

Requirements of Reality Based Religion

What makes the Church of Reality a reality-based religion? After all, can't any religion claim to be a reality-based religion? Is there any objective test to support the claim that a religion is or is not reality based? Does a religion have to get everything right to make a claim to be reality based? Who gets to say what religions are reality based and what religions are not?

We believe that there are some objective tests. In the case of religion, there are two categories or types of religions. There are religions whose doctrines claim to be deity inspired and religions whose doctrines are inspired by humans. Because these two types of claims to reality are very different, we have to create a separate set of rules for each type.

- Deity-Based Religions - A deity-based religion assumes that its omnipotent being (we will use the term God(s) to reference all religions' omnipotent beings) is perfect, infallible, and infinitely wise. The religion assumes, also, that their God can communicate with people and has expressed itself, and that their doctrine is an accurate expression of the will of their God. They claim that their religion is reality because it meets these necessary criteria:

- That their God is the real God. That it is authentic. That it has established itself as a supreme being and that it is sufficiently omnipotent to be an authority of knowledge of absolute reality.

- That God has communicated reality to the human authors of the holy books. That this communication is real, that there is a basis to believe that God used divine powers to make sure that the communication is accurate and complete, and that the communication was fully and accurately incorporated into the holy texts. The holy texts must be believed to be accurate, specific, clear, and not subject to individual interpretation.

- That there is a verifiable chain of custody of the holy book and that it wasn't altered or tampered with by anyone who wasn't also divinely inspired. If it was altered, then there is reason to believe that anyone who made an alteration did so as a result of God using them as a conduit to get his changes made, and that the changes can be relied upon. Although, if changes are made, it raises the question of why God didn't get it right the first time. After all, if you are infinitely wise, omnipotent, and you can see the future, then why would any changes be necessary?

- The issue of completeness is somehow dealt with. Since all holy books are finite, it must be assumed that the holy book either covers everything or that God is adding new chapters through some divine process. If the book is considered complete, how does it deal with new issues not specifically covered in the holy book? If it relies on humans to act as live interpreters, such as priests or prophets, how do we know that these interpreters are in direct contact with God to ensure that their word actually is God's word and not their own agenda, or even an honest mistake?

- If some human fallibility is possible in the religion (mistake), does the religion support a mechanism to correct the mistake? If a priest or prophet gets it wrong through not having a 100% accurate communication link with God, how is the error fixed? If there is room for error, then how does the faith determine the probability of accuracy of doctrine and how do they deal with the deviation from absolute reality?

- It would also seem that the doctrine would agree with science and that the word of the deity would tend to be proved to be correct and accurate as human knowledge advances.

As you can see, religions that claim reality based on divine inspiration have a lot of hurdles to deal with to verify their assertion. If a religion is truly divinely inspired, shouldn't there be consistency? Wouldn't God say the same thing to everyone? In reality, for example, the laws of physics apply the same to everyone, every time. If you jump off a tall building you will fall to the ground at the same rate of acceleration and with the same laws of wind resistance as every other object, every time. If an omnipotent being is accurately expressing reality through a supernatural process, wouldn't one expect that the results would be the same? Wouldn't contradiction indicate error? And if there is error, how is that resolved? Who is the true voice of God? If two religions, or two people from the same religion, claim that God is saying opposite things, then at least one of the religions cannot be reality-based.

We believe that in order to pass the reality-based religion test for deity-based religions, members would have a single, consistent voice and be in agreement with each other and with God. That those who speak for the deity would speak with a single voice, and that they would ultimately be proven to be accurate. That the doctrine would be both complete and error-free, that the deity would actually be infallible, and that the communication link with the deity would not be subject to error or mistake.

For example, the Bible would fail these tests for a number of reasons. The Bible expressly claims that its prophets are human and fallible, and are subject to mistakes. The God of the Bible changes its mind even though it is infallible, and claims the ability to know the future. It also gets angry, loses its cool, and destroys the world when aggravated by humans, exhibiting behavior unbecoming of a deity. Thus the Bible fails the reality test.

- Human-Based Religions - Human-based religions are religions whose doctrine is clearly created by humans. Some of these religions claim supernatural events and some are based purely on science. But, in a human-based religion, it is accepted in doctrine that the religion was created by people and that there is a probability of error. The Church of Reality is an example of a human-based religion, and one of the few things that we can accept on faith is that we will always have mistakes.

So - if we are wrong, how can we claim to be a reality-based religion? How can we claim reality when we freely admit that some of what we proclaim is just plain dead wrong?

With the assumption of fallibility, the best that a human-based religion can do is to pursue reality. The pursuit of reality is the commitment to explore reality the way it reality is and to change your mind when you find out you were wrong. This means that a reality-based religion that is human based can not be a static religion and have a fixed doctrine. It has to be evolving forward. It has to embrace change. It has to be humble and admit its limitations. And it has to invite scrutiny and maintain a world view that allows and encourages positive evolution.

Even then a reality-based religion is merely an attempt to pursue reality, and the religion has to earn its place in history by being sincere in its pursuit. Since one never achieves reality, one can only make a good chase and record their progress in the {In:Tree of Knowledge} so that future generations can build upon their work. We are the Church of Reality only to the extent that we stay sincere to our principles and succeed in actually moving forward.

Some religions have a static doctrine that, for it to be a reality-based religion, it has to be 100% accurate, be totally complete, the deity has to be verifiable, and the doctrine has to be an original work of the deity. For a deity-based religion with a non-static doctrine, it is accepted that the doctrine isn't perfect, isn't the exact word of the deity, but that the

doctrine is moving forward toward reality. Something like our {In:Principle of Positive Evolution}. Such a religion is both deity based and human based, but the humans know that even if the deity is perfect, the message from the deity is incomplete, or the message is subject to interpretation, or that people might have tampered with the deity's work.

For other religions to qualify as reality based, they have to accept that reality is a process of discovery, and that their religion is flawed. That their religion is, at best, a small subset of reality. That they have an evolutionary process for self-improvement. And - that they have a process for change. Anything short of this and they aren't a reality-based religion. The test for being reality based isn't so much a matter of the status of the current doctrine but the direction the doctrine is heading. It's more of a vector than a location, for those of you who are into geometry.