

believe (accept) whatever is true, religious people accept as true whatever they believe. This contrast owes its origin to the different ways in which we learn the two sets of beliefs.

We learn sciences when we are conscious learners, when we can discriminate between what is true and false and so on. We learn sciences deliberately; there is no indoctrination. By contrast, we learn religion right from our infancy, when we are too suggestible and are unable to discriminate and gather evidence to the contrary. There is a deliberate and comprehensive type of indoctrination. The whole process is carried on every day in the family, the neighbourhood, the schools, in literature, in the media, in cultural activities, and so on. The superiority of one's own religion is so ardently preached that the believer is prepared to die or kill in the cause of his faith. Religion gradually becomes a lifestyle, a routine, a compulsion, and a mission. For religious people the transcendental is more real and better than the empirical. In their view it governs the empirical. Now this is not the case with the sciences and scientists.

The teaching of scientific findings is not an indoctrination. Science is not one-sided propaganda. Science does not become a routine, a ritual, a compulsion or a mission. Science is not one more religion. Although orthodoxy has harassed, tortured and even killed many scientists, no scientist has ever retaliated in the spirit of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye.

Science tries to explain events with the help of antecedent natural causes. If religion explains who does this act or that act, science tries to explain *how* the given events take place. If religion explains who makes the rain fall, science explains how the rain falls. Moreover, all the world over, science is one while religions are many and function as a factor dividing humanity. Ancient man, with the help of religion, fought against the ferocious forces of nature. But now religion is making today's men fight with each other. There is little hope of religious fanatics seeing reason because their outlook is not based upon reason. Since religion is based upon faith the phenomena of dogmatism, fanaticism, fundamentalism and terrorism invariably go with it but never with science.

What about the settlement of disputes?

The arguments between two scientists are of a factual nature and can be settled by correcting each other's errors in assumptions, readings or procedures; but disputes between the followers of two different religions can never be settled since they are sentimental in nature. It works like this. If people in different countries claim that a particular river in their country is the longest river in the world, the dispute can be amicably and happily settled. But if persons claim that a particular river in their country is the most sacred river in the world, this dispute can never be settled. Religious disagreements are of this type. Disputes in science generate light without generating heat, whereas disputes between two religious people invariably generate heat without generating any light.

Religion promises miracles but it performs little; on the other hand, science promises little but performs miracles. It is science and not religion that is making blind people see, lame people walk, and so on. Thanks to science, man can fly in air and see the things inside the earth. Take again the case of liberation. religion promises man liberation which no one can verify. But it is for anyone to see that science is substantially and in-

creasingly liberating man from misery, drudgery, want, ignorance, superstition, diseases, deformities, etc. And, most important of all, science has freed man from fatalism and diffidence. Man is now the confident maker of his own fate.

There are many more points of contrast. We will note just one. Since the belief is that the scriptures and religion are perfect in every way, they need no change. But the contents of science are changing every day. Anyone can see that in becoming unchanging religion presents an obscurantist appearance while science is always the latest one. If religion by its fossil-like appearance tells us how the various people once upon a time thought, science depicts how man is currently thinking.

To ask questions is the innate tendency of man and sciences are the result. To live as guided by a religious faith is to curb the questioning spirit of man. I quite accept that for a good life science alone is not enough and that many more things are necessary. Yet one thing is evident - by curbing the spirit of questioning, religion makes us intellectual dwarfs while by encouraging the inquisitive spirit, science helps man gain new heights in what is essentially human. □

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**“Don't ask questions - just get inside”**