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# Is the Bible Relevant to the Modern World?

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In his *God Delusion* (<http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/article.aspx%3Fid%3D1886>), Richard Dawkins, like others before him, has denied the place of religion ([http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/religion\\_and\\_spirituality.aspx](http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/religion_and_spirituality.aspx)) in our lives: we as adults should not teach matters of faith to our children. This idea has now been taken up by Hector Avalos, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Iowa State University. Avalos has just published a book entitled *The End of Biblical Studies* (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1591025362/>).

As a professor, Avalos opines that the Bible is irrelevant to the modern world and therefore should not have any impact upon our lives. Teaching the Bible as a book of any value to a modern student should cease! Amazon's editorial description of his book states:

"In this radical critique of his own academic specialty, biblical scholar Hector Avalos calls for an end to biblical studies as we know them. He outlines two main arguments for this surprising conclusion. First, academic biblical scholarship has clearly succeeded in showing that the ancient civilization that produced the Bible held beliefs about the origin, nature, and purpose of the world and humanity that are fundamentally opposed to the views of modern society. The Bible is thus largely irrelevant to the needs and concerns of contemporary human beings. Second, Avalos criticizes his colleagues for applying a variety of flawed and specious

techniques aimed at maintaining the illusion that the Bible is still relevant in today's world. In effect, he accuses his profession of being more concerned about its self-preservation than about giving an honest account of its own findings to the general public and faith communities.”

The arguments that can be ranged against such an approach are probably fewer than people might think. Most Christian religions only pay lip service to the Bible ([http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/religion\\_and\\_spirituality.aspx](http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/religion_and_spirituality.aspx)). Any detailed study of Christianity shows that most of its major doctrines have no relationship to and are often in stark contradiction to the biblical instruction. So the majority of “Christians,” before reacting viscerally to the ideas of Avalos, should perhaps stop and consider that their belief systems and actions support his argument.

One respondent to Avalos takes the opposite approach. John F. Hobbins in his Blog *Ancient Hebrew Poetry* ([http://ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com/ancient\\_hebrew\\_poetry/2007/08/why-hector-aval.html](http://ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com/ancient_hebrew_poetry/2007/08/why-hector-aval.html)) highlights the biblical instruction to care for the poor and fatherless and shows how far society is removed from Scripture. To Hobbins, and to this writer, society would be greatly enriched by applying the biblical commands. The Bible is not old-fashioned and irrelevant to modern circumstances. Living the life of caring for others would be a witness against the rationality of Dawkins and his colleagues. This gets to the very heart of modern problems. But doing so would mean obeying commands established in another day and time. And obedience sits uncomfortably with our post-modern age, for it implies someone else dictates our lives. If only we could appreciate how ephemeral our ideas of liberty really are and that we are held in captivity to a destructive system.

The first followers of Jesus Christ understood this connection and showed their allegiance to the way of life He taught by being concerned about the less fortunate members of society.