

Belonging and the Cost of Religion

As we move through this chapter I would like to suggest that the weight of your intention be placed more on the thoughts and ideas of philosophers and religious scholars and take with you the notion that each individual brought valuable information forth during their lifetime which may have directly or indirectly influenced how we each experience our world. What may not be as important is their life history, although I have added certain information so as to link each to their particular time periods, environments and outside influences, as I believe that we are each affected deeply by our interactions within our environments as well as our relationships. We all have something to offer based upon our experiences. To share means risking ridicule and condemnation. Both hinder the sacred life experience. Deleting judgment frees body, mind, and spirit, allowing for a great healing to take place.

Let us begin with Ibn Rushd (1126-1198), who was an Islamic religious philosopher born into a notable Spanish-Arab family of jurists in Cordoba, or Spain as we know it today. He lived at a distinct period in history when the disintegration of the Caliphate of Cordoba had led to the fragmentation of Muslim Spain, that had been defeated by a band of fervent warriors and yielded to the epicurean atmosphere of Spanish Islam.

He trained in medicine and was accomplished in philosophy, religion, and theology. In his early years he became chief judge of Cordoba under the Almoravids, which had been a position his grandfather had once held before his death- during the year Rushd was born.

He was influenced by famous philosophers of generations past. Two such truth-seekers were thinker and writer Ibn Bajja of Saragossa, and his celebrated teachers Abu Jafar Harun al-Tajali of Trujillo. Both applied energy to expanding the rationalism of the Greek philosophical tradition into a powerful intellectual tool for seeking out truths concerning God, human beings, and the world. Rushd/ Averroes and Islamic Rationalism believed that thought and action should be governed by reason which confirmed in his works, Long Commentary on the Metaphysics (c.1290) suggesting that the highest worship of God is to be found first and foremost in the philosophical science of metaphysics rather than in the rituals of religion. (Ibn Rushd/ Averroes and Islamic Rationalism)

Rushd became famous for his commentaries, which were his life's work, revolving around the writings of Aristotle. His quest for facts related to God and our human existence allowed him to differentiate between religion and philosophy. He believed that only metaphysicians were capable and proficient in interpreting doctrines contained in the prophetically revealed law and furthermore alleged that the aim of philosophy was to establish the true inner meaning of religious beliefs and convictions. He believed that the world was not created but that it was eternal, and in order to prove his theory he used Aristotle's argument of First Reason, *there always was motion and always will be motion*

throughout all time, which is eternal. He went on to prove his chosen truth by using an interpretation of the Qyran, expressing his opinion supporting the opposite view of the arguments of other religious scholars. (Al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd on the Correlation between Philosophy and Religion) Rushd was determined to draw the attention of representatives of religious teaching to philosophy and seek understanding of the world which surrounds human kind.

There is only one truth which is that religion is for everyone, no matter what religion that may be. That the whole and only truth for all believers is that religious teachings about reward and punishment, and the here-after must be accepted by the elite as well as by the masses. The philosopher must choose the best religion which for a Muslim is Islam, just as Christianity was the best religion at the time of Jesus and Judaism at the time of Moses.

Within the scope of this notion it is my belief that although there are many religions, they all equal a one true philosophy. Forcing oneself to belong to one that someone else chooses for you comes at a cost, which is often revealed to us when we least expect it. When we act out of obligation because someone else made decisions on our behalf, our body, mind, and spirit often experience some form of dysfunction. This can be applied to more than just religion.

Furthermore, Rushd believed that Islamic law conformed to the truth and conveys knowledge which supports happiness as the whole of creation, which is guaranteed. He trusted that everyone was permitted to their own share of happiness in this life as well in the next and that those who do not truly know God would be a believer merely through symbols rather than by evidence. He admits that Islamic law contains knowledge that exceeds our mortal perceptions however the divinely revealed truths should be accepted by everyone. He advocated that creation is a continuing process, which Aristotle demonstrated in the perpetuity of matter while also asserting that God knows of details but that his wisdom is different from that of humans.

Religion and philosophy are two forms of knowledge, which complete rather than nullify each other. (Al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd on the Correlation between Philosophy and Religion (247) Consider that philosophy is merely a tool used for understanding why we are here today and that religion could be used to better articulate and recognize our beingness. The Bible, religious and philosophical teachings allow us to peek into the past to see what others have learned and how to live a better life, possibly a life of oneness and faithfulness. Should we merely choose a religion based on symbols rather than having felt something stir within us, potentially revealing 'the path', we might be left feeling empty and disconnected in our religious or spiritual principles.

I once had a friend that would ask me each Christmas eve whether I was going to go to church that evening. I found it quite interesting that he went no other time during the year except that night, seeking to be freed from any guilt of his wrong doings during that

year. At the time I answered that I had not gone throughout the year but that had always been connected and in communication with God. I did not feel the need to go into a church to gain man nor Gods acceptance or absolution.

Just as Rushd felt that religion and philosophy could understand one another, this would be appropriate for achieving the common purpose of reaching the truth, which also resonates with my own beliefs. He tried to harmonize the relationship between religion and philosophy, striving to draw the attention of representatives of religious teaching to philosophy and aimed to understand the world which surrounded humanity. We each are entitled to our own righteous practices as they relate to us. If by chance our practices are hurtful to others, then and only then would I say that we are not acting in the best interest of humanity and that we are out of balance with our sacred life.

Let's take a lighthearted look at our religious and government systems. My intention for bringing this to light is to gain a better understanding of what is within our power to change.

Martin Luther, a monk plagued by disproportion between his own sense of sinfulness and the perfect righteousness God required for salvation. Money and power seemed to be the object of political and religious affection. Man presumed themselves to be above God, manipulating, controlling, and commanding, stepping on the meek and down trodden to fulfill their lustful ideals, as they have since time began. What makes this time any different from years past? Choice and faith perhaps. We all know that someone has to take the first step in order for all others to follow. Rushd was moved by his search for truth; just as Aristotle, Hippocrates, Luther and others did.

During the late Middle Ages, popular resentment of clerical immunities and ecclesiastical abuses spread among German cities and towns which yielded an unorganized national opposition to Rome's reform; protest of indulgences and the theology that legitimated them.

Luther believed that the righteousness that God demands did not result from charitable acts and religious ceremonies but was given full measure to anyone and all who believed in and trusted Jesus Christ as their perfect righteousness satisfying to God. He believed that faith without charitable service to one's neighbor was dead, not whether good works should be done, but how those works should be respected. He argued that it was unbiblical to treat works as contributing to one's eternal salvation and that this was only something that God could bestow. Good works expected over a lifetime, not because they earned salvation.

The believer bound to Christ by faith already possessed Gods perfect righteousness.

I think it's interesting that even today we have a tendency to think along these lines. There are many that think that by doing for others we might be spared any suffering in Hell or Purgatory by God or some other personal religious entity of our choosing.

In Luther's day, indulgences paid would release the living of the obligation to perform a work of satisfaction for a sin, which Luther reacted to with anger and frustration, protesting the sale of indulgences that were being used to raise money for a new Saint Peters basilica in Rome. What he saw then was what he considered to be a circus, where people paid to be falsely discharged of their sins and freed of purgatory in the name of God. What makes now any different from Luther's experiences of the 1500s?

I don't believe that our salvation can be bought or sold but is something only we have the power to enforce within our own lives.

I, like you, have had my struggles as you are about to see. I may have been born with the exceptional gift of empathy yet I'm still very much human and prone to error. In the pages to follow I chose to share what I had learned and how I choose to live in order to engage in faithful awareness, always eager to live this life for as long as I am allowed to do so.

No matter how you or I choose to live our lives be aware that life will go on in one form or another. As we evolve in our awareness all things around us will evolve too; the earth included.

All time spent living is sacred, deserving of great respect. As the earth shifts and changes beneath us, this sacred time calls to us all, silently requesting us to be awake and aware, inviting us to shift and change also. There is a divine intelligence perpetually at work here and many are feeling something tugging at them, while others may only be experiencing the Earth changes by seeing what is happening around them. Some may only be experiencing minor discomfort while others are driven to the emergency room to have major body work done. As you awaken to your sacred time I suggest you pay attention. Your body may ache, your heart may be beating strangely, or you have begun to feel and experience things differently than you once had. Note that something is waiting patiently as we align ourselves with the one divine truth. The truth as it pertains to you and you alone, where your soul purpose for this life gets revealed. Where your soul is ready to live its sacredness in real-time, where everything you say and do affects the tides, the weather, or it affects how other people view us, view themselves, how they treat each other, how they treat the animals, this planet, how they will affect future generations or even how it may affect extraterrestrial and stellar life forms. It's a time for integrity, honesty, true inner strength, humility, compassion and spiritual passion. It is time to clean ourselves up, to stop the killing, the thieving, and the raping of the people and the planet. It is time to find solutions to problems without depleting our natural resources, overpopulation, and deforestation.

Let us be clear. You chose this book for a reason. Perhaps this is your sacred time and your soul is ready for its sacred movement or you've already begun your journey with spirit-filled living and all you need is a little nudge to provoke the birthing of your new sacred self. My part by authoring this book it is my intention to provoke thought and sacred action. What will you do with it? Using this text will help you to peer deeply into your future while also aiding you to purge anything that no longer serves your sacred self. What will you look like as you live your sacred life? To delete any old, outmoded ideas about fear and lack, I suggest that you grasp the notion that this is the life that only you yourself can live, and that no one in the world has to do without in order for you to have this new life. You were born into this life with a particular skillset and only you are able to do the thing God sent you here to do.

As you move through each chapter you will get a sense of who I was when I wrote it and also who I have become based upon my own personal life experiences. The life I will be sharing in the pages ahead is very real, it's mine, and it served a purpose. I have no regrets and cannot imagine being anything other than what and who I am today. I am deeply moved and in love with the idea of a God source that desires nothing more than to be in relationship with each of us, and it is within these pages that I pray you too get to know, understand, and fall deeply in love with It.