

Question of the Week

8 December 1997

by Ted Wise (twise@mediacity.com)

QUESTION:

"I would like to tell you that, for one thing, witches respect your religion and you should respect theirs..."
Ayla

"I believe there is NO one religion that everyone can accept...I have read the Bible and if your going to put down Wiccans at least get your facts strait. Wiccan's do not harm anyone..." Tom,

ANSWER:

You both comment on our lack of understanding of your Wiccan, er, ...faith?? (the word "faith" means to put your whole confidence in, to lean on or to trust completely). I'm truly sorry that you where offended by our ignorance of Wiccans and hope you realize that your quarrel is not really with us.

Personally, it's my commitment to a certain kind of Bible study that consumes my time and prevents me from reading about Wiccans. In fact, there are lots of interesting religions that I would like to be adept in understanding. Nearly all of mankind's religious beliefs, current past or future, fascinate me.

However Wiccans, about the best I've been able to do in that regard, is to come up with a kind of rule of thumb for taking the measure of belief systems. Given the nature of the world we live in, a person (Wiccans too) must be able to judge between truth and error. For my self (and many others) the rule is to try and understand the intent of another's heart rather than the correctness of their beliefs. I certainly don't want to be one of those people that seem to see themselves as occupying an imaginary space between mankind and God and acting as though they were judges of all prayer and worship. Eventually though, as with everything, it still all comes down to what's truth and what's error.

Another aspect of this rule of thumb thing is to try and understand what the actual speaker of an old saying from an ancient document meant at the time he said it rather than what I happen to think it means. I also want to know what it meant to its hearers in their day. I don't want to believe in a form of Christianity that is a handed down version covered with the cultural barnacles of every age it docked in. That's where this rule stuff comes in. As a Christian, I ask myself how does one know if what one believes is what the Apostles believed? Because, whatever they believed is surely what Christianity is supposed to be and what I want to believe.

What you read was not the opinion of Dr. Stedman and what he had to say about witches but rather the result of careful scholarship concerning what the Biblical text actually says about witches. So Wiccans, it would appear that your quarrel is not, as I say, with us but with some ancient and worthy Prophets. You certainly are as welcome as we are to delve into the text. BUT! you do need a rule of thumb. If for no other reason, so that you don't kill the messenger just because you don't like the message. We maintain the web site, in part, to promote what we believe to be good Bible scholarship. It goes like this, What does it say? What does it mean? and the big THEREFORE, What should I do? Faith is only alive in that last one; What should I do? Wiccans obviously know that faith without good works is dead and to only "know" something is, at best, only empty learning if it isn't put to work.

I am advising you to get yourself a metaphysical dipstick to check out this Wiccan thing before you commit

yourselves totally to it. I mean it, Christianity isn't the only encrusted old philosophical boat drifting by from an earlier age. I wouldn't want you to get spiritually sick just because you ignorantly partook of some theologically out of season bad bivalves.

You say you have read the Bible. That's good. Most people are afraid of it. That's one of the first things I noticed about it. People acted weird around the Bible. They read it like no other book, skipping around all over the place. reading this passage with another from some other age. People would think you were nuts if you read any other book in that way. It felt weird to me too and that really got to me. I read the New Testament like a novel, read it straight through, Matthew to The Revelation.

Jesus is cool, what else can I say, you read it. Sure there's a lot of crap going on in God's name but I'm not His defender, He's mine. That what's so cool, a religion for people who don't seem to have the stomach to live in the world. How cool, a faith where you start off by admitting that you are a screw-up who hasn't obeyed God's commandments and aren't likely to do so in the future. How cool Christianity is, where being weak is better than being strong. How cool, how could a guy like me not like Jesus? How cool, indeed, how could a guy like Him not love a guy like me.

Before I knew Him I didn't know where I was, where I was going or if I'd like it when I got there. Now I know who I'm following and He knows where we are and what we're doing. Jesus has given me what is called a fore taste of what's to come so that I can be at peace and not be afraid that forever is some kind of one-size-fits-all nightmare wherein my very self, my me; "I" would be lost in some spiritual sea of mediocrity.

Wiccans, the Word of God never returns to Him void. It accomplishes exactly what He wishes and that alone. When He says, "Let there be light." He gets light, not lizards.

Write back if you want. I will answer as time allows me.

Ted Wise

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