

Consider...

*If there is only one true God then why are there so many religions?*

*If religion makes people better then why isn't the world getting better?*

*Why do religions that advocate peace, condone violence?*

*How can a loving God allow some people to go to Hell?*

*Whose side is God on?*

*Why does the Bible and the Koran have so many inconsistencies and contradictions?*

*Is there one universal religion?*

These are a few of the questions that plague religion. From the rich to the poor, the intellectual to the simple, the philosopher to the common man, all must eventually ask these questions and seek the answers.

Derrick Holt has struggled with these questions for over 20 years. There's nothing he wants more than to know that what he has believed all of his life is the truth, but he has doubts. Is there truth in religion or are we being deceived?

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# Are We Being Deceived?

by

Chris Meyer

*...the “sacred” is an element in the structure of consciousness and not a stage in the history of consciousness. On the most archaic levels of culture, living, considered as being human, is in itself a religious act, for food-getting, sexual life, and work have a sacramental value. In other words, to be -- or, rather, to become -- a man signifies being “religious.*

*Mircea Eliade*

*Preface to A History of Religious Ideas – Volume 1*

*All men have need of the gods...*

*Homer*

# Prologue

We are born into a world we don't understand; a world of complexity and endless mysteries. To make things worse, life is just as mysterious. In our need to understand how to survive successfully within our environment and live peacefully with those around us we listen, we read and we observe, hoping that what we have heard or read or observed will help us make sense of the world in which we live and guide us in our efforts to survive. Our search for understanding would be much simpler if the information available to us was always accurate or true. Unfortunately, it is not.

It has been said, "We do not see the world as it is, we see the world as we want to see it." Bombarded by a deluge of information, we go through our days impulsively choosing what we want to believe with little or no regard for truth. Maybe there is no absolute truth. Maybe truth is subjective or relative. Maybe truth is no more than what we believe it to be, therefore there is no real universal absolute. And yet, truth, absoluteness, must exist somewhere, at least in degrees, as a universal reality. If there is no objective truth then anything goes; there is no definitive direction for men's lives. If we are left to create truth for ourselves then there is only chaos. Unity can never exist where there is no truth; no absolute. If there is no truth then we are left to wander in the darkness with no illumination other than that which we create for ourselves in our own imagination and limited understanding. We are lost.

In an attempt to achieve some measure of order in life and find direction many of us adopt a system of beliefs or creed. These standards help guide us through the uncharted waters of life. Sometimes these tenets become a part of life subtly. And, because they have crept in so imperceptibly we fail to adequately investigate their credibility. Many of us simply do not question whether or not the creed that we have accepted is actually true.

Some people really don't care whether or not what they believe is true. They are content coasting through life believing what their parents believed; accepting those things without

question. After all, parents are older and wiser; and if that creed is the most popular with the majority of the population, then there is no reason to doubt whether or not those principles are valid. If it seems to work for us, why question it?

Of all of the influences that affect our life, religion has, perhaps, the greatest impact. Mainstream religions talk as if they have God and religion figured out. There is a rigid formula for everything: sin, prayer, salvation, and the afterlife. The problem is that not everyone believes the same thing. There are a myriad of religions and religious ideas in the world. So we are faced with a dilemma: either one religion is right and the others are wrong, they are all right, or they are all wrong. But which is it? What makes one religion right and the others wrong? What makes one true and the others false? After all, people in all religions are convinced that theirs is the right one; the truth. Is it a feeling that we are right that makes us right; that what we believe is true? Or does everyone in all religions share that same feeling? And, from our own experiences, is it smart to trust feelings? Haven't we all been deceived by emotion? Remember that first love? Feelings were strong. We felt as if that person would be our mate forever. Unfortunately, for most of us, it turned out to be no more than a momentary obsession. There is a fine line between love and lust. Impulse, infatuation, desire, these are feelings that can drive us to make catastrophic mistakes. Can feelings be trusted? Is religion no more than a feeling? And if it is more than a feeling what else is it? Is it necessary that a creed or set of beliefs constitute truth or is it sufficient just to believe in something? Is religion important enough to be tested or is it enough that it gives us something to believe in and provides us with some direction in life, notwithstanding that that direction might not be the best? Who really cares? Some do.

For some, truth *is* important. But the search for truth can be exhaustive, frustrating and confusing. No road worth traveling is an easy one. However, the destination can be well worth the journey. The search for religious truth is a journey that everyone must make for themselves at sometime in their life; a quest not

just for superficial answers or traditional rhetoric, but a search for objective truth; a quest for the one true God and a universal religion. Once and for all it is important to know: is there truth in religion? Do mainstream religions have it right or are we being deceived?