

Why My Religion is Right

And Yours Is Wrong

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The Flawed Logic of "The One True Path"

If you are a human being who lives on Earth, you have probably been exposed to other human beings who are not your exact clones.

If this sounds like you, then you have probably also been told once or twice that what you believe is wrong and (coincidentally) the person who told you this just so happens to have the correct set of beliefs that you should promptly integrate into your life.

The first time I heard this, I was excited at this easy replacement for years of personal discipline, study and introspection. Imagine my shock and amazement when I found that that the reasons they offered as to why they were right didn't quite stand up to the feeble light of early dawn.

To save you from suffering the same disappointment that I endured, I have listed some of these reasons that failed to provide me the "easy out" and forced me to do actual real work in finding my own personal spirituality.

1) My Religion is Right, so Yours Must be Wrong!

Let's all start and agree with the premise that Divinity is Big. Quite probably beyond our ability to grasp its vastness. Bigger than the Earth, even!

Okay. Now look out your window and describe what you see. Did you just describe every feature of our planet, or just a small part that you have seen and are familiar with?

If you can't describe all of our little planet, how can you expect to describe all of Divinity?

Just as I can look outside and say "The Earth is a muddy swamp like my backyard is after the rain" you might say "The Earth is a dry hot arid place" because you've had a year of drought.

A Religion is basically like looking out your window and describing Divinity as you see it. It is impossible for you to describe it in its entirety as you haven't seen it in its entirety.

As a result each religion is expressing the portion of Divinity that the people who created it could see.

Just because you see one thing doesn't mean that somebody else can't see a different aspect of Divinity and be just as correct as you are. Just like I see mud outside my window and you see a cracked river bed. We're both right. It's just that we're looking at something so big that we each see a different part of it.

Just because you don't see the same thing I do doesn't mean that I'm wrong. We can both be right if we're seeing different things.

2) My Religion is Old, so it must be Right!

Due to the fact that people have believed something for a Real Long Time™ it must be correct. This is quickly shot down with this:

From my quick search on Google, the oldest formal religion appears to be Hinduism. So if you're not a Hindu, you've already buzzed out.

The oldest informal religion was probably cavemen worshipping the sun and cowering from the angry storm gods. So, if you're not a Hindu and don't worship the sun and fear the storm gods, you've just buzzed out twice.

But even If you do happen to be a Hindu and worship the sun and fear the storm gods, it still doesn't mean you are right. Sorry. When it comes right down to it, this answer is really no more valid than any other when it comes to establishing a logical basis for your belief system.

3) My Religion is New, so it must be Right!

To the best of my knowledge, the newest religion is the one that I just made up worshipping The Great God Lardicus and the Gentle Goddess Dietima.

If you're not worshipping one or both of them, buzz yourself out on this one, too.

4) My Religion is New, but it is based on Ancient Knowledge, so it must be Right!

I have to admit that is my favorite one, as it gives you the best of both worlds. This is a common one with many of the New Age religions. Many of the "New Old" religions are only about 50 years old, but claim ancestry going back hundreds or thousands of years.

Ancient wisdom combined with modern insight - what could be better?

Unfortunately, if being Old doesn't make it Right, and being New doesn't make it right, being Old and New doesn't make it right either.

5) Lots of Other People Believe It Too, so it must be Right!

If everybody decided to go and jump off a bridge, would you do it too?

I'm sorry. My mother made me write that.

But I must grudgingly admit that she has a valid point. Lots of people were pretty darn sure the Earth was flat, yet even that power of belief was unable to squish our planet into a nice one-horizon pancake planet.

6) Hardly Anybody Knows About It, so it must be Right!

Many "secret societies" have a veil of this kind of thinking around them.

While it may be possible that they possess knowledge (or think that they do) that others don't have, it does not automatically give their beliefs any more credibility than any of the other reasons we've covered so far.

7) This Holy Book Says it is True, so it must be Right!

Welcome to the land of Circular Reasoning!

Here's how it usually works: "My Religion is Right!" "Why?" "Because my Holy Book says it is!" "Well, why should I believe your Holy Book is Right?" "Because my Religion says it is!"

You can not logically say "Here's my first premise, here's my second premise. My first premise is true because my second premise says it is. My second premise is true because my first premise says it is. Therefore, both premises are true and support each other!"

Unfortunately, this doesn't work when exposed to any form of logic or rationality. In order to provide "proof" there must be validation from outside of the condition being tested.

8) Divinity Said It Was True, so it must be Right!

This is almost identical to the last technique, but instead of a Holy Book saying it, some form of Divinity said it.

But who did they say it to? Was it someone you know is trustworthy? Are they alive?

Did you hear it? So it's at best second-hand knowledge (you personally know the person who Divinity spoke to), or most likely third-hand (usually more like 100-handed) knowledge.

Have you ever played the game of "Telephone"? People line up, and a message is whispered to the first person in the line, who whispers it to the second person, who whispers it to the third, and so on until the last person gets the message. They then say the message that they got and everybody laughs at how the simple message got completely mangled to the point of being unrecognizable.

Now, add to this process the following and shake, not stir: What century was it written in? What language was it in? How many translations has it gone through since then? How likely is it that there were words and phrases that did not translate literally, and the translator had to make an approximation across the languages? How many cultural differences go unstated that are not accounted for in translations? How many political or other agendas were able to influence the translations to sound more like the positions that they advocated?

As you can see, there are many issues that can take what could have been straight from Divinity and changed, confused or corrupted it on its way to the version you see today.

And we still haven't addressed the issues as to whether the person who originally said they heard it wrote it down correctly. Have you ever tried to write down what happened in a dream after you woke up? Have you ever had difficulty expressing a significant personal experience using nothing but words?

And then there is the most basic question of if they actually did receive a message from Divinity or not. Could they have just made it up? Were they trying to impress someone, become famous, influence people? Under the influence of a mind-altering substance? Suffered from a mental illness?

Do you know people who you trust who have told you important things that turned out not to be true?

Unless you personally experienced it, you have no unquestionable basis to believe it. And all of the other rules here also apply to why you should believe what someone else says is true.

9) Someone I trust told me it is True, so it must be Right!

Why do they believe it is True? Is their reason covered by one or more of the above explanations? If so, there is no rational reason to accept it as True based on those reasons.

10) Science agrees with me, so it must be Right!

Science is not always right. Periodically a new discovery is made that invalidates entire bodies of knowledge and creates new ones. Many scientific "facts" are discovered to be incorrect as new information is learned.

While this foundation provides the best rational platform for a system of beliefs, it does not "prove" it is right. There could always be a new scientific revelation that could end up proving it is wrong after all.

Additionally, there are lots of things that science admits that it still doesn't understand. Every so often, someone comes along and discovers a new aspect of how things work, and it can cause an explosion in new knowledge that builds upon this new foundation.

Nothing is absolute in science, despite the wishes of the scientists.

If you are a logic-based person, this is probably the only rationally valid reason to prefer one belief system over another. But remember that it is not absolute, and will not be a valid rationale for an emotionally-based person.

11) It Just Feels True for Me, so it must be Right!

If you are an emotionally-based person, this is probably the only valid reason to prefer one belief system over another. In your gut or your heart, it just feels right.

But remember that you based your beliefs based on your PERSONAL feelings. If another person chooses a different belief system based on THEIR OWN PERSONAL feelings, you can not logically discount their choice but assert that your own is Real when you both selected your beliefs based on the exact same criteria.

Therefore, religious choices chosen in this way can only be a PERSONAL choice for you and you alone, because only you can experience the emotional foundation of your beliefs.

In Conclusion...

I hope this helped to illustrate that there is no magic reason that anyone's belief system is right or wrong. It is, at best, a personal decision as to what criteria you use to find your spiritual path through life.

Most importantly, there is no way that you can make a logical case that your belief system is "more right" than anybody else's.

Therefore, please treat everyone with respect and courtesy when discussing your beliefs or theirs. If you try to find the core principles that guide most religions, you will find that they all share many similarities, and there is room in the world for all of them.

Blessed Be!

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