

“My teacher is encouraging me to question my beliefs”

Sue Bohlin

Dear Sue,

I hope I can word all of this correctly and in the most concise manner possible. Thomas Aquinas of Renaissance times said one must question what he believes rather than accept things blindly. This was the whole mindframe of the rebirth from the dark ages. My mother of modern times says she doesn't question her faith because she wants to stay strong in her beliefs. I agree with Aquinas. Whatever is in quotation marks in this letter is an excerpt from my history teacher's e-mails to me. He wrote, “The first step in believing something for yourself is figuring out what you believe versus what others have told you to believe.” He said I should decipher “propaganda from purpose.” He studied different religions alongside Christianity such as Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism, and even though he didn't buy into them he realized that they were all promoting the same basic ideas: “The golden rule is in every major religion.” Major religions all include the idea of the flood and most promote a moral system for promotion. I know I'm kind of jumping around but I hope you'll still be able to figure the labyrinth of my mind. He wrote, “Doubt is the seeding ground of wisdom.” It drives people to find out about their faith and strengthens their beliefs. He points out the seeming contradictions in the Bible. Here come some more quotes! “The last line of the Lord's prayer is an addition by a monk. .. Luke 19:45-48, Matthew 21:12-16, and Mark 11:15-18 show Jesus turning over the vendors at the temple after His Triumphant entry into Jerusalem.”

I agree with Aquinas.

I do too, which is why I'm glad I was able to catch up with you in the bathroom at church where I could use the wall to illustrate the point that it's the strength and credibility of what we believe in, rather than the strength or fragility of our faith, that matters. That's why it's okay to question Christianity: it can MORE than hold up under scrutiny. Just like that wall was more than adequate to stand up to me pushing against it.

He wrote, "The first step in believing something for yourself is figuring out what you believe versus what others have told you to believe."

That's true. Part of growing up means examining our beliefs that sit in our head like canned goods sit on the shelf of our mind, and we decide which ones we're going to keep and which ones we're not. Once you believe to keep the "can" of a belief, it becomes yours instead of your parents' or your teachers'. HOWEVER! The most important question is not, "Do I believe it, or was I merely taught to believe it?" but "Is it true, regardless of whether I believe it or not?"

He said I should decipher "propaganda from purpose."

Who can argue with that? The bottom line question, again, is "Is it true?" And how can we know if something is true or not, apart from information from "outside the box" (the box being the world and our human experience)? That's why we as Christians depend on revelation: God is giving us information from His perspective, outside the box. That's a big way (and the ultimate way) we know whether something is true or not.

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religion.”

There’s a big difference between all religions sharing a particular element (e.g., the golden rule) and all religions promoting the same basic ideas. We can find some truth in every religion, but that doesn’t make the religions themselves true because they don’t correspond to reality. Only Christianity corresponds to reality.

I think it’s interesting how many people can “study” world religions and come to the conclusion that they’re all basically the same. Eastern religion is radically different from Christianity: the concept of reincarnation and karma is vastly different from the concept of one birth, one death, then judgment.

Furthermore, Christianity says “There is no way anyone can get into heaven on their own because only the good and perfect and holy can get in.” Other religions, if they even believe in a heaven, depend on their own good works. Christianity says, “We are dead in our sins and separated from God.” Other religions say, “Our efforts can overcome our sin.” Christianity says, “Jesus Christ is the only way to God.” Other religions say, “There are many ways to God.” Christianity says, “Christ living inside you is your power source and allows you to live a life pleasing to God.” Other religions say, “You’re on your own” or, worse, the New Age religions promise the lie, “You ARE god!”

Major religions all include the idea of the flood and most promote a moral system for promotion.

First of all, the fact that major religions all have a flood story/myth/legend says something powerful about it being a real event! What’s significant to me is that the flood story as recorded in our Bible is the one that Jesus endorsed when He quoted from that Bible, when He talked about Noah as a real person.

Secondly, about promoting a moral system for promotion: what is that but a system of human works? Why would we be surprised that all religions, which

address the subject of morality, would talk about *good* works? Again, though, Christianity is completely different from all other religions in this department. It claims that there is nothing we can do to promote ourselves, to climb any ladder of goodness and morality because we are sinners. "Promotion" comes from accepting Christ's righteousness in exchange for our sinfulness. What a swap! That isn't found in any other world religion-what human would have thought it up???

I know I'm kind of jumping around but I hope you'll still be able to figure the labyrinth of my mind. He wrote, "Doubt is the seeding ground of wisdom." It drives people to find out about their faith and strengthens their beliefs.

Doubt, if it means being openminded to finding or being reassured of the truth, may well be a seeding ground of wisdom. But I am concerned whenever ANY teacher holds up the banner of doubt as "freethinking" as if choosing to continue to believe your beliefs is closeminded and controlled. Please see this teacher as a threat to your faith. God may well be using him to help you build your faith at the same time, but know that the enemy uses disillusioned teachers to destroy students' faith all the time. It's not an accident; it's a deliberate attempt to spread the enemy's poison. It's a spiritual battle, and the teachers and professors are unknowing pawns being manipulated by the enemy in the heavenlies just as surely as if they were marionettes. And ironically, they **think** they're being "freethinkers!"

He points out the seeming contradictions in the Bible.

There's nothing wrong with examining SEEMING contradictions. Usually they come from not seeing the whole picture.

Here come some more quotes! "The last line of the Lord's prayer is an addition by a monk."

And how would he know that?

“...Luke 19:45-48, Matthew 21:12-16, and Mark 11:15-18 show Jesus turning over the vendors at the temple after His Triumphant entry into Jerusalem”

Right. Who said there could only be one cleansing of the temple? If John tells of one cleansing, and the synoptic gospels put a cleansing at another time, why does that make it a contradiction instead of an addition?

I’m so proud of you for not being afraid to face the questions. You have nothing to be afraid of. The very power of God is behind the philosophy and words of scripture, which assure you that what you believe is indeed the truth. It will always stand up to your study and hard scrutiny. What may not stand up are your assumptions about things that God never said in the first place, and that’s not a bad thing! (For instance: there are people who suffer with their desire to get up and dance to a great, moving, rhythmic song, but they believe—because they’ve been taught—that dancing is sin. But God never said it was! That’s a man-made rule that doesn’t stand up under the searchlight of “Hath God said. . .?”)

Hang in there! You have all the supernatural assistance possibly available to you!

Love,
Sue