

Axiology

Axiology, is taken from the Greek word “Axia”, which means “value”, “worthiness”, it is a theory of value. It seems that the term was first used by Lotze, and then by Brentano, Husserl, Scheler, Nicolai, Hartmann and others, chiefly for general formal theory of value. Scheler contrasted it with praxeology, a general theory of action, but it has for the most part been contrasted with deontology, a theory of morally right action (Maunter, 2005).

Axiology denotes a value theory that typically indicates the nature, kinds, criteria, and status of values and value judgments and attempts to resolve such disputes as whether values are subjective or objective. Although moral value is important such as religious and aesthetic one, “Axiological ethics” determines right and wrong actions by reference to their ends, consequences, often identical to theological ethics (Findlay, 1970; cited by Childress, 2000).

Agathology is another word, which can be used in this field. Agathology is taken from the Greek “agathos” (good) and “logos” (discourse), agathology is the science or theory of the good (Macquarrie and Childress, 2001).

Yaqar is an adjective occurring about forty times in the Bible with the primary meaning “precious” or “valuable.” The love of God is described as “precious” (Ps. 36:7), as are the people of God (Lam. 4:2). And lady wisdom in prov. 3: 15 is declared to be “more valuable than jewels (Renn, 2005).

In some cases, the word “goodness” has been applied in the Bible in the sense of “perfection” or “completeness” in Gen. 1:4ff, as God’s assessment of his creative endeavors. Other examples of his sense are found in pass. 136: 1; 145:9, which point to the goodness of God given at Sinai.

“God” in the sense of high quality is indicated, for example, in reference to gold in the land of Eden (Gen. 2:12); cattle (Gen. 18:7), trees (2 Kgs. 3:25); figs (Jer. 24:2); the intelligence of Abigail (1 Sam. 25:3). The fertility of Canaan is also described this way (e.g., Exod. 3:8; Num. 14:7; Josh. 23:13ff; 1 Kgs. 14:13).

The sense of “goodness” as a moral or spiritual virtue is found in Gen. 2:17; 3:5 in reference to the “tree

of knowledge of good and evil.” Material blessing from God is also described as that which is “good” (cf. Gen. 50:20; 1 Sam. 24:19; Ps. 107:9).

Also, that which is “good” include the blessing of God in a general sense (e.g. pass. 23:6; 118; Jer. 21:10; Amos 7:4); kindness (cf. 2 Sam. 3:13); God’s protection (cf. Ezra 7:9; 8:18; Neh. 2:8); that which is pleasing to the Lord (cf. 1 Kgs. 14:13); and that which brings comfort (cf. 2 Kgs. 20:19), (Renn, 2005).

“Doing well”, that is, acting in accordance with God’s character, is mentioned in Gen. 4:7 in relation to the warning God gives to Cain after the murder of his brother Abel. “Doing good” in a general sense is referred to in Lev. 5:4; Ps. 36:3; Jer. 10:5.

The nominal meaning “good” in the sense of “that which is morally upright”, including people, is indicated in Matt. 5:45; 12:35; John 5:29; Rom. 2:10; 7:13, 18; 9:11; Eph. 6:8. Elsewhere, “good” denotes “ultimate spiritual benefit” in Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:11; 10:1 (Renn, 2005).

In relation to ethical standards, data in the Bible refers to the knowledge of right living, wisdom, and understanding in Gen. 2:19, 17; prov. 1:29; 2:6; 6:9ff; 12:1; 13:16; 23:12, prov. 1:7 defines the beginning of knowledge as the fear of God (Renn, 2005). Moral principles are meaningful and unchanging, because they reflect absolute moral realities (Peterson, 1986).

Islam has introduced absolute and unchangeable values. The reason of their unchanged ability is that they are based on man’s unchangeable nature, and since man’s nature does not change, “there is no changing God’s creation” (30:30), therefore, those values do not change as well, that is all men in all times and in all places consider them inherently and naturally valuable.

Islam itself is a collection of these very values, and the reason of eternity and exchangeability of Islam is summarized in the above point: “set thy face to the religion, a man of pure faith – God’s original upon which He originated mankind” (30:30).

Since man’s nature does not change, thus Islam and Islamic values that are quite consistent with man’s nature does not change too. Therefore, it can be deducted that the Divine religion is not an unfamiliar set and, collection for human being, rather it is the very familiar story that all humans has naturally an inherent acquaintance with it, and it was in the light of this very interior union that all men in “the world of Zar” when God prepared and made present all of them and asked them whether I am not your Lord, they all answered yes, we bear witness that Thou art our Lord: **“And when thy Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed, and made them testify touching themselves, ‘Am I not your Lord’? They said, ‘yes, we testify’** (the Qur’an, 7: 172). “With thee will I establish my covenant” (the Bible, Genesis 6:18).

We cannot confine “the world of Zar” only as word before this nature and this world in which all men were present and inherently answered the question of God, rather when man purifies his soul from all sorts of sins, or has not contaminated his nature by different sins, if he at any moment is asked this question from God that: **“Am I not your Lord?”, he verily will answer that “yes, we testify.”** Thus, it is

not for nothing that one of the names of the prophet of Islam is “the reminder”: ***“then remind them! Thou art only a reminder”*** (88:21).

We use the word “reminding”, when we remembered something and then we forgot it, and we remembered God’s message, and forgot it, thus it is the God’s prophet, which reminds us of it. Imam Ali considers natural and inherent rapprochement with men as the main duty and task of the God’s prophets (to get them fulfill the pledges of His creation) (Nahj–al–Balaghah, Khotheh 1).

The Bible refers to an intimate relationship between God and humankind, sovereignty initiated, maintained and fulfilled by God alone; and involving a commitment to life and death from both God and humankind. The solemn bonding between God and his people lies at the heart of the covenant phenomenon.

This bond testifies to God’s mercy and compassion in nurturing and redeeming his people, guaranteeing them an intimate relationship with himself as well as the prospect of blissful life in the land he had given them. All of this, however, was conditional on the people’s response of gratitude, obedience, and exclusive loyalty (Renn, 2005).

“Take hold of eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6: 12). That is because: “when you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it.

Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the (temple) messenger, ‘My vow was a mistake’. Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands” (Ecclesiastes 5:4–6). “Obey the King’s commands, I say, because you took an oath before God. Do not be in a hurry to leave the King’s presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause” (Ecclesiastes 8:2–3).

This very natural man’s agreement with God, i.e. with Divine values, indicates that these values are in harmony with the man’s nature, and then indicates their being absolute and eternity. Therefore, it can be said that as man does not force himself to enjoy the beauty of a beautiful flower or a beautiful handwriting and painting in the same way, he will not force himself to enjoy and love beautiful morality, behavior and thought (religion in itself is nothing else save these very beauties), unless that man is not normal.

If a man involves in the nature deforming (metamorphosis), that is his Divine nature has deformed, has become lightless or insensible and unfeeling, then it may be that he feels contrary to his nature, i.e. enjoys indecency and obscenity. “Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law” (the Bible, Romans 7:21–22).

This superficial and seeming pleasures of the worldly men are nothing save repelling the pains, such as hunger or thirst which are pains and afflictions that food and water remove them, now if that food or water

is eaten or drunk more, they in turn change into a pain, while the real pleasures (happiness) are those ones the more the seeker of which reaches them, not only he does not get tired and weary, rather he will become more lovesick, because spiritual pleasures such as the nearness to God have a state that the more the wayfarer of this route is closer to God, and the more feels the pleasure of comprehension of acquaintance with God, and the more he utilizes from immense ocean of Divine love, his thirst will be increased.

It is not inopportune that Imam Sajjad refers to this fact that: “My God, who can have tasted the sweetness of Thy Love, then wanted another in Place of Thee” (Sahifah-al-Sajjadiah, the whispered prayer of the lovers).

Therefore, it can be claimed that one’s soul thirst for God (Psalm 42:2). And according to Jesus Christ: “Love the Lord Your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: `love your neighbors as yourself`. All the law of the Prophets hang on these commandments” (Matthew 22:37- 40). Thus, “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in Zeal, but keep your spiritual favor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.

Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not think you are superior.

Do not repay everyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as, it depends on you, live peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath...Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12: 9-21).

This is happiness if God lightens a minute of man’s life with it, its value should surely be known and should not be easily lost because it is alchemy and the world sizes it easily from men. That is the reason why the prophet of Islam emphasizes that for all the people there is breathes for their Lord in the days of their lives breathes, thus it is up to all people to expose themselves to these spiritual breathes and not to turn away from them.

It reminds us of the Hafez’s poem: “In the morning from Laila’s dwelling, lighting flashed; Alas! With the harvest of Majnun, heart – rent what it did” (p. 134). As if these were parts of the heaven and paradise that God has placed in the earth.

According to the Bible, God will surely bestow joy and happiness to those who are deserving for it: “You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy” (Psalm 30: 11). The result of such a holy joy will be

praising of God: that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. Lord my God, I will praise you forever” (Psalm 30:12).

Although, on the other hand, it can be said that reaching God and praising Him as it deserves will cause such a joy and happiness: “I will be glad and rejoice in your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul”(Psalm 31:7).

Those who hope in God achieve a position in which their hearts rest in Him: “Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord” (Psalm 31:24). That is because “The Lord preserves those who are true to him, but the proud he pays back in full” (Psalm 31:23).

“In Him our hearts rejoice, for we in his holy name, may your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you”(Psalm 33: 21–22). “Take delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4).

The real faithful do not do the values –related affairs habitually, rather they have reached a position that they have identified and experienced them valuable and have identified the bad affairs as indecent and they have really achieved a state that have become sure and convinced themselves of this fact that goodness causes happiness and man’s deliverance from every grief, affliction and sorrow, and that badness causes all sorrows, and since they have identified God’s ordainment as all wisdom and knowledge, thus they have embraced it most heartily and have acted according to it.

According to the Bible, “This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for people to eat, to drink and find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them – for this is their lot.

Moreover, when God gives people wealth and possessions, and ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil – this is gift of God. They seldom reflect on the days their lives, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart” (Ecclesiastes 5: 18–20). “There is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad.

Then joy will accompany them to their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 8: 15). But contrary to these: “I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on the human race: God gives some people wealth, possessions and honor, so that they lack nothing their hearts desire, but God does not grant the ability to enjoy them, and strangers enjoy them instead” (Ecclesiastes 6: 1–2).

“Those who love money never have enough: those who love wealth are never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. As good increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them?” (Ecclesiastes 5: 10–11).

These are the real causes of wars and quarrels: “What causes fights and quarrel among you? Do not

they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire, but do not have, so you kill” (James 4:1-2).

Therefore, we should understand this valuable fact, that: “Whoever wants to save their life will lose it but whoever loses their life will find it. What good will it be for you to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul? Or what can you give in exchange for your soul?” (Matthew 16:25-26).

“Hypocrisy” will be increased in a society which an interior transformation has not occurred in its individuals. In such a state, which is frequently occurred in the society, the peoples’ value standards are false and truth less.

Therefore, their standards for pleasure and pain are mistaken, then they enjoy in their minds those things which are not really deserving for pleasure, and they suffer from those things that there is no place for grief and sorrow thus wherever they should enjoy, they do not, and wherever they should regret, they do not.

Imam Ali, in this field says: “What is your condition? You feel satisfied with what little you secured from this world while much of the next world of which you have been deprived does not grieve you. The little of this world which you lose pains you so much so that it becomes apparent in your faces, and in the lack of your endurance over whatever is taken away from you; as thou this world is your permanent abode, and as though its wealth would stay with you for abode” (Nahj-al-Balaghah, Khotbeh 113).

Imam Ja’far Sadeq believes that the brief and summation of all of the beautiful religion of God is “friendship and affection”, and according to the Bible: “God is love “(1Jn. 4:10). It should also be noted that man can achieve a position in which not only loves all humans but also he loves all particles of the universe.

God as a creator of the world is at the peak of beauty and He loves the beauty. How is it possible that God is the manifestation of all beauties, and the universe and the world which is the place of manifestation of His being and existence is not at the peak of perfection and beauty: “Who created all things well (the best or the fairest)” (32:7).

As, along with this existence and originating book, His law book (scripture, i.e. the Qur’an) is the best and the most beautiful: “Learn the Qur’an for it is the fairest of discourses” (Nahj-al-Balaghah, Khotbah: 110), that is because: “God has sent down the fairest discourse as Book” (39:23).

The Bible describes the universe as collection of “good” things: “And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good”(Genesis :12). And such a “good” system and process rules over other things of the world, such as day and night (Genesis: 18), every living creature... (Genesis 1:21).

The idea of creation implies that the whole created world is good (Peterson, 1986). Thomas Aquinas

believed that everything in the world that exists is more or less good. There are varying degrees of excellence. There cannot be infinite scale of good. Therefore, there must be something, which is perfection. This is what everyone understands to be God (Dewar, 2002).

The more is man's wisdom and knowledge and his comprehension from the nature and its beauties, his goodness and beneficence will be increased, on the other hand, the more is goodness and beneficence in man, a particular kind of knowledge and wisdom will be increased in him and he will better comprehend the values and beauties of the world.

It is not for nothing that the prophet of Islam do not consider as a Muslim a man who does not try for the Muslim's affairs, because, as said, "How it is possible for such a man to understand the beautiful facts of the God's religion and act according to them?" Thus, a real Muslim and religious person, in first place, confirms by his behavior that religiosity and faith is good and beautiful.

It is not desirable that he says only with his tongue that values are valuable while his actions do not confirm this. According to the Bible, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

The rain came down, the steams rose, and the winds blew, and beat against house, and it fell with a great crash" (Matthew 7:24-27). If man does not possess a good personality, and he only establishes prayer apparently, then he will make other people pessimistic to the prayer.

On the contrary, if a man with a lovely personality and sufficient popularity establishes prayer, prayer will become respected and lovely for the other people.

The first criteria for the judgment about a society with a special religion are the behaviors of the individuals of that society. If those behaviors are not confirmable, then the others may dislike such religion.

While it is seen nowadays that there has been created a long distance between the behaviors and cultures of some societies as compared with their religions.

Some people have imagined the religion as an awful and horrible in their mind, escaping from it in a confused state, while religion and its cognition is the most beautiful, the most scientific, the most artistic and the most subtle categories and topics of the world. Thus, it is the artist knowledgeable that can the truth of the beautiful religion of God as it is and transfer it to the others as it deserves.

As a religion, Islam is much more than just a system of beliefs. It is a way of life, though, word and deed. To the Muslim believer faith without action is meaningless. Faith must lead to action and action brings

faith into the outside world where it can grow and deepen (Keene, 2005).

The word “ethics” is related to the Greek ethos habit, custom. It is used in a number of related senses. The Latin moralis was first used by Cicero, which explains why in many contexts moral ethical morality ethics, moral philosophy ethics are pairs of synonyms (Maunter, 2005).

Ethics is the study of the concepts involved in practical reasoning: good, right, duty, Obligation, virtue, freedom, rationality, choice. Also the second-order study of the objectivity, subjectivity, relativism, or skepticism that may attend claims made in these terms (Blackburn, 2005).

From the Qur’an we learn that God has endowed human beings with values. They are innate in the human Spirit. The Spiritual entity in a human being cannot therefore be considered as a social product but an innate reality (Ashraf; quoted in Ashraf & Hirst, 1994).

Virtues are general dispositions to do the right thing at the right time. Any list of virtues, therefore, embodies the values which prevail in social or cultural traditions. One might have a list of virtues which would constitute our views of the thoroughly virtuous person.

It is quite possible for a person to accept the reasons for behaving in a particular way but not be disposed so to act – not to have the relevant virtue. Indeed, such capacity to reason may be put at the disposal of the very feelings which are not virtues (Pring, 2000).

Moral and religious behaviors are based on values: “Jesus replied; you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbors as yourself Sell your possessions and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven” (Matthew 19: 18–19 & 21).

We should really ask God to make us committed to values, according to the Bible: “In you, Lord, I have taken refuge; Let me in your righteousness” (Psalm 31:1). (Trust in the LORD and do well) (Psalm 30:3). But as for the evildoers: “The words of their mouths are wicked and deceitful; they have caused to be wise and to do well; even on their beds they plot evil; they commit themselves to a sinful course and not reject what is wrong.”

“How great is your goodness, which you bestow in the sight of all on those who take refuge in you. In the shelter of your presence, you hide them from all human intrigues. You keep them safe in your dwelling from accusing tongues” (Psalm 31:19–20). Therefore: “Turn from evil and do good; then you will dwell in the land forever” (psalm 37: 27).

We refer here to the parable of the sheep and goats, a story that Jesus told (Matthew 25: 31–46) to teach his followers that they would, one day, have to account for their actions on earth. These are the questions they will be asked for God according to the parable: have they fed the hungry? Have they given water into the thirsty? Have they invited the stranger into their house? Have they visited the prisoner in his prison cell? Have they looked after the sick? Have they clothed the naked? (Keene,

2005).

The Qur'an also teaches Muslims how they should prepare themselves to appear before God on the Day of Judgment. To help them in this preparation, Muslims are given guidance about matters such as (avoiding) drinking alcohol and gambling; marriage and divorce; the treatment of widows and orphans and the lending of money with interest (avoiding usury) (Keene, 2005).

There are many examples in the Hadith of how the prophet of Islam avoided waste, was kind to animals and respected the earth. All Muslims must follow his example.

What often lies at the heart of religious behavior, and indeed conviction, is not morality but duty. It is the person's responsibility to respond in certain ways; to do their duty, to God, to another person, to society, to their community.

Morality, in religious terms, is less connected with conventional actions and more with a developing sense of responsibility and commitment. Religion may of course embody ethical principles which are not unhelpful to moral understanding (Elan and Brown; cited from Best, 2000).

Astley (1994) lists the (overlapping) categories of Christian attributes as follows:

Christian beliefs – that, understanding and knowledge: including beliefs about God, Jesus, the Church, human nature and the world; Christian beliefs –in: including faith and trust in God, or in salvation, baptism etc.; Christian attitudes and values: covering Christian spirituality and moral virtues; the valuing of Jesus, Mercy etc.; Christian emotions and feelings: including awe, thankfulness, pity, joy, etc. (this category may be entitled “subjective religious experiences”).

Christian experiences, in the sense of “objective religious experiences” of God, Christ, the Spirit etc. and their activity; Christian moral actions: e.g. active love, forgiveness, trust, obedience; Christian religious actions: e.g. prayer, profession of faith, evangelism, worship, church membership/ involvement; Christian or theological reflection and criticism: including those interpretative and evaluative cognitive skills and processes – with their related attitudes, unless these are placed in category (3) – that lead to active “Christian reflection” and/ or “doing theology.”

Astley (1994) concludes that Christianity is many – sided. Robert H. Thouless listed a range of factors in the development of a “religious attitude” – viz intellectual, social, the experiential in various forms, and personal. Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark designated five core dimensions of religiousness: belief, ritual and devotional religious practice, religious experience, intellectual knowledge, and consequential effects on general conduct.

The empirically – based factor analytic studies of Morton B. King and Richard A. Hunt found various religious dimensions including creedal assent, personal devotion, church attendance, attitudes towards the church, religious belief, subjective religious disposition (measuring the importance of religion in one's

life etc.), spiritual experience and (respect for) moral beliefs.

The psychologist of religion, Laurence Brown, lists knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, experiences, belonging and practice as individual factors of religiousness; together with trust, doctrines, consequence and rituals under the heading of “social contexts.”

Such research has encouraged students of religion to move away from thinking of religion “as a coherent ‘thing’ with rather sharp boundaries.” “Bundle” has the wrong connotations, perhaps, but this cognition of the multiplicity of religious dimensions is surely to be welcomed.

To be religious is to have certain religious attitudes and to engage in certain patterns of behavior that are expressive of such attitudes, the attitude predisposing person to behave in that way. Clearly religious people have such attitudes at least partly because they have learned them.

They have developed them as a result of certain experiences, including their experiences of other people. Very often these experiences have been placed in their way by Christian religious education (Astley, 1994).

Christianity introduces people to, and “imposes” on them, certain spiritual values. Those who learn Christianity adopt some elements of Christian spirituality that lead to their (this worldly and/ or other worldly) “release” and “hearing.”

It is some such form of Christian spirituality, experienced as salvific, that constitutes the hearth of the Christian religion. The word “spirituality” is used here in a very broad sense to describe “those attitudes, beliefs, and practices which animate people’s lives and help them to reach out towards super – sensible realities” (Astley, 1994).

Human beings are expected to be committed to values because the knowledge of identification of “good and evil” has been given to man: “And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil” (Genesis 3: 22).

According to Aquinas, reason is the God – given tool for discerning what is good (Dewar, 2002). Martin Luther and the Reformist insisted that human reason played no part in seeing right and wrong. God’s revelation (in the Bible) was sufficient, and the Bible acts as the source of all Christian morality.

In contrast, the scholastic (such as Aquinas) argued that God – given reason was the tool by which distinction between right and wrong could be seen (Dewar, 2002). Therefore: “I have set the Lord always, before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Psalm 16:8).

The result of the above will be: “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh rest in hope” (Psalm 16: 9). Because God, only God, is the real source of happiness: “Thou wilt shew the path of lie in thy presence is fullness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Psalm 16:11).

“I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psalm 16: 15). That man who has tried to be committed to values and virtues is defined in the Bible as: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth the mediate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brighten forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:1–3).

But the man who is not committed to these values is described as: “The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall Perish” (Psalm 1: 4–6).

Theology has sometimes argued truly to love God or our neighbor requires us to renounce Eros entirely, and with it our desire for the beatitude of God’s presence and our natural reactions to our neighbor’s charms.

In “believing in God”, Gareth Moore wrestled with the problem of rewards, while framing a powerful account of Christian spirituality. He argues there that the talk of reward that we so frequently encounter in the new Testament is often not what it seemed, but is being used by Jesus only “in order to encourage people to forget all about rewards.”

The depth grammar of Jesus’ language is that ‘to seek a reward from God is not to seek a reward at all’, for the Christian life is presented as an end in itself and not as a means to something further. The point is that the reward is not the point; and, in any case, seeking the reward for its own sake is as counter – productive spirituality as seeking happiness for its own sake is psychologically. We must seek first the kingdom of God (Mtt. 5: 33; cited in Astley, 2004).

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