

In reply to [r.g.price](#).

Neil Godfrey has already responded with an excellent Link but I want to say this.

Christianity does not claim to "Explain Everything". Nor did The Ancient Greeks Think Life existed on other Planets. When People say things like this, they usually base it on snippets read on a Website, and extrapolate meaning based on Modern Ideas.

It is popular especially in Atheist Circles to attack Christians as Holding Back Science and Reason and to Lionise the Superior Knowledge of Greece and Rome, complete with a Mythology that says the Evil Christians Destroyed the Wonderful Science of Old.

But, when so doing, examples are often distorted to fit the prejudice.

This is why You, For example, contrast Christians who say Life on other Planets is impossible, to the Ancient Greeks who would have had no Issue with it, as they believed in Life on other Worlds.

Of course, one fallacy in this is the assumption that "The Ancient Greeks" actually Agreed with Each other, which is not True.

It's not even True that they Understood the Concept of life on Other Planets. While it is True that Ancient Greek Philosophers postulated Many Worlds, such as Democritus, He did not understand this to be other Planets. He saw it more like the Multiple World Theory, or "Multiple Universes" as we prefer to call it. (I Hate that term myself, as Universe literally means All things in Unison.) The Ancient Greeks tended to be just as Geocentric as Later Christians were, and in Fact it is the Ptolemaic Model the Christians used. They did not destroy the Superior Science and Knowledge of Rome and come up with it on their own.

Ironically, One of the other points about how Superior The Greeks and Romans were to Christians is to say that The Greeks Knew The Earth was Round, and The Christians believed it was Flat. But not only is it a Myth to say The Christians thought The Earth was Flat, but many Greeks rejected it was Round. Including Democritus, who actually argued for a Flat Earth.

Democritus could not have believed Life existed on other Planets, as He did not Think The Earth was a Planet, but a flat disk, and believed The Planets Orbited The Earth.

I am not simply saying this to correct a specific Historical Point. I Hope You reflect on not just the Specific Information, but the overall way You approach Religion as a topic, and see how maybe a lot of this is simply an effort to Justify a dim view of Christianity.

I will address the rest in a Moment.

I would now like to address Your take on Religion, and Why I View it as Misguided.

I have already addressed The Greeks and so I shall not revisit Your examples. But what You are doing does seem to Me to be a form of Primitivism or Restorationism.

Ironically, a Christian Movement I am All too Familiar with did the same Thing. And this is Relevant to the Point I Wish to Make.

The Christian Restoration Movement began in The 19th Century, and Sought to Purge Christianity of its corrupting influences and Restore it to its True Original Form.

This, it seems, is a recurrent Theme We see in Humanity as well, and One You appeal to when You say Phase 1 Religions are somehow more Rational than Phase 2 Religions.

But I posit this is a Mythology, designed to Harmonise and Explain, and more importantly to Justify, today's Secular Humanist Religion and Why it is the True Way, and how others are False.

There is a need to Harmonise the Works of Anthropologists, Sociologists, and Psychologists with the Narratives of Modern Neo-Enlightenment Advocates such as Stephen Pinker or the New Atheists. There is also a Need to Justify the Love of Ancient Greece and Rome, and in Our Culture this merges with the Anti-Colonization Narrative, in which We vilify the Colonization that occurred in The Age Of Empire.

What You are saying is rooted in what others have said, such as Hitchens.

To quote Hitchens-

""How did such evil nonsense ever come to be so influential? And why are we so continually locked in combat with its violent and intolerant votaries? Well, religion was the race's first (and worst) attempt to make sense of reality. It was the best the species could do at a time when we had no concept of physics, chemistry, biology or medicine. We did not know that we lived on a round planet, let alone that the said planet was in orbit in a minor and obscure solar system, which was also on the edge of an unimaginably vast cosmos that was exploding away from its source of energy. We did not know that micro-organisms were so powerful and lived in our digestive systems in order to enable us to live, as well as mounting lethal attacks on us as parasites. We did not know of our close kinship with other animals. We believed that sprites, imps, demons, and djinns were hovering in the air about us. We imagined that thunder and lightning were portentous. It has taken us a long time to shrug off this heavy coat of ignorance and fear, and every time we do there are self-interested forces who want to compel us to put it back on again."

This has become the way Militant Atheists have Dogmatically Defined History, leading to it being a Mythology Binding You to others of the same general Beliefs. And it serves to Justify Hatred of Religion. But You want to preserve some Religious Ideas, as The Greeks and Romans are Highly Honoured, and The Primitive, for they are not imbued with the Errors of Christianity, and The White Man in Colonization.

So, You harmonize The Hitchens View of History that understands Religion as Our First Failed Efforts at Science with the idea of Older Religions being more Rational than Modern Religions by saying what You said here.

To Quote You-

""What would be called "primitive" religions actually were much more intuitive and compatible with our modern scientific understanding of the world. Primitive religions are very much based on people's experiences and observations. They are, essentially, empirically driven. They may hold beliefs that are provably false, but they are, by and large, the product of "bad science", or essentially an incomplete understanding of the world. ""

This allows You to retain the Appreciation of The Primitive and of The Greeks and Romans whilst retaining the Contempt for Christianity modern Ideological Atheism is built on.

You make Your case based on the concept of Phases in Religion. Specifically, of Phase 1 and Phase 2 Religions. I Feel this is Misguided and shows a deep Ignorance of Religion, especially Christianity. I also see it as Hypocritical given how You differ from Christians only in an Abstract Way that relies on how we Define the Words used to Describe the differences, as opposed to an Objective Reality about the World We Live in.

But for clarity, I Will repeat what You said.

Below are Your own Words used to Define Phase 1 and Phase 2 Religions. I did not modify the Quotes, so they don't Read like they belong to a Definition but this is to avoid anyone saying I Altered Your Words.

Phase 1 Religion Defined; What would be called "primitive" religions actually were much more intuitive and compatible with our modern scientific understanding of the world. Primitive religions are very much based on people's experiences and observations. They are, essentially, empirically driven. They may hold beliefs that are provably false, but they are, by and large, the product of "bad science", or essentially an incomplete understanding of the world. They are hypotheses about how the world works and how we should behave and operate within it. They are ways of trying to fill in gaps in our data with suppositions and narratives.

Phase 2 Religion Defined; Phase 2 religions claim to have divine knowledge about how the world does work and how people must behave. These religions enforce specific worldviews on believers and tell believers to deny their experiences. These religions basically claim to have obtained a full understanding

of reality and they posit that claims or beliefs that contradict their model of reality must be false. The narratives of these religions are no longer ways to fill in gaps in our data, they are actually viewed as the only valid data. So these religions compel believers to ignore their own observations, ignore their own intuitions, ignore what seems to be reasonable, if any of that contradicts the model put forward by the religion.

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I have No Reason to accept the Above. And No Reason to Think of Modern Atheists as not fitting it if Christianity does. And this is not about Islam, or Buddhism, Modern Militant Atheists attack Christianity. This is not due to it being The Most Popular Religion, before that excuse is used. An Excuse I am all too familiar with, and which also shows how this is not an Independent Observation but a repetition of Dogmas.

Still, as with most Narratives, there is some Truth to it. But Some Truth does not make it accurate. It just means that as with all Narratives, If there is No Truth whatsoever in them, if they can't be applied in any way to what is in The World, then they could not be used and would not be adhered to by anyone.

Ironically though, this proves the Point I am making.

Belief Systems must invariably reflect what people see in The Real World, and what They Experience. If they don't, No One would believe in them.

Religious Belief, including Christianity, has to reflect the Real, Lived Experiences of its Adherents or else they would simply not believe in it. It has to have practical Applications, or else No One could Believe in it. Humans do not adhere to mere abstractions, but what They can see Manifest in the World around them.

Religious Beliefs do not simply exist to Explain Things, but explanations are part of Religion. It is also however part of The New Atheism.

After all, You have just explained why Phase 1 Religion is Empirical and Scientific and Rational and how Phase 2 Religion is not, and how it tells us to Deny Our Experiences and this is why it is so Wrong and Dangerous.

And Your explanation was based on what others have said before You in the same Community.

Which brings me to an Issue I have with what You said.

You want to claim the Modern Non-Religious Atheist and the Primitive Religious perspective are both Rational and based on Empiricism.

Or, to Quote You again-

""What would be called "primitive" religions actually were much more intuitive and compatible with our modern scientific understanding of the world. Primitive religions are very much based on people's experiences and observations. They are, essentially, empirically driven. They may hold beliefs that are provably false, but they are, by and large, the product of "bad science", or essentially an incomplete understanding of the world. They are hypotheses about how the world works and how we should behave and operate within it. They are ways of trying to fill in gaps in our data with suppositions and narratives.""

You contrast this to Phase 2 Religion by saying This.

""Phase 2 religions claim to have divine knowledge about how the world does work and how people must behave. These religions enforce specific worldviews on believers and tell believers to deny their experiences. These religions basically claim to have obtained a full understanding of reality and they posit that claims or beliefs that contradict their model of reality must be false. The narratives of these religions are no longer ways to fill in gaps in our data, they are actually viewed as the only valid data. So these religions compel believers to ignore their own observations, ignore their own intuitions, ignore what seems to be reasonable, if any of that contradicts the model put forward by the religion.""

There are several issues with this, but the Main issue is, its an excuse to attack Christianity. You disguise it by saying "Phase 2 Religion" and mentioning other Religions like Islam, but it is obvious from what You said that Christians are the Real Target, such as when You say Our Views on Primitive Societies came from Christian Missionaries and phrase it in such a way as to make it Obvious that this is supposed to cause us to immediately react with Shame that we ever listened to those People. You even work in the Favourite Hobby Horse of Evolution.

""You also don't find that aborigines held dogmatic beliefs or beliefs that they would contend should override your lived experiences. So for example, Christians held that life on other planets was impossible (a belief actually held by ancient Greeks). I don't know this for certain, but I would assume that Australian natives would not have said that such a thing was impossible if a member of their community threw it out there as a question around the camp fire. Many cultures actually held views of the development of life from an evolutionary process, Australian natives among them. In fact, the concept of evolution is actually intuitive, and is actually pervasive in origin stories from around the world. Even semi-scientific concepts of evolution were developed in multiple cultures, most notably by the ancient Greeks. These were all denied by Christians, and Christian missionaries went around the world telling tribal people who held evolutionary beliefs that they were wrong and exterminated such teachings. Notably, several tribes from Africa believed that humans and apes were related before they were "corrected" on this mater by Christians. The Greeks of put forward many evolutionary explanations for the development of life on earth, including that life originated in the ocean and that eventually fish emerged onto land and developed into land animals, ultimately into people. In fact, the impression we have of many tribal cultures being hopelessly

superstitious and uneducated is itself highly biased. Remember that so many of these descriptions come from Christian missionaries! "These primitive fools believe that humans and animals are related, such barbarians!"

This is of course a simplistic and Rather Obviously False Narrative. For example, Christians did not Uniformly reject Evolution. Even if they had, Christians did Argue that Man and Animals were Related given both were Created by God.

But the Real Point to this is to get us to have Negative Emotional Reactions to Christians based on shared Cultural Values such as a belief in Evolution. They, the Bad people, Reject Our True Dogma of Evolution, and this proves how Immoral they are!

Not like The Noble Savage, Not Like the Wonderful Greeks and Romans, no! The Evil Christians reject EVOLUTION!!!

The FIENDS!!!

But Honestly if You are Dr. Price, You Know better.

Not all Primitive Religions had any concept of what We could call Evolution, and pretending as if Primitive Religion would not have an issue with Evolution is itself speculative, and reductive, and acts as if all Tribal Religions are the same, as if they are not impacted by Social Dynamics or Individual Psychology. As if Evolution itself is some self evident Truth We;d Know if not for The Evil Ones corrupting The True Faith.

Its nonsense.

It is also Nonsense given The Christians You attack often express support for Evolution and quiet Frankly, so did the Historical Christians You;d point to. It would hardly challenge such as St. Gregory of Nyssa that Man and Animal had Bodies formed of Natural Forces and were Kin, for he said as much Himself in On The Making Of Man.

It is simplistic to Think Primitive Religion would accept Evolution and in fact did to some degree and it is simply Ludicrous to assume Christians by Definition reject it.

This post is getting Long so I Will conclude it in a Third and Final Reply.

This is the Final Post, and addresses the Thesis You advance about "Phase 1 Religions" being Empirical, and "Phase 2 Religion" being opposed to Reason.

I find it disingenuous, of course, and it ignores that what You erm Phase 2 Religion, notably Christianity, actually operates the same way all Modern Society does. While it is True that Christians have Written Documents, and Central tot his is The Bible, that explain what it is they Believe, this is True of America, which has The US Constitution and Writings of The Founding Fathers and other such things, and it is True of The New Atheism which has the Writings of The Four Horsemen and other New Atheist Writers and their Predecessors, such as Bertrand Russel and Robert Ingersol, so I Fail to see much of a distinction. Especially since this is also how Science functions. It snot as if the majority of Scientists run Experiments on everything they Accept, independently. Most of the Time Scientists accept the Written Papers by other Scientists or what they learned from other such Books.

While the Distinction will inevitably be made that People don't treat those other Sources as Infallible or as if given by a god, I'd say this is all Talk and Functionally they do. An American often simply sayings "According to The Constitution{ or "According to The Founding Fathers": as of this alone wins debates, and New Atheists often recite quotes from "The God Delusion" or "The End Of Faith" as if merely quoting them proves a Point. Saying You don't see Harris or Dawkins as infallible or giving The word of some Deity doesn't alter the Reality that they are Treated as if they are infallible and driven by a Deity.

I also find it quiet telling that The New Atheism attacked Religion for how Violent it is, and cited Christianity's past and the Then pressing Threat of Islamic Terrorism to prove this Case, and described how taking Religion Seriously inevitably lead to Violence in the same way Boyle said We as a Culture often do with Religion, and used the inevitability of Violence caused by Religion to Argue for its Abolition, only to then advocate for Violence themselves. After all, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens both supported The War On Terrorism by envisioning it as a War against Islam specifically and Religion Generally, and saw it as a Fight between Secularism and Religion. Hitchens even waxed Poetic about the eared Flesh of the Muslims He delighted in Imagining being Killed by Ripped and Burned Flesh.

The Inevitable Violence of Religion was contrasted to the Inherent peace and Rationality of The Secularists like Hitchens and Harris.

I am not of course the First to Note this. And a Justification for it was given. We, the Secularists, merely act in Self Defence. Religion is Violent on its own, and We are Justified in using Violence to defend against the Inherent Violence of Religion.

But We all Know it was not mere self Defence, especially since they wanted to use the same examples to Justify attacking Christians.

The Concept of Religion We have is actually Artificial. It did not exist in Antiquity and I am not Certain it is useful today. Religion Really is simply Philosophy, and pretending Religion is different from Philosophy is to Me an Error. What I Find odd though is, if I say Religion is Science I am mocked, but if an Atheist like Hitchens says the same, it is taken as Truth, so long as it is :Bad Science", and not the "Good Science" Secularists believe in.

I thus Question Your Claim about how Unnatural Phase 2 Religion is, and how it Requires signifiant Inculcation, a Posit You use to Argue against it.

The way You Frame Religion requires Signifiant inculcation. The Very fact that You wear the Clothes You do, or Believe in the Government Philosophy You do, or the way We interact in general in Civilization, all Requires Signifiant Inculcation. So do Tribal Societies, which far from the Experimental Process, often pass on its Culture and Traditions, including its Rituals, via Inculcation. That is the Nature of Society.

Of Course You may Content that the difference is, their Rituals are more Rational and based on Experience, unlike Christianity. But, that is nonsense.

I do not call it Nonsense because I Think Tribal Religions are not based on Experience, but because what You say of Phase 2 Religion is rubbish.

For Starters, at what Point does a Religion go from Phase 1 to Phase 2? You claim The Greeks had a Concept of Evolution and Life on other Planets whilst Christians did not. I have discussed before the Reason it is not True that The Greeks thought of Life on Other Planets was possible. They did not even have the Ability to Think of "Other Planets" as they did not Know The Earth was a Planet. The same is True of Evolution. You Misrepresent their Ideas and those of Christians of Antiquity.

While some form of Evolution had been Imagined, it is a distortion to act as if it was Comparable to Ours, and simply False to Pretend it was The Consensus of The Greek Philosophers, or to Pretend that Christians had a Uniform Rejection of it. Saint Augustine in The City Of God rejected a Literal Reading of The Creation Account as did Origen who advanced Allegorical Exegesis.

So, Your Thesis is already exposed for what it is; An Anti-Christian Mythology designed more to promote the Narrative that Science and Reason are Inherent to Humanity, and Religion clouds our Reason and is some sort of Parasitic Infection that grabs us Later.

This is Polemic though, designed to Serve as propaganda for a Humanist Perspective.

It is also tied to the We Think For Ourselves The Religious do not Myth.

After all, the Defining Trait of Phase 2 Religions like Christianity is how they claim to Know All Truth Already, and how Your Experiences must be Denied in Favour of Dogma.

To Quote You-

""What I'm calling phase 2 religions, however, are much different. Phase 2 religions claim to have divine knowledge about how the world does work and how people must behave. These religions enforce specific worldviews on believers and tell believers to deny their experiences. These religions basically claim to have obtained a full understanding of reality and they posit that claims or beliefs that contradict their model of reality must be false. The narratives of these religions are no longer ways to fill in gaps in our data, they are actually viewed as the only valid data. So these religions compel believers to ignore their own observations, ignore their own intuitions, ignore what seems to be reasonable, if any of that contradicts the model put forward by the religion.""

This is a dull repetition of the same old song of why Religion is Evil, though done in a modified form to fit in Acceptable Religions like the Greeks.

It is also not True.

Christianity does not Teach that it has a full understanding of reality. On the Contrary, Christianity has Always been Understood as saying Humanity does not Fully Understand Reality, and says there is much Humanity simply does not Know. It also does not say it has All You should Know and discourage further investigation. The Church Fathers, again, said Man could Learn more about the World and it is in the Context of Christianity that Science as We Understand it was Created.

Christianity does not Teach us to Ignore Our Experiences, or to Deny them either. In fact, Personal Experiences were often included in the Writings of The Church Fathers, and continue to be a Central Feature in Christian Writings, especially in The Modern World with Evangelical Christians giving Testimonies, which often reflect on Experiences they faced.

I also have to wonder if You Think Ancient Israel had a Phase 2 Religion. After all, they did use The Law Of Moses. But they clearly did not have the degree of Specialisation We have today, and Communal Survival would not take the form of Segmentation.

Islam is also an issue, since Muslims invented The Windmill and other Amazing Things based on their own Practices in The Islamic Golden Age, and I would Like to Know what exact Islamic Sources You have that demand We Ignore Our Experiences.

If Anything, it is Atheists who demand We ignore Our Experiences, if We focus on Militant Atheism. After all, a Christian is often Mocked if He speaks of Personal Experiences by The Atheist Community, and old this is Anecdotal Evidence and thus not Real Evidence as it is not Empirical. But now You Argue that personal Experience is Empirical? And it is Phase 2 Religion that denies it?

The Modern Atheist use of the word "Empirical" bothers Me. It is no Longer a term that Means "based on, concerned with, or verifiable by observation or experience rather than theory or pure logic" but rather is

defined as Reliant on Logic and Reason, and given the way New Atheism uses those words, Empirical means that which accords with Our presumptions and Assumptions.

The Word Empirical is more of a repeated Doxology that is used to give approval to an Idea rather than a Real Process these days.

The Modern Atheist reliance on Empiricism is undermined by the Fact that what they call Empirical is always what They already decided to Believe.

Honestly You are using Slogans and Catch Phrases and Familiar Words to Dress this Story up to make it acceptable to Modern Ne Atheists, whilst allowing them to maintain the overarching themes of their Religion in the face of Challenges that are eroding it.

Which is ironic, since this sort of Religious Adaptationalism is also Evidence that what You are saying is Wrong. After all the same process is at play in Christian and Islamic Circles as well.

Back in 2005, Sam Harris said

“Imagine we could revive a well-educated Christian of the fourteenth century. The man would prove to be a total ignoramus, except on matters of faith. His beliefs about geography, astronomy, and medicine would even embarrass a child, but he would know more or less everything there is to know about God. Though he would be considered a fool to think that the earth is the center of the cosmos, or that trepanning constitutes a wise medical intervention, his religious ideas would still be beyond reproach.

There are two explanations for this: either we perfected our religious understanding of the world a millennium ago — while our knowledge on all other fronts was still hopelessly inchoate — or religion, being the mere maintenance of dogma, is one area of discourse that does not admit of progress.”

This is in essence what You are saying, too. Only You apply it to Modern Religions, not Ancient Religions, or as You term them, This applies to Phase 2 Religions, but not Phase 1 Religions.

But Sam Harris chose an Interesting Time to discuss. The 14th Century. This is when Wyclife and His Lollards Lived, and the Time of Jan Hus.

Is Sam Harris aware of Religious Controversies at the Time? This is unlikely given He chose to use this Period as an Example, and the Period undermines His Point.

But Your adaptation of His Point is not so Undermined. It I still however Compromised, as this is a Phase 2 Religion that allowed for Change, and obviously does not simply remain fixed in Dogma, passing on the same Dogmatic view without Change, or only changing if forced by the Outside World after Lengthy Combat, be it Literal or Figurative.

Religious Beliefs actually Change and Adapt over Time. Religions, including Islam, and Christianity, do adapt to New Situations, and do grow to Incorporate New Understandings of the World. The so-called

Phase 2 Religions, which You Characterise as unmoving and unalterable edifices, which You Claim say have All Knowledge of Reality and forbid further Inquiry, the same Phase 2 Religions You say tell us to Deny our Experiences, have openly encouraged both Investigation and Experiences and have over Time found ways to incorporate them.

Far from being the Monoliths You cast them as, Religious Belief is a Flexible, Growing, Living System, which does reflect New information and The Human Experiences of its Followers.

New ways to Approach The Scriptures, New Ways to Interpret them, New Ways to find Application in Our Life, even disagreement with Older Views, all exist in Religion. Ironically, they are also used to discredit Religion in Atheist Cirques. The same Circles who say Religions refusal to change also say because it has Changed and modern Religious Adherents do not believe everything Historical Adherents did will turn around and say because Religion refuses to Change it can;t be True.

It is a Double bind, and Ultimately a ridiculous way to look at the situation with Religion unless You simply want to attack Religion no matter what it does.

I find such unconvincing.