

Prophet, Heal Thyself!

Lithos

Hello and welcome to the Devil's Discourse. And with me here today, I have Leraje.

Leraje

Hail Satan.

Lithos

I have Ligeia.

Ligeia

God is dead. Hail Satan.

Lithos

And I have Pike.

Pike

Hail Satan.

Lithos

And, uh, I'm Lithos. Hail Satan. And today I'm going to hand over to Pike to introduce the theme because it was her idea. So Pike, over to you.

Pike

Hello. So, uh, as Satanists, we're often, and I think not just Satanists, but atheists in general, are often frustrated with what we see as mediaeval trappings of various religions, uh, that feel so odd in the modern world and whether you take Christianity or Islam or something else. So in this episode, uh, we'll talk about whether there is a place for religion in the modern world at all and if yes, how it could be transformed to reflect the values we hold now as opposed to, uh, you

know, some random crazy talk written down a long time ago which doesn't ring true now and probably didn't even then. So what does religion bring to us that is of value? Uh, what is harmful? How would other religions have to change in order for us to accept them as a force for good?

In other words, get ready to blaspheme.

Lithos

Yes, sorry, it's just a mention of blasphemy and I got all excited.

Pike

To kick us off, I will ask this question. Do you see non theistic or atheistic Satanism as a religion at all or is it just a belief system? And what's the difference?

Leraje

I do.

Pike

You do.

Ligeia

I see it as well as a religion.

Lithos

So do I. Yep.

Pike

Okay, so it is a religion. And what aspects? Why are you attracted to a religion in the first place? You could just be atheists.

Leraje

I think I can only speak from my own personal perspective. And I think the difference between a religion and a philosophy or just a kind of like belief is that

we do rituals which are, uh, normally associated with theistic religions. We operate under a kind of like, not, it's not a strict or kind of like set set of rules as such, but we have a kind of like, guiding philosophy.

He says, after saying it isn't a philosophy.

Lithos

Well, nine principles.

Leraje

Yeah, yeah.

Lithos

Or six pillars, depending on what, what you're, what you're into, what particular yeah, sort of Satanic religion you adhere to.

Leraje

I think the thing to me though is that theism and kind of like a theistic religion has a supernatural element. But people, when you say religion to somebody, they always think of belief in some kind of supernatural being. But that's not the definition of a religion. You know, there are plenty of non, uh, theistic types of religion of which we are one, Satanism.

But there's non theistic paganism, there's non theistic Wiccans, there's even, believe it or not, a non theistic sect of Christianity.

Pike

Wow.

Leraje

Yeah. So I don't think there's, I think the first thing we need to differentiate is that if we, even if we do see ourselves as a religion, religion per se does not necessarily mean supernatural.

Pike

Right?

Ligeia

Yeah.

Pike

So it would be the rituals, if you like, personal spirituality. Right. That is the distinction between uh, just a belief system and the religion, is that right?

Lithos

Yeah, that and sort of a set of principles at the bottom of it. Actual principles that uh, are sort of guidance to how you conduct yourself towards yourself and towards others and the rituals. Yeah. There is atheism and I think a lot of us might have come here via atheism. I certainly did.

And I, uh, found atheism particularly of the Dawkins variety, a bit dull because they don't have the rituals. You know, it's like they'll dismiss anything like that as being silly. And they're also very dismissive of other religions, as in trying to claim that you've got to be stupid to believe in anything supernatural.

That you're kind of like you're constantly trying to prove that something which is unprovable doesn't exist. You know, it's just so much time wasting and such a sort of humourless concept that I found most atheism really just yeah, didn't do it for me.

Leraje

I think that there's a difference between, I mean, atheism literally just means I don't believe in supernatural gods. It's kind of like a lack of a system, a lack of a sort of set of beliefs or principles or whatever you want to call them. And that's maybe what differentiates us from atheism. And atheism itself is a stange...

Ligeia

But it's still a religion.

Leraje

That's what I mean. Yeah. That's why we, that's why I consider us to be a religion because we do have those things. We do have rituals and we do have a set of guides.

Ligeia

Sorry.

Leraje

Go on. Sorry.

Ligeia

Yeah. I just wanted to say, for me, religion is mostly, I see it as a like human construct of like a cultural technology almost. So it's there to solve normal human problems that are everywhere, every human goes through. And we look for people who can be our community based on how we approach the, the solution to the problems or the ideas or whatever we want to be concerned with. Like, with us is the justice fighting the prejudice fighting mostly what is obsolete with the traditional religions nowadays. I, uh, would say, like misogyny and the traditional look at the family as a unit or, you know, the roles of, what are we? Genders, no genres, genders, how to raise children, many things. Uh, approach to medication, to the scientific ways of, you know, claims. Uh, the aspect of, you know, looking at

very old books like the Bible as what they are for us, it's, it's a piece of literature. It's a, it's a myth.

It's a book written so long ago that it can't be relevant to anything for a modern human being in this world. So for me, we are religion, even though we don't believe in the, in the spiritual mythical creature or creatures, demons, angels, who can help us if we pray or if we manifest the good stuff.

So it's not the... the new age situation. Uh, ah, like, that's also for me, like a no go. Uh, but we are religion because that's my definition of what it is.

Leraje

You know, I think you said a really important word there, Ligeia as well, which is another thing that I agree with you, which is why we're a religion and that's community.

Ligeia

Community, yes.

Leraje

We sort of like, seek out. We found each other, so we are a community. And there are other satanic communities. You know, there's TST, there's GOS. There's, uh, Satanic Circle there's the, the Morning Star Group. There's lots of different variants. But the one thing we have in common is that we all found a community.

And, um, that's, that kind of makes us. I think that's one of the kind of, like, definitions of a religion. Whereas atheism, again, it's, it's kind of a lack of that. Uh, and I'm not saying there aren't atheist groups, because there are atheist groups. You know, there's people like the National Secular Society and groups like that, and that's fine.

But no. Don't know what I'm trying to say. If somebody wants to step in and tell me what I'm saying.

Lithos

No fun. No fun.

Ligeia

It's not sexy. It's not sexy.

Lithos

The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, arguably are having fun with it.

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah.

Leraje

Yes.

Ligeia

It's like some people may ask, like, what is the difference between us and the humanists? Well, it's the ritualistic sexiness, if you ask me.

Pike

Yeah, totally.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Pike

So we like rituals, we like community. Right. So you say, if you take Christianity, it's got those two things where I think so some aspects of that has got to be good. But what makes say uh, sometimes these religious communities toxic? What's... Because we have a community. They have a community.

Leraje

They do have a community. But I think uh, the sort of, the community. Well, to take it a step back, the sort of like principles that like Lithos mentioned earlier, the principles that our community is based upon are kind of like concerned with humanity and they're very kind of like humanistic principles. Whereas Christianity and um, the other big Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Islam and the smaller ones too, they are primarily concerned with venerating God and getting, you know, they're not living a good life or they're not asking people to live a good life because they think it's, it's a positive thing to be good for the world.

They're doing it because they want to get into heaven. And I think that's, that's where I disagree with them.

Ligeia

Yeah. And the morality is based on the book and the scripture. It's not... we, I think what we believe is that the morality is deeply embedded in, in the humans and it needs to be formed at the time we live. So we can't be following something that was put together 2,000 years ago, maybe even before that.

Just because, you know, it has been alive, because people created it and kept it alive, it doesn't mean that that's the truth for me today. Yeah, so. So I think that's, that's the huge difference between us. Like we don't think that because we don't follow a book or a scripture, we are not moral or we are unable to live ethical, moral. Moral life, you know?

Leraje

Um, have you read the Idiot by Dostoevsky?

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

Yeah. So there's this kind... there's this bit in it where one of the characters goes and sees the painting. The corpse of Christ or the death of Christ. I can't remember what it's called, but it's basically just a painting of Christ in the tomb before the resurrection.

And um, what the character says in that, uh, this is the sort of thing that could make you lose your faith because it's kind of like it's obvious he hasn't been resurrected. There's mould, he's got, he's going mouldy and that kind of stuff. And um, one of the thrusts of the novel uh, is kind of like this conflict between the idea that Christians do good because they want to get into heaven.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

Atheists, non theists do good because it's the right thing to do. You know. It's kind of like, why are you being... if there was no good, would you still be moral? And I think, yes, we would. Would. Would they? I don't know.

Lithos

Well, I think. I mean, it is a generalisation, yes, but I think a really large number of certainly Abrahamic faith adherents don't actually do it because they want to get into heaven. They might do it because it's a family tradition that's been brought down. They might do it for community. Um, they might do it because they want to get engaged.

Uh, you know, it's the more extreme factions that kind of like use that getting into heaven, not getting into hell thing to try and drive the religion. And I'm focusing on Abrahamic religions here because I've been looking into them for this. And it is a depressing fucking read because there's so many of them.

And the, the problem is, it is a history of persecution upon persecution of people who believe in the same God, the same series of prophets. But how dare you question my prophet over your prophet? Yeah, uh, you know, because there's the original prophets, and we're talking, you know, Abraham and then Moses, there's, uh, many more listed, especially in Islam.

And then you go, right, okay, they're persecuted. Along comes, and... and they form their own religion, and then along comes Christ, uh, and says, oh, well, here's a new message of God, and by the way, I'm the son of God, and that they then get persecuted. And then along come the Muslims who say, well, no, he's not the son of God.

He's just a prophet. He's just a very naughty boy. No, he's a prophet. Um, and our prophet is a final prophet. Our prophet is the seal of prophets. They get persecuted by polytheists initially, and then, and then the Christians, and then the Baha'i turn up, and then they get better persecuted by Muslims, and that's separate Abrahamic faiths.

Then you're looking into Abrahamic faiths and you go, as soon as they're formed, almost as soon as they're formed, there's a split. Right. Almost as soon as Islam happens. There's Shia and there's Sunni.

Pike

I feel like this should be in the Bible, you know. And their fathers, uh, you know, persecuted.

Lithos

Yes.

Leraje

Yeah. Instead of all those begats we should have. And they split from them, and they split from...

Ligeia

The Sunday readings.

Lithos

And all the scriptures are about being decent to each other, being, you know, good to your fellow man, being a decent person, looking after your family. And. And yet there's been this preoccupation with no, our religion is the best and our prophet is the coolest and all the other prophets are inferior, you know, even if you admit to them and it, again, I, I will stress, this is supposed to be the same fucking God you believe in, the same God, and you are chucking rocks and missiles at each other and you have been since the beginning of history. So your God, as far as I'm concerned is bullshit, you know, because he would have done something about this by now.

Leraje

Uh, yeah.

Pike

I love it when you go into one. Like really launch.

Lithos

Sorry.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

I am angry because I've just read so much about Abrahamic faiths and I've just gone, it's any one of them fucking actually sticking to what they're supposed to believe in?

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

Find the common ground.

Leraje

They don't even have to look that far. They've got common ground. They've got the same God, they've got the same prophets. You know, it should be like as easy as reaching out and shaking someone's hand. Oh, uh, what a lovely thought anyway.

Lithos

Yeah, well, your prophet says, you know, feed the hungry, look after the poor, look after the dispossessed. None of them said, spend fucking billions on, um, high grade weapons and lob them at each other and shoot children in the street. Or make people pay when they're ill. That's not part of any religion, you know.

Leraje

Well...

Pike

A lot of that in fighting and stuff is, well, so you, you have all these different ills within religion that we see now. And a lot of them, um, likely, I said, are old historical beliefs that have no significance now and don't mean anything. But I think at the very top of that pyramid of ills is that authoritarianism of these religions.

Right. It is this way and it's not that way. And that's why everyone's fighting, because nobody says, well, I believe in this. They say the God is this and that is bad.

Leraje

Yeah, yeah. There's not, in their minds, there's not any kind of debate, there's not any kind of room for doubt. This is what we believe, therefore we are right. Therefore, because we are right, everybody else is wrong. And if you don't agree with me, then I'm gonna fucking invade.

Ligeia

Because there is supernatural explanation to it.

Lithos

Yeah.

Ligeia

And the authority is unquestionable.

Leraje

Yeah, yeah. Literally unquestionable.

Ligeia

Where do you go, where do you go from there, like.

Lithos

Yeah, Well, I would argue that most adherents to these religions don't actually believe in any of that. They don't want to go to war, they don't want to see places blown up. They don't want to have their kids sent out with weapons on the battlefield. It's the people who use those religions specifically as a method to subjugate and to distract people and to create these situations of conflict who are the problem.

You know, when you kind of look at things like, you know, they use bullshit arguments like, this is one you hear all the time now. White fuckheads, like Tommy 10 names Robinson going, oh, uh, Christianity is persecuted. Uh,

Christians are persecuted in our society. Christianity is the biggest religion in the world. Right. It has more followers than Muslims.

So where are you being persecuted? Yes, maybe some people are being persecuted in, in some countries, but by the same token, some Muslims are being persecuted in Christian countries, you know, but you're certainly not a persecuted religion. You're not a persecuted race. And why are you using your prophet who preached peace and understanding as this?

It's because you don't believe in it. It's because you're using it for your own agenda, which is to enrich yourself and your friends and push up your status. You don't believe in any of this shit, otherwise you wouldn't be doing it, you know, so I'd argue that the people who're causing the problem are not the actual people who have proper faith.

It's the people who use that faith and who use, misuse the words in the scriptures, uh, for their own, for their own furtherment.

Leraje

Yeah. I mean, interestingly, you can, you can even lay some of the blame for that on people like Richard Dawkins in this country anyway, who's... Richard Dawkins is obviously famously an atheist, but he is, he's on record of saying that he calls himself a cultural Christian because he believes that the culture of Christianity, even if he doesn't believe in the theistic side of it, is superior to the culture of insert religion here.

Pike

Wow.

Lithos

Yeah. And anyone who says that, just like anyone who says Judeo Christian, uh, uses that term, um, you're just giving away the fact that you're a massive dick, that

you're an Islamophobe. You know, you, you would, you, if you were honest, you'd say Abrahamic, right? Because it's the same God. You wouldn't say Judeo Christian because that means Abrahamic, except Muslims, you know, and that makes you a massive dick and, and a bigot.

Uh, you know, there is no such thing as a Judeo Christian ethnicity or philosophy. That's absolute bullshit. There isn't even such a thing as a Christian one.

Leraje

Judeo Christian is a political statement. It's not a...

Lithos

Yeah.

Ligeia

Yes, yes. Oh yeah.

Lithos

I mean there isn't even Christian, I'd argue. What, what's Christian? Is it Catholic? Is it Orthodox? Is it Protestant? Is it Evangelical? What, what, what are you talking about? Agree amongst yourselves what it even means. That's point number one. And then, and then come and preach to us about being fallen to the Devil or whatever the fuck.

Anyway, I'll let other people talk now.

Pike

Well, that's them told.

Lithos

I've ranted myself out.

Pike

Okay, so it, it all sucks. And do we think a, uh, religion can be reformed? Even say, you know, say Christian, Christianity, Islam and so on. But do you think really it can change? And you know, the way you said, for example, that a lot of people inherit their religion from their families so it's a cultural thing for them.

Um, would they, would it be possible to have these religions and for them to be a force for good if they dropped some stuff?

Leraje

I don't know, it's, it's, it's like. So if we look at the example of the Christian or the uh, the Church of England in the UK or in England particularly or the Church of Scotland, you know, there's been so many moves over the last couple of decades to get women more integrated into the church, lots of moves to try and um, recognise uh, same sex marriage as being something that can happen in a church, all this kind of stuff.

And the pushback is always horrendous. I mean from the traditionalists, I mean within the church there doesn't seem to be any move to modernise. And I think that the very, the sort of like very minor advances that have been made have been made extremely grudgingly. And there's a part of me that thinks, I mean, I do wonder like uh, if I, if I'm reading, I read a piece about same sex marriage within the church and I'm thinking, why are you guys pushing so hard for this?

Why do you even want this? As let's say two gay men want to get married in a church? Why, why do you want to get married? Why do you want to even be part of a religion that fucking hates you? I don't, it's like I don't understand it. And I'm not saying that they're wrong for having that religion.

Uh, it's just incomprehensible to me that someone would want to be part of something that openly persecutes it. And I don't really see that that position from

the Church of England changing anytime soon and certainly not within The Catholic Church.

Lithos

Um, we should ask the, the Reverend Richard Coles on here because he's formerly of... was it the Communards? And gay and also a member of the clergy and uh, had a same sex relationship with another gay member of the clergy, however, said it was entirely sort of non sexual because the faith went, yeah, it's okay as long as you don't get up to any actual sexual stuff.

Pike

It's not. It doesn't count if the balls don't touch.

Lithos

Yeah, exactly.

Ligeia

Preach.

Lithos

Um, but you know, I never understood why, why he never got the balls to touch. I mean, you know, I'm going...

Leraje

Richard, if you're listening, did you ever push back?

Lithos

You both love each other and then you're part of a faith which goes, yeah, okay, but you can't marry and, or you even you could marry, but as clergymen in that faith, you can't do gay stuff.

Leraje

Gay stuff.

Lithos

Well, I don't know, uh, you know, I don't want to go into technical detail because a lot of these people are obsessed with, you know, the people who are homophobic seem to be obsessed with the technicalities.

Pike

Gay people are also obsessed.

Lithos

Oh yeah.

Leraje

For a different reason.

Lithos

They've got a good reason to be, you know.

Pike

Well, I was told, uh, just now when I was in at the local pride, I was told by somebody that um, there was a priest recently, I think in Argentina was marrying, um, trans couples. And there was a lot of backlash. And he said, well, so no one told me not to. They said, marry men and women.

I'm marrying man and woman. But there's no man and woman, they go, oh, yeah, but these are, uh, trans man and woman. He said, well, they didn't say marry cis man and woman. They just said marry women. I'm just doing what I'm told. What's your problem? So it's interesting, there are those little pockets, but little pockets do not, you know, a religion make.

These are exceptions.

Lithos

I mean I look at. Oh, sorry, carry on Ligeia, go on.

Ligeia

I just wanted to get back to your, your original question there. So I was thinking that like when you look at the specifically modern, I don't know where that starts, but like modern age. Okay, we can agree on like where...

Pike

Now!

Ligeia

...that starts. Yes. Okay. We can see that all religions are not, they are not static. Okay? They have the same scriptures, books, whatever, but they are not completely static, stationary, uh, frozen. They are changing a little bit. Usually the change happens in the secular sphere, the fields between secular people who then have to put like a lot of pressure at... see, I don't, I don't know, like wherever, the pressure comes from there usually.

And then a little change happens in the religions. So my sort of question is not if this is going to continue. Obviously it has to. It's not going to work. The same religion that was, I don't know, in 16th century can't work for a human, wherever you are on this planet, you don't have to be in like Western society, it can't work. So it is changing. My question is because these, um, reinterpretations. That's a word?

Pike

Yeah.

Ligeia

Are happening with like the secular pressure. When will that point be achieved or like reached where the actual God will be replaced with just a human moral consciousness that has been there anyway, you know, that the judgement of the human morality will replace God probably at some point because we are able to reason and question the scriptures that that can be proven.

Pike

I think that happens sometimes already. Um, yeah, because you do have people who say, well quite a lot of religious people who say, well, you shouldn't take the books literally. It's. It's all a metaphor. It's, you know.

Ligeia

Yeah, but what does that mean? Like where, which words are we? Selective, uh, blindness or what are we doing?

Lithos

I, um, mean, I would say most, certainly in Christianity, most serious theologians and people in the faith who hold positions of authority don't actually literally believe the Bible and know that an awful lot of it is just unverifiable and is kind of metaphorical. But, uh, I think hopefulness relies, rests in the number of religiously unaffiliated people in the world that are growing.

That's a growing population. Okay. At the moment, looking at the latest research stats, which was, I think it's the Pew Research Centre, the quickest growing proportion is Muslims at the moment. They're still increasing at a higher rate than the religiously unaffiliated. But the second highest rate of increase is religiously unaffiliated. And then Hindus and then Christians.

And that's just the rate of increase and not the total number. Now, Hindus is easily explained by the population of India increasing. And I think why Christians might

be bothered, you know, some Christian sort of ethno nationalists might be bothered is they're not the greatest sort of religion in terms of growth anymore.

They're not expanding as quickly.

Leraje

This is the thing. I mean, how many Christians, if you look at what's going on in, in the UK today, there's, there's definitely a concerted attempt at the moment to tie Christianity into the idea of British values and whatever that might mean. And it's interesting because the UK is not a majority Christian country.

So there's this kind of like dichotomy here between, and um, I think what they've done is they've tied into this idea that Richard Dawkins, what I said about Richard Dawkins, this thing about cultural Christianity. Most people I've talked with who aren't Christians don't really have any strong problem with churches ringing bells, you know, at 10 o'clock in the fucking morning on a Sunday or...

Pike

Love it. Love it.

Leraje

Yeah. But by the same token, they do have a problem with the Islamic call to prayer at, uh, certain times of the day. So it's kind of like for them, these people who are suddenly using Christianity as a kind of like intrinsic British value, that's where their popularity and their rising popularity is coming from, I think.

Ligeia

Hm.

Leraje

It's not so much. It's like you were saying Lithos. These people might not necessarily believe in God, a Chris... the Christian version of God, but they, they

have tie... in their own minds because we've all grown up with it, those of us who grew up in this country. It's become part of the culture, maybe.

Mhm.

Lithos

And I think it's kind of like being pushed as part of the culture. I certainly never felt this was, you know, ever since I've lived here in the late 80s, I've never felt it's a particularly religious country. It's a largely secular country. I think that, that hate figures on the ethno Christian or that call themselves Christian on the ethnic sort of fascist right like Farage and Robinson are uh, actually pushing people who are not religious into Christianity.

Can I hear the... Can I hear bells?

Leraje

Someone go get me a 99.

Lithos

Jesus. It's Jesus calling!

Ligeia

Jesus is calling!

Pike

They come every day and stop in front of my house.

Lithos

It's the rapture! They're using, they are using Christianity, which they don't actually really believe in, to get other people who don't actually really believe in it to have an excuse to hate foreigners, people of other religions, by using specific verses

from the Bible that are metaphorical and hence can be twisted into any meaning you like.

Leraje

Yeah. Because once you float this idea of cultural Christianity, you know, as something that's a, uh, British value, air quotes, you can then justify that by saying, oh, but you said you, you thought the same as me, that it was a, uh, kind of like a culturally British thing. So therefore when I say stone all the gays death, why are you suddenly disagreeing with me?

Because that's a Christian thing.

Pike

Because that's homophobic, Leraje.

Leraje

It is homophobic. Of course it's. But they would quite happily use it and say it if they thought it would advance their cause just another inch forward.

Pike

It's, it's very cynical. There was a picture from, I think the recent one of those big far, um, right marches in London. There's a great photograph of an abandoned cross that's made out of, I don't know, plywood or something and on it you have a stencilled word that says Saviour and then just a pile of cans of Carling or whatever just lying around it.

Lithos

Yeah, I mean it is, it's kind of, it's not actually got anything to do with the genuine message of Christ any more than the people who, who are sort of like fighting wars in the Middle east believe in the message of Moses, Christ or Muhammad for that matter. You know. It is, it is...

You know these things are being used largely by, by the patriarchy in charge to make sure the patriarchy stays in charge. Because Abrahamic religions are very macho. Uh, there's not a lot of women in, in them and you can, you know, make sure that your women are obedient and make sure that, you know, the men are in charge by force and that those scriptures can be used, uh, for that.

Leraje

To justify that.

Lithos

Yeah, yeah.

Leraje

I mean what could possibly be more Christian than a 50 year old reform member, uh, cosplaying as a crusader at uh, far right march, chain mail sagging over his belt.

Pike

I mean I was, I was just suggesting, about to suggest, I think these new Christians, they, they are, I think they are gearing up for a crusade.

Leraje

They absolutely are.

Pike

If you know, we put them on foot, landed them, you know, where is it? Was it Muslims they don't like. Right. Sent them to uh, you know, one, one of these countries, deposit them there and be like, all right, go with the power of Christ.

Lithos

Yes, with the power of Christ.

Leraje

Oh, by the way, they've got nuclear weapons these days.

Lithos

Yeah. Hegseth literally has used the word crusade, you know, um, so you are talking about crusade and the go-to for all these people who want to use religion for hatred, certainly in Christianity is Leviticus, which essentially is a really old health and safety guide if you want to look at it in that way.

You know, it's like don't, don't eat shellfish because you might get sick kind of thing. Don't eat pork because you might get diseases from it. You know, uh, don't, don't have tattoos because you'll probably get an infection. But people will go, yeah, you can't be gay because it says so in Leviticus. You know, that's an abomination.

And they'll have a tattoo on their arm of Trump or the American flag. And you're going, yes, so is that. And by the way, that lobster roll you're tucking into, that's an abomination too, you know, so it, it is like literally cherry picking. And, and this is the problem with scripture, you know, it's like the vagueness that's inherent in it and the old language that's used and the metaphors that are used and then the selectively taken as literal.

Leraje

But if they're cherry, if they are cherry picking verses that they think are good, are the people who are saying love thy neighbour, are they also cherry picking verses?

Ligeia

Mhm, very true.

Lithos

I mean I've heard it said that for example, the homophobic stuff, particularly, you know, in the Old Testament is down to they are worried their population is in

decline, they are being persecuted. So make sure you make more kids, don't do gay stuff, make more kids. Not because, you know, you don't want people to be gays because you want actually a bigger population.

So you want everyone to have a heteronormative family with lots of kids to prevent your, your race, your faith or whatever from dying out, you know, so it can be taken as a, you know, that's the meaning, you know, it's no longer relevant, if it ever was. Yeah.

Leraje

So really we just need to get shot of all of them, really. If they can, if they can all be cherry picked from either positively or negatively, then they are essentially worthless, surely.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Pike

Yeah.

Lithos

Yeah.

Pike

So I guess...

Lithos

Sorry, I was just going to ask you Pike, because you asked the question, what's, what's your take on, um, you know, how can religions sort of improve themselves, for want of a better phrase, for the modern world?

Pike

Well, uh, the first thing would be, and I kind of mentioned it already, but would be to drop that voice of unquestionable authority. Um, please. Yeah, I think after that a lot of other things would follow naturally because if you uh, become a bit more relaxed, then, well, okay, so then the, the book is just a text, it can be interpreted in various ways, etc, etc. It becomes less about the letter, and people then start thinking about the spirit of it.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Pike

But I guess what I wanted to, to ask, right, we are talking about, okay, how feasible is that in real world? Well, not very feasible. Well, okay, what if it was? What sort of things would we like to see change? Because one thing that I immediately think about is also I would like to separate church and state, which is not the case.

I know the, um, the bishops in the House of Lords have done a lot of good things and blah, blah, but I think ultimately it's just, it's not a, ah, happy marriage there.

Leraje

I mean, the House of Lords itself is anachronistic, uh, to the max. The idea that unelected people can sit in judgement. But when you then introduce 26 bishops who are Christians and we're told that they've got some kind of fucking divine right to be there, how?

Pike

Uh, no, but that's what they mean. A religion should be contained within the sphere that is of religions, not, not in education. That's another one that really gets my goat. It should get the out of schools, uh, it should get the out of government and tend to, I'm pretty sure there's a good quote from the Bible, something about tending that, that is yours, but I can't give it to you.

Leraje

But this goes back to what we, we were saying earlier about the idea that for some people, for some theistic religious people, their book is their law and that's where they get their morals from. So if we were to say, right, well, you can't have, uh, religion in schools anymore unless it's in an R.E. class and you're learning about the religion, they would say, well, then how can I be, how can I teach my pupils to be good?

How can I teach them to be moral without my Christianity? And they genuinely would say that. I've heard people say that.

Ligeia

Would that mean that before Christianity or any religion was established, people were just savages?

Leraje

According to them, yeah, yeah.

Ligeia

It's not true.

Lithos

That's why the human race wiped itself out entirely before Jesus came along.

Ligeia

Yeah, right.

Leraje

But they honestly believe it. I've had conversations with Christians who have said, oh, without the Bible, we wouldn't have a basis for morality in the West.

Ligeia

Oh, no.

Leraje

And it's like, what the are you talking about? I mean, how can that possibly be true when we're not all dead? You know, if, if there was no morality, we'd all be fucking murdering each other and there'd be none of us left.

Pike

Well, I, I have an interesting, um, thought here because remember at the beginning of the podcast, we're talking about the people who make this, the decision to do good purely because they want to do good, and then people who make that decision because they're told by their religion, what if, and this Is, this is a bad idea.

But, uh, let's entertain it for a moment. What if some people want to be led so badly by something more powerful that's outside of themselves that they cannot do good unless they're told that they must?

Ligeia

That is scary.

Pike

That is scary.

Ligeia

That it might be true.

Lithos

Well there's the Marvel Cinematic Universe for that kind of thing.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

You can believe in fucking...

Leraje

But that's the, that's the basis of the, the person I was saying, talking to, that I was talking about a minute ago, who said without the Bible there'd be no basis for morality in the Western...

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

That question is a reflection of that. What, what that person was saying was that, uh, without religion we'd all be psychopaths.

Pike

Well, you would. I wouldn't. I wouldn't.

Ligeia

Right, exactly.

Leraje

Exactly. We wouldn't be. We just wouldn't be. And therefore if you need to be told that not murdering someone is a good thing, then I'd say there's something wrong with you because most people just know that.

Lithos

Yes, if you need the threat of eternal torment in the fires of hell to be a good person, then you're not a good person to start with. So you might as well end up there. You know, it's. Yeah, I think, I think one of the things we certainly could do certainly in this society, I agree, yeah, separate church and state, you know.

Ligeia

Yes.

Lithos

But as we've seen in the States, you know, that that's written into their constitution, you know. And then it started with, I believe it was Eisenhower who put the In God We Trust on the banknotes and had One Country Under God added that to various bits and then gradually the church is getting back into the state.

Mhm. And to the point now where it is actually literally starting to run things, even though constitutionally you're not allowed to. So, you know, you've got to stick to it. But I would certainly say in this country it would be good to actually have an official.. and to also remove any special dispensation from the law of the land to religious organisations, to say this is a secular country now, there are laws.

I don't care what religion you're part of.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

You follow the same rules, you pay the same taxes and you do not get to cover up child abuse, you dirty fuckers kind of thing. To actually hold them, hold all religions to the same standard as all non religions. We are a secular country and you can believe what you like and you can build your own church and pay for it, you can build your own school and pay for it.

But anything that, that goes through the State is for all and all are equal under it kind of thing.

Pike

Yeah, I don't think they should build schools personally. I don't think children should be uh, subjected to religion in that kind of way until they are mature enough to make the choice.

Lithos

Yeah, but in the end, you've kind of got to leave that decision to parents. And uh, I would say rather than actually subsidising religious schools or paying for it through state coffers, you go... You know that would pretty much put a stop to it if you went, no, yeah, it's self funded and by the way, no special VAT dispensations or anything like that.

You don't get to say it's a charity, it's a school.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

You know, you fund your own. If you want decent education, come to state school. But it does annoy me that the Church of England gets taxpayer money to run its own schools and then gets away with it by saying oh yeah, but we'll allow people of other faiths in. You know full well that if your parents are C of E then they get priority.

I know that because in, in my own case my brother and his wife wanted to get my nephew into a decent school and the best school in the area was a C of E primary. So they went through the charade of going to the church and you know, doing the Anglican thing, and we're Anglicans, and they actually spoke to someone there who was in the same church and they're getting into a conversation.

He was going yeah, I want my kid to go to the school and sort of whispered, to be honest, I'm not Anglican, I'm actually a bit Muslim. He actually used those words.

Ligeia

A bit. I'm a bit of a dancer.

Lithos

So it's not open to all. It's not open to all. So it shouldn't be a state school. The government should not pay a penny towards that school.

Leraje

That scenario applies to uh, employment of teachers as well. They're not allowed to by law but they very much do differentiate when they interview potential teachers.

Ligeia

And this is, this is then resulting in like really, for me, like outlandish situations. Specifically in Western society it is like the Christian, whatever Christian sect it is, but it's starting to be like Christian equals good.

Leraje

Mhm.

Ligeia

Like description of, I don't know, somebody's talking about the family or like, oh, this was a very nice good Christian family. Where are we? Are we, are we hearing like, what are we hearing like? They are uh, there to like the tradition, they listen to the Bible, they follow the rules or what is, what does that even mean?

It upsets me so deeply because are we saying this is a good family or are we saying this is a Christian family and everybody in the, in the street knows they're Christian? They go to church. They might be fucked up, but they are Christian because they go to church and they go to this school, whatever that is Anglican, um, whatever.

But because they are in that community, it means they are good.

Lithos

Exactly.

Leraje

I mean, it goes back to the idea we were talking about a few minutes ago, where the appearance of who you are, your religion, transcends anything that you might have done.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

You know, it's kind of like, uh,

Ligeia

oh, uh, that's scary.

Leraje

He might go to the pub, sink 10 pints and then come back and knock his wife about. But he goes to church every Sunday, therefore he's a great guy.

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah.

Leraje

You know, and it's kind of, it's like, at what point does someone's personal responsibility trump there?

Ligeia

Oh, because God will forgive him.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

So he takes away the sin.

Pike

That's why it's a charity, you see, because a charity has to do some good in the society.

Ligeia

Also, you can reach a lot of kids, uh, anyway.

Pike

Otherwise you don't get all those sweet, sweet tax breaks.

Lithos

I mean, it has certainly become the case in the United States where you cannot dream, and that has been the case since the 70s, definitely, that you can't dream of an American president who does not profess the Christian faith winning an election.

Ligeia

because it equals good. For some reason it's like the whole concept of good.

Lithos

And this is recent, this is, it dates back to the middle of the last century, you know.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

When this whole, um, In God We Trust on the banknotes came in, because America was a secular country, you know, and the religious right have managed to

crowbar their way in. And luckily they haven't done it here because we have had people who stood, um, as party leaders who have professed atheism. And I don't think it actually bothers most people in this country, but increasingly I am seeing, like you said, Ligeia, the words good Christian used in the same way that politicians use the phrase hard working families kind of thing, you know, hard working British families, you know.

Leraje

It's certainly the case that, I mean, we all know that Restore and Reform in this country are funded by American groups who, uh, have ties to extreme far right Christian groups, you know, so that money is coming from them because they don't... they are very much of the evangelical side of it.

They, uh, and they don't see it as just political power. They, they genuinely do see it as Christian conquest. You know, they, they very much do believe that Christianity is that, but not Christianity as in Jesus Christ, you know, flipping over the tables of the tax people. They believe in kind of like an extreme right version of Christianity.

Um, and they're funding the groups over here now.

Lithos

And they have got to the position now, whereas previously it was like, and in the States, certainly under people like Reagan, you know, it was like, yes, we want to get a president who believes the same stuff as us.

Leraje

Yeah.

Lithos

You know, uh, like George W. Bush, who, you know, oh, he used to be an alcoholic fuck up and now he's, you know, he had a revelation and now he's born

again. Now they're at the point where they don't care. You know, they will take people like Trump, who is so obviously not a Christian and so obviously hasn't read a single fucking word in the Bible, but is useful.

And Farage likewise, and Richard Tice and, uh, whatever other dickheads they've got in the party.

Leraje

Yeah, I mean, it's slightly off the subject, but that's why I don't think MAGA will die with Trump, because the people who are funding him, these far right Christian groups, they don't care that Trump's not Christian. He's blatantly not Christian. He is replaceable and he will be replaced and MAGA will get called something else, but it will still be MAGA.

Ah. And, that is beginning to happen over here now as well.

Lithos

And it's what happens when you, a bunch of Puritans found the country. Because the myth about the Founding Fathers of the the USA, the Puritans that went across was that, oh, uh, they fled to find freedom and escape persecution, which is bullshit. They fled because they did not like the number of other Christian denominations in the countries they came from.

There was no persecution. They just did not like these other sort of filthier, more secular Christians who weren't Puritan like them. So they're going to go off and form their own land of purity. And I think a lot of that spirit still hangs about the place.

Pike

That just sounds fucking nuts in 2026.

Leraje

Yeah, it really does. But that's where we are.

Pike

That's where we are.

Lithos

Uh, so we've not got to the bottom of, like, how are we going to fix this? Or how are you going to fix religion?

Pike

No, we did. We did. And the answer was it will not be fixed.

Leraje

The answer, surely is to make sure that everybody's balls are touching.

Lithos

I mean, I have faith in the fact that the number of people who don't believe is, is just going to increase and it's going to get to the point where, right, major world religions will, will not be a thing anymore. Um, well, not be a threat. They'll always be there. People will always want to believe in something greater than themselves.

You know, whether they're gonna stick a label on it because, we didn't even touch on, um, actual other major world religions, like all of the Chinese religions, ah, Hinduism, you know, which have a completely different culture concept of what godhood is. Um, you know, it's just like more concept of the, the vastness of everything being...

Leraje

You know, the difference between those world religions and the Abrahamic ones is that the Abrahamic ones want to make you all, make everybody believe the same thing they do, whereas the other ones...

Lithos

Yeah.

Leraje

Are not really that bothered if you do or you don't.

Pike

Well, I think we hear about it less, because there are, you definitely hear about repression of various sects and that kind of stuff.

Leraje

True.

Pike

Even amongst even, you know, amongst Buddhists. So...

Lithos

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Leraje

That is true.

Lithos

You know, it exists there. But I'd say if you look at like the biggest world religions and you're going, right, they are the ones that have had the best weaponry. That's what it boils down to. They've had the best armies, they've had the most money to fund the armies.

And that's why they are where they are. They're not where they are because they've been nice and tolerant and pulled people in. They are where they are because they have largely been very forceful about making sure that anyone who does not

believe is dealt with swiftly and that you can kind of like, uh, go into a place and uh, impose your religion upon others.

Christianity certainly been really good at that.

Pike

Yeah. Also you got a free shirt if you agreed to get christened. Yeah, you did. They would give you a white shirt and then they would put you in whatever, some source of water and do the whole christening thing. And you got to keep the shirt.

Ligeia

But it's tiny if you are a baby. I mean, my little shirt was this small.

Pike

Oh, no. But these were grown up Pagans. So, uh, okay. In my home country, they came there. There was obviously the usual military conquest and all that. But also some people went to get christened. There was some queues because of the free shirts.

Ligeia

Oh my goodness.

Lithos

Well, yeah.

Leraje

Fair enough.

Lithos

And again.

Pike

Money. Money.

Lithos

Money. Yes, money. Money buys weapons. Also, money buys freebies. You know, it is...

Leraje

Propaganda.

Lithos

It's, you know why, And you look at the various Abrahamic smaller, um, religions that have never made it and they haven't really had the money or the backing to make it. It's not that they're any worse. In fact, if you look at something like the Baha'i faith, I'd argue that that's one of the best strands of Abrahamic religion, about as good as you can hope for. But they never made it because they were persecuted.

Leraje

Yeah. If it comes down to money, then we're fucked.

Ligeia

With the balls touching? Please?

Leraje

I'm never going to touch your balls.

Ligeia

Is that a promise or a... what is that?

Leraje

Don't know.

Lithos

This is very, very balls focused. Maybe because of the Abrahamic religions there's not been a vulva in sight.

Ligeia

Freaking patriarchies.

Pike

And here I try to, to have us discuss a serious topic in a serious way.

Lithos

Yeah, well, I think we, I think we should come back to this because this warrants further discussion. Honestly, I think it does.

Ligeia

Yes. Yeah, I think I have balls now. You scared the fucking balls out of me.

Leraje

Yeah, it's too big a subject to, uh, cover in one...

Ligeia

I will never stop now, I'm sorry...

Leraje

...episode, I think.

Lithos

Well, it's also because it's been largely Abrahamic, you know, which is understandable from where we are, but, well, you know, looking at other sort of faiths and how they could play into this is another matter.

Pike

So we can wrap up. And how many pitchforks would you give the Bible?

Leraje

Wrong podcast.

Ligeia

I would give it a pyre.

Leraje

Yes. Five burnt witches.

Lithos

Who will win in a fight? The Bible or the Quran or the Torah?

Leraje

Which one's thicker?

Pike

They're all pretty thick.

Ligeia

I think if it's like really, really pretty and beautifully done and it's like, like. Yeah, okay, why not? I can acknowledge the beauty, that's all.

Leraje

This is a thing I have with churches and cathedrals, I mean they are beautiful.

Lithos

Well, well, if it's a matter of prettiness, then, then the Quran definitely wins because that certainly, the original one looks, uh, bloody impressive.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Lithos

And churches like you said. Leraje. Yeah, yeah, yes.

Pike

And the music, Tim Minchin said, though the lyrics are dodgy, the, the, the, the melodies are quite nice.

Leraje

You've lost me. What, what music are you listening, are you thinking of there as an example?

Ligeia

Church music?

Pike

Like carols and stuff. Some, so yeah, some churchy singing because they've got...

Ligeia

The choir singing?

Pike

Yeah, yeah, yeah. They've got the acoustics and everything. It sounds very...

Ligeia

I mean, I would like the Gregorian.

Lithos

Yeah, I was just gonna say a bit of Gregorian chanting. A bit of church organ.

Ligeia

Oh, not bad.

Pike

Oh, my parents tormented me with Gregorian.

Ligeia

Good!

Pike

When I was a kid, I would come downstairs 6AM, got to go to school, everywhere is dark. One light above the kitchen table and the Gregorians in the background.

Leraje

Jesus Christ. That sounds intimidating as fuck.

Lithos

I've just got this mental image now of you walking into the kitchen. There's a bunch of Gregorian monks with everyone standing, standing over you while you're eating your breakfast.

Ligeia

Good morning, Pike.

Pike

Anyway, I think there's overlap with metal for sure.

Leraje

There is, yeah. Doom metal's pretty church organ based.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

Shout out to Pantheon.

Ligeia

It's organic. Yeah. So maybe, yeah. The first step for me, uh, in this whole situation should be like people realising that the scriptures are not flawless. They have so many flaws because they were written by people. And there is where maybe the thinking process could start and maybe we can hope for a little change?

Leraje

And not just the fact they were written by people. They were written by different people over different centuries and have been edited and revised and translated several times.

Ligeia

Oh yeah, and lost on purpose, like...

Leraje

Yeah. There are whole bits of the Bible that apparently aren't literally part of the Bible because they didn't make the cut. And it's like, oh, who decided that?

Ligeia

Yeah. Written by women also. Mhm.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Uh, hello?

Pike

Yeah.

Ligeia

no, so, yeah, sorry I went back. So no, no pitchforks. No pitchforks from me. No.

Pike

Commit it all to the... you know, as Hume said, if it contains any, uh, anything that is not verifiable, committed then to the, to the flames.

Ligeia

With a pleasure.

Leraje

Don't come here with your bloody philosophers.

Lithos

There was that list in the Guardian recently of the hundred best novels of all time and they've now done a reader's choice because the previous one was editors and authors choice and in, in none of them was the Bible featured. Maybe because it doesn't count as a novel. I'd count it as a novel.

I think it's fiction.

Leraje

Certainly fiction.

Pike

Um, it's not that good though. It's a bit of a nightmare to read.

Ligeia

It's not a page turner for me like, no, no, not really.

Lithos

Apparently it's very good in its original Aramaic.

Leraje

Yeah, I'm not learning Aramaic just to read the Bible.

Lithos

Yes, yes, it comes back to poetry. Doesn't translate.

Ligeia

The purist.

Lithos

I did, I did buy an English translation of the Quran and, and try and read it, but I, I uh, didn't get anywhere and I think that definitely didn't translate well from Arabic. I think that's the reason.

Pike

I think my partner was reading it in Arabic a little bit. Well, uh, I don't know how far he got, but he said that it was bollocks.

Ligeia

Still impressive.

Pike

Okay, yeah.

Lithos

Yes. Maybe if they were regarded as works of poetry rather than as kind of like words you should live your life by.

Leraje

Yeah. Uh, all our ideas, our principles, are they better?

Ligeia

Yes, they make sense.

Lithos

I don't think they are different from the principles inherent in... if you boil down the Bible to the best principles, or the Quran, I, uh, don't think they're any different. You know, if you took out all the thou shalt not. Ours are more like try and do this, not don't ever. If you took out all the don't evers out of the Bible and the Quran and out of all those principles.

I think there's a lot of overlap.

Pike

Yes. But we do reject absolute authority, which that is very different.

Lithos

Well, yeah, I said a lot of overlap.

Pike

Also we place a lot of faith in, in the individual, in ourselves.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pike

Whereas the Bible and other so-called holy texts will tell you you're so fallible.

Leraje

When I said are ours better, obviously that was semi rhetorical because obviously I think they are, otherwise I wouldn't follow them. But what you just said there, Pike, and then compare that with what you said earlier about some people that just don't seem able to be, have independent responsibility. They need to believe in something higher than them, supernatural, who's given them a set of rules to live by.

Whereas ours, our principles are very humanistic and individual and revolve around ideas of autonomy and consent. Would people be able to en masse adopt our ideas, do you think?

Pike

It does require a certain level of maturity, I think.

Ligeia

And trust to yourself and the human kind.

Pike

That's why we have these, uh, strong men, you know, politicians with so many followers. Because some people really feel a lot at a loss. They don't have somebody to deliver absolute certainty. Uncertainty is uncomfortable.

Lithos

It is true. I mean, yes, I should have, I should have said, well, not just strip out all the thou shalt not, but also strip out all the you must obeys. Because Islam literally means submission in Arabic. So you're kind of like going, that's the name of your religion, submit. So you kind of like...

Yeah, that, that is a big difference.

Leraje

Yeah. I think any sentence that starts with "you must" is inherently suspect right from the word go.

Pike

Or "should". Or "should".

Lithos

I think, I think our principles are good guidance as to decent human behaviour regardless.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

And I think all those principles are at some point in the scriptures. Maybe not with as much kind of like self reliance, but I think self reliance also is part of the scriptures and sort of like, I don't know...

Pike

One of the founders of cognitive behavioural therapy said, you know, stop shooting yourself.

Lithos

Aye.

Leraje

Well, are we talked out on this?

Lithos

I think we have. We have.

Pike

I'm out of tea anyhow.

Lithos

And, um, on that note, thank you for, um, the subject choice, Pike. It has been very interesting. Not always very serious. Even though you tried hard. I've been Lithos. Hail Satan. Ligeia?

Ligeia

Hail Satan.

Lithos

Pike?

Pike

Hail Satan.

Lithos

And Leraje?

Leraje

Cock Tip.

Lithos

Thank you so much for listening. Um, and if you made it this far, I admire your intestinal fortitude. Don't give up. We are pathetic sinners and good night.