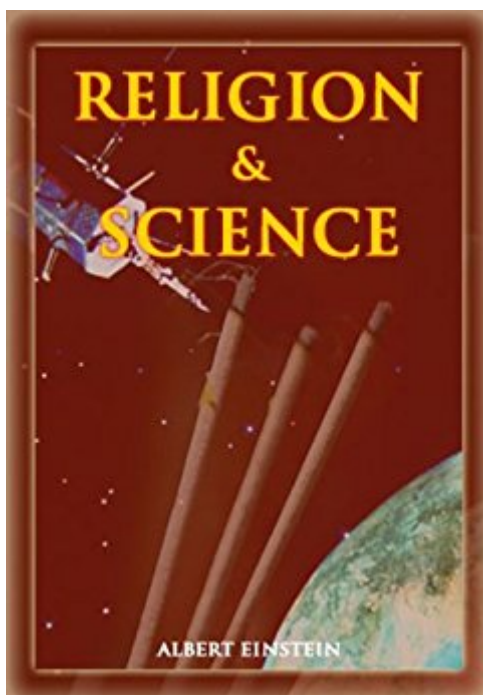


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Religion And Science



Synopsis

Religion and Science by Albert Einstein

The following article by Albert Einstein appeared in the New York Times Magazine on November 9, 1930 pp 1-4. It has been reprinted in Ideas and Opinions, Crown Publishers, Inc. 1954, pp 36 - 40. It also appears in Einstein's book The World as I See It, Philosophical Library, New York, 1949, pp. 24 - 28.

Everything that the human race has done and thought is concerned with the satisfaction of deeply felt needs and the assuagement of pain. One has to keep this constantly in mind if one wishes to understand spiritual movements and their development. Feeling and longing are the motive force behind all human endeavor and human creation, in however exalted a guise the latter may present themselves to us. Now what are the feelings and needs that have led men to religious thought and belief in the widest sense of the words? A little consideration will suffice to show us that the most varying emotions preside over the birth of religious thought and experience. With primitive man it is above all fear that evokes religious notions - fear of hunger, wild beasts, sickness, death. Since at this stage of existence understanding of causal connections is usually poorly developed, the human mind creates illusory beings more or less analogous to itself on whose wills and actions these fearful happenings depend. Thus one tries to secure the favor of these beings by carrying out actions and offering sacrifices which, according to the tradition handed down from generation to generation, propitiate them or make them well disposed toward a mortal. In this sense I am speaking of a religion of fear. This, though not created, is in an important degree stabilized by the formation of a special priestly caste which sets itself up as a mediator between the people and the beings they fear, and erects a hegemony on this basis. In many cases a leader or ruler or a privileged class whose position rests on other factors combines priestly functions with its secular authority in order to make the latter more secure; or the political rulers and the priestly caste make common cause in their own interests.

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Customer Reviews

The book is brilliant - coming from the mind of Einstein, could have expected nothing less. The evolution of religion, to manage fear then to manage morality and finally to manage cosmic wonder is beautifully explained in Chapter 1 as only a genius like Einstein could. But Chapter 2 is entirely missing from the Kindle edition. I looked at other reviews and only one other person has mentioned this. Wonder why ! The rest of you, in case you have got Chapter 2 in your Kindle edition, please let me know. Unfortunate that because of this flaw - attributable to the publisher, I am sure, I have to give 3 stars. The other 2 chapters (1 and 3) clearly deserve 5 stars.

As a writer and publisher I was surprised to find Einstein's essay, "Religion & Science," significantly confusing. At least in this era of his career, Einstein's writing seems overly lofty and wordy, studiously debating each side of the proposed issue without a clear message of his own conclusion. In my view, that gives his essay a feeling of emptiness. In fact, his debate seems to be as much with himself as his intended readers. And it certainly is wide ranging and thought provoking, well worth studying intensely. We know that a great many, if not most, who consider themselves scientists claim to be atheists or agnostics, feeling, perhaps, that they are able to create the universe and all that's in it with scientific education. We also know that many others are persons of faith, believing that scientific education studies an already existing intelligent, amazingly intricate, design. In a debate of this magnitude, it is always meaningful - in our own quest - to share the thoughts of an Einstein on such a vital part of our humanity. There is a hint of his conclusion when he says that man creates religion in his own mind to buffer life's fears, dangers, and mysteries. Nevertheless, what I wanted to know when I found this essay of Einstein's was...as a scientist, what do you think of God? I couldn't find that answer in Einstein's essay. Maybe you will.

I couldn't understand how such a great scientific mind could have religious thoughts. "God doesn't

play dice with the universe. ", always came to my mind. But now I think I understand what Einstein had in his own mind. This got me to think of a different perception of what God has to do in a scientific realm. Not too easy a read, but should be read by anyone who wants to get a different perspective of science and religion. Recommended.

The simplicity of his narrative is in keeping with his motto: "If they can't explain it simply enough, they didn't understand it well enough". I know this for a fact when I think about most of my under and postgraduate lecturers. Recommendable read.

These essays distinguish among fear-based, moral, and cosmic religion. Primitive religion is fear-based; modern mainstream religion is primarily moral. Only cosmic religion - without an invasive, anthropomorphic, rewarding and punishing view of God - is truly compatible with, indeed necessary for, the pursuit of science. The only religious institutions I know of that match such a description are Unitarian Universalism and, perhaps, New Thought Christianity.

It was intelligent and thoughtfully crafted, as you might expect from Albert Einstein. He was a great humanist as well as a great scientist, and his thoughts on the connections between religion and science were quite fascinating. Those of us who peer through a telescope for fun probably feel some experiences akin to what he talks about. That being said, the publisher really should have included a bit more. Even though the price was only 99 cents, 3000 or so words is still pretty thin.

This was a wonderful little collection of essays on science and religion by the 20th century's most important physicist. Within its pages "Religion & Science" explains Einstein's analysis of religion's changing role in society over the course of history and outlines his perspective on its relationship to science. His outlook is insightful and quite positive, demonstrating how science and religion complement one another and how, interestingly, those scientists whom we would consider to be atheists today may actually be the "only profoundly religious people." If the kindle edition contained the second essay this would probably deserve 5 stars.

Excellent short and cogent handling of a classic topic by one of the best thinkers that ever lived. I will read more of his writings that are off the subject of theoretical physics. Eventually might get to his "Theory of Relativity". Honestly and seriously, well thought out on the topic of God, religion, and science by a very intelligent man - who does not throw his beliefs or un-beliefs into the discussion.

Try it.

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