

Fundamental Concepts

Every religion has its own world view and culture. The Church of Reality is no different. Our world view and culture are rooted in the {In:Sacred Principles} which define our ethical standards. Although our mission is to explore reality, we need to deal with a lot of other related issues to do that. Here is an overview of what being a Realist is all about.

- Commitment to Reality - We are committed to trying to see reality the way it really is. We reject dogma, mythology, and world views that have no basis in the real world. If something is true, we believe in it. Although we'll probably never accomplish it, we aspire to understand everything the way it really is.

- Pursuit of Reality - We are committed to pursuing an understanding of the real world. We actively seek out knowledge in order to learn and understand new things. We are committed to purging ourselves of information in our minds that we once believed was true and now know is not true. We are committed to changing our minds when we find out we are wrong.

- Limits of Knowledge - We understand that we don't know everything and we probably never will. We accept that, in answer to many questions like, "Why does anything exist?" the only correct answer is "I don't know." We don't just make something up when we don't understand it. We accept that there are things beyond our ability to comprehend. Yet we relentlessly strive to comprehend it anyway.

- Knowledge is Dynamic - What we know today is what we believe is true based on current information. We know that some of what we know is in error or incomplete, and we know we are going to learn new things. We are committed to changing our minds in order to better ourselves as we discover new knowledge. We, therefore, reject the concept of nailing down reality into a static "holy book" and declaring it the ultimate truth. As knowledge grows, static sources of knowledge can become less accurate with time as things are disproved. And static sources of knowledge become more incomplete with time as knowledge increases.

- Debate is Required - This is not a faith-based religion. This is a learning-based religion, and debate is required in the process of exploring reality. Everything is questioned, nothing is assumed. Disagreement is encouraged. Ideas must be tested and explored. There was a time when mankind believed that Up and Down were absolute directions. We now know that Up and Down have no meaning in the context of the universe. How did we learn this? It started by debating it. Debate is a process in which we test our beliefs to determine what is true and what isn't.

- Our Minds are Imperfect - In the context of evolution, logic is a new function of the human mind. Human logic is limited. Our brains serve many functions, and logic is of lower priority to other functions, such as self-preservation, eating, defending, shelter, breathing, instincts, and reproduction. We are committed to understanding our mental tools of understanding, to learning how to improve our minds, and to understanding the mental imperfections that cause us to believe things that aren't real. In order to use the mind as a tool, we have to understand the limits of the tool. Thus a deep understanding of understanding is necessary to the pursuit of reality.

- We are a Society - Humans can not really explore reality individually. We explore reality together as a society, as 99.999% of what we know comes from other people and we are interdependent on the rest of humanity for our knowledge. Humans evolved the ability to share knowledge in what we call the {In:Tree of Knowledge}. We, therefore, must function as a healthy, productive, and sane, society in order to thrive and explore reality together.

- Integrity - Church of Reality members value being productive members of society and try to maintain a high level of personal integrity. We value honesty, accountability, community, compassion, hope, love, generosity, charity, wisdom, respect, equality, and other noble virtues.

- Humor - We try not to take ourselves too seriously. We are a community that enjoys having fun, and we like to laugh at ourselves and others (especially others).

- Freedom and Justice - The pursuit of reality, the way it really is, is hindered by societies that restrict an individual's ability to pursue true knowledge. If people are persecuted for what they believe, then our personal growth and our collective knowledge will be restricted. One must be allowed to be free and independent of the common herd mind in order to examine whether the beliefs we share as a society are in fact true. History is full of examples of people who were prosecuted because they believed outrageous things, such as the Earth is round and orbits the Sun. We look back and scoff at those primitive world views. One hundred years from now, people will look back at us and scoff at our world views, and evaluate how we persecuted free thinkers through our justice system. We, therefore, contend that it is our right and our duty, in the pursuit of reality, to make sure that the world is safe for free thinkers and that our courts are just, ethical, and fair.

- Humility - Compared to the vastness of the universe, we humans - with our limited minds - don't really know squat. Anyone who claims to have universal knowledge or speaks for God should be laughed at. God is a big boy and can speak for himself should he choose to do so. Our minds are more influenced by instinct than logic. We are stuck using our imperfect minds as tools to try to separate what is real from what is illusion. This planet is but a speck of dust in a vast universe and we exist for but a moment of time. How important can we really be?

- Paying the Price of Reality - Believing what's real isn't always easy. It's often hard to accept that what you always knew as real may not be true. When Einstein suggested that time is not constant for all observers, other scientists were very uncomfortable accepting it. They wanted to believe that all people with good clocks would measure time the same. Einstein himself fought the concept of an expanding universe. Reality isn't always what you want it to be or what you are comfortable with. It's hard to accept that things you were taught as a child are often just not so. Knowledge often causes pain and requires courage to accept. If you aren't ready to endure the pain, or have the courage, or pay the price, then your mind will trick you into believing things that aren't real. The Church of Reality is dedicated to overcoming the fears that separate understanding from reality, to learning how to pay the price of knowledge, and to learning how to learn about things that are difficult, painful, or uncomfortable to understand.

- Standing up for what is Real - In order to enjoy reality the way it really is, we have to dedicate ourselves to ensuring that our right to be real isn't taken away from us by those who would enforce their beliefs on us against our will. We can not experience and understand reality if we are not free to explore the knowledge of the universe. We have to protect our right to openly and freely exchange ideas, to try things and fail, to talk about issues, to make mistakes, to experiment, to conduct science, to have free speech, to allow people to openly disagree, to protest, to dissent, to express themselves, to pursue knowledge, to accept and respect the opinions of others. We must not allow others to persecute us because we don't believe what they believe, and we must not persecute those who don't believe as we do.

- Honoring Weird People - The average person rarely accomplishes anything. Progress is caused by weird people. Most of the greatest people in history started out as outcasts and were persecuted. Although most cultures don't kill smart people the way they used to, society still tries to get people to conform and shuns those who are strange. People with weird ideas threaten belief systems and the order of society. Progress often involves pain and has a price. The advances we as humanity are going to make in the future are being created today in the minds of weird people. We must therefore accommodate diversity in order to progress.

- Becoming a Free Thinker - People are herd animals. Most of our knowledge is shared knowledge, acquired from other

people. Shared knowledge is good in that we as individuals don't have to figure everything out for ourselves. However, shared knowledge is sometimes faulty and causes us to fail to see reality the way it really is. Free thinking allows us to reexamine shared knowledge and to test it to see if it's still true. It also allows us to explore the rim of human understanding and expand our knowledge of reality. A free thinker is an explorer who contributes wisdom to the collective mind and adds ideas that are new, unique, and accurate, and expands our ability to understand the real world. As members of the church of Reality, we aspire to be free thinkers and to contribute new and accurate knowledge to the realm of human understanding.

- You can become Smarter - How smart you are is not limited to the number of brain cells you have. A lot of it has to do with how much wrong information you have stored that causes you to come to the wrong conclusion. It has to do with how much emotional baggage you're carrying that prevents you from fully realizing your potential. And it has to do with your training in logic and problem-solving techniques. You can learn how to be much smarter than you are. All you have to do is put out the effort. Many people say that your IQ freezes at the age of five, and after the age of five you can't become any smarter. They are probably speaking about themselves. It just isn't so. Most people have never been trained in logic or how to think. You'd be amazed at how much smarter you can become.

- Tithing - You rarely get something for nothing. If I don't make a living I can't continue to do this. I am a person who has unusual mental talents. I think science should study me to see what it is about me that gives me my unusual mental abilities. I think what I do can be learned and reproduced. I think that the Church of Reality is a step towards making the world smarter and will benefit society as a whole. I would like to dedicate my life to introducing this new belief system into the world so that people like you and I can flourish. I think that the Church of Reality is worthwhile and something that justifies support. Your generous contribution will help ensure that this movement expands and becomes a serious competitor in the market of religious beliefs. If you like what you see and want it to be part of the real world, then you can help make it happen by sending me a check.