflect the thinking and human knowledge level of those times. They are certainly valuable documents and much can be learned from them, but do not possess supernatural powers or represent god in any direct way. Because god speaks to us every day, we have come to realize that those sacred writings are wrong and indefensible, and as a result, today's versions of those writings are nothing like their

originals. Yet every religion claims that their newest version is identical to the original which has remained unchanged because god's message is never wrong. History shows that this claim is provably false. Thus just calling them Holy Scriptures does not make them any closer to god, just as calling ministers reverend does not make them superior human beings close to god as the numerous incidents of criminal activity by such "reverends" have proven.

## Religion and truth

Many religious teachings are the exact opposite of reality. Thus there seems to be a tendency for more people to believe something that is more unbelievable.

Religion: God made Man in His image.

Truth: Man made god in his image.

Religion: Do good and you will go to heaven after death.

Truth: Do good and you will enjoy heaven on earth, before you die.

Religion: The days of miracles are over.

Truth: We perform miracles every day (such as saving lives) that writers of the bible could not even imagine.