

From Abraham to Average Man: Game Theoretic Analysis of Divine Social Relationships

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Abstract : Billions of people worldwide profess some feeling of psychological or spiritual connection with the divine. The majority of them attribute this personal connection to the God of the Christian Bible. The objective of this research was to discover what could be known about the exact social nature of these relationships and to see if they mimic the interactions recounted in the bible; if a worldwide majority believes that the Christian Bible is a true account of God's interactions with mankind, it is reasonable to assume that the interactions between God and the aforementioned people would be similar to the ones in the bible. This analysis required the employment of an unusual method of biblical analysis: Game Theory. Because the research focused on documented social interaction between God and man in scripture, it was important to go beyond text-analysis methods. We used stories from the New Revised Standard Version of the bible to set up "games" using economics-style matrices featuring each player's motivations and possible courses of action, modeled after interactions in the Old and New Testaments between the Judeo-Christian God and some mortal person. We examined all relevant interactions for the objectives held by each party and their strategies for obtaining them. These findings were then compared to similar "games" created based on interviews with people subscribing to different levels of Christianity who ranged from barely-practicing to clergymen. The range was broad so as to look for a correlation between scriptural knowledge and game-similarity to the bible. Each interview described a personal experience someone believed they had with God and matrices were developed to describe each one as social interaction: a "game" to be analyzed quantitatively. The data showed that in most cases, the social features of God-man interactions in the modern lives of people were like those present in the "games" between God and man in the bible. This similarity was referred to in the study as "biblical faith" and it alone was a fascinating finding with many implications. The even more notable finding, however, was that the amount of game-similarity present did not correlate with the amount of scriptural knowledge. Each participant was also surveyed on family background, political stances, general education, scriptural knowledge, and those who had biblical faith were not necessarily the ones that knew the bible best. Instead, there was a high degree of correlation between biblical faith and family religious observance. It seems that to have a biblical psychological relationship with God, it is more important to have a religious family than to have studied scripture, a surprising insight with massive implications on the practice and preservation of religion.

Keywords : bible, Christianity, game theory, social psychology

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