

The Bible

Understanding Context

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SCM

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A bank robber shoots a bystander dead.

A long-term carer suffocates their chronically ill partner.

A driver skids and hits a pedestrian, killing them.

Three separate actions resulting in each case in a death. Yet our response to each situation will probably be different. We need an understanding of context when we try to appreciate the varied situations life generates.

Yet we look to our religions to provide certainties, and hanker after guiding texts as rulebooks. How much easier life then becomes. But when we understand that we must contextualise all other areas of life, how absurd is this? It is both theologically and emotionally juvenile, and frankly a cop out.

I think it is critical when reading the Bible to always bear in mind that it is not The Bible. That is a handy name for a collection of books, letters, songs, poetry, genealogy, history and propaganda which were collected together at a given point in history for certain reasons by a particular group of people who understood the world and its workings in a way very different to ours. Much possibly relevant material was left out. It is argued this was a divinely ordained process, an example of God working in mysterious ways. Personally I believe that a great hindrance to accessing the insights of the Bible is precisely this approach.

Read the Bible. As Christians that is a must. But if you want theological and emotional maturity, get rid of the pedestal. The power of the Bible is precisely that it is not sacred.

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