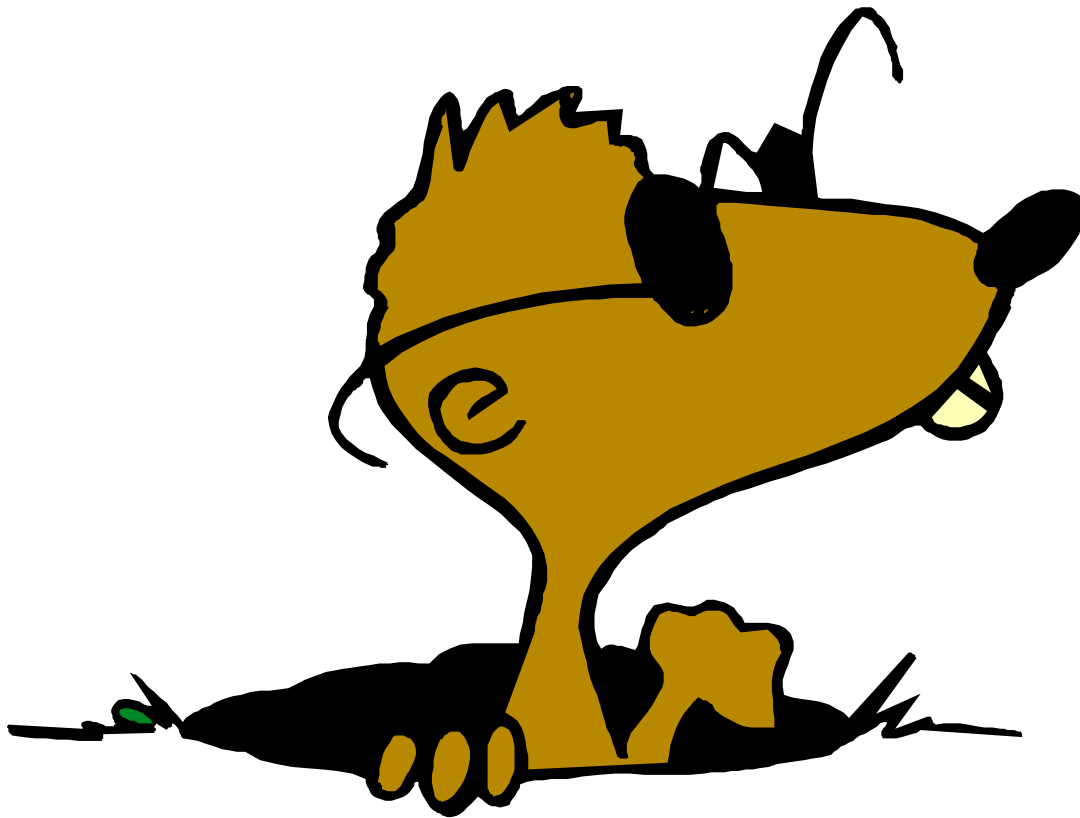


Blind Faith in Religion

AND SCIENCE

**Is there any objectivity
out there?**



**A CrossWave Resources
PUBLICATION**

Blind Faith in Religion ... and Science

Is there any objectivity out there?

Upfront apologies and confessions

I would like to be as honest as I can upfront. I am a Christian. But like many people I know I initially struggled to reconcile my faith with what non-Christians claim as 'evidence' against my beliefs. In fact, when I became a Christian I buried myself in a prolonged study of the tensions between the Christian faith and secular criticism. The conclusions I came to in favour of Christianity did not 'convert' me. I was already persuaded – at the time I did not fully know how – by what I can only describe as God's reality to me. The evidence I found confirmed my 'conversion'.

So yes, I may be guilty of the very premise of this article: that my 'original assumption' twisted the facts to affirm what I already believed. But then the point of this article is just this: **we all do so**. Thus whatever we 'believe' – whether we claim to be an atheist (no god), agnostic (vague god), pantheistic (many gods) or monotheistic (one god) – we are all guilty of 'blind faith'. And as we will soon see, so is the scientist.

My intent in this article is not to convert you to my faith. This I admit will be impossible for me to avoid doing perfectly. If I was able to do be absolutely neutral, it could be argued that I'm not convinced in what I believe. Hence, I apologise upfront for sounding 'preachy' where I do and hope that I can do two things without putting you off:

- (1) Attempt to point out the subjective faith in all of us; not just those who are 'religious'.
- (2) Attempt to look at the only objective 'arena' we have, as humans at least, on which faith can be based.

These goals are of course impossible to achieve. I am certain to fail in this article on every turn. So why bother? Because I hope that it can in some way help you. I know it won't help you if you're looking for a 100% perfect defence of the Christian faith. I am not that clever even though there are many who are and their writings are outstanding...and available. But there is a good chance you won't read them because you know that they have an agenda that will colour their conclusions. And you will be right; which is, again, the point of this article.

I know I won't help you if you're already a Christian – in fact, I'm sure to frustrate you. At times I deliberately withhold saying what I should as a Christian. Without being rude, I would recommend that you don't read this article. It is simply not written for Christians.

It is written for people who are not Christians. My hope is to, in a very simplistic way; give you a view from the “other side”. For sure, I hope that this will have a positive impact on you and may confirm your journey towards the Christian faith but it is not my direct intent. I hope you don’t feel pushed. Drawn yes, but not pushed.

I have also chosen to write this article under sections. Each section follows directly from the next and should be read as one long discussion with each section connecting the ‘big’ thoughts. The sections simply help in referencing these various key thoughts, giving you a chance to digest each thought before grappling with the next.

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Okay enough explanations, let’s do this.

SECTION 1 – The Point of Science

In our television age, watching ‘historical’ and ‘scientific’ documentaries I am horrified at the conclusions that are often drawn. I am a history fan and science nut. And while I hold no specific accreditation in either of these fields I do my fair share of reading and studying. When I consult the more trusted references on various subjects and compare what television documentaries teach as fact, it is unbelievable to me the inconsistencies present. Not small deviations of fact; gross divergences of opinion. And this doesn’t happen occasionally but is, in my viewing experience, a norm.

Without exaggerating, I have watched historical/scientific documentaries that I confused with the twilight zone or the X-Files. It is actually this bizarre misrepresentation of fact that was another reason for this article. Why do scientists come up with such different conclusions to the facts they claim to have. Okay, “Why?” would imply deliberate deceit so let us give ‘them’ the benefit of the doubt and ask, “How?” *How do intelligent people draw contrasting conclusions staring at the exact same evidence?*

The purpose of science is to observe the behaviour and events of the ‘created world’. Science can only tell us what happened in a given case and then suggest, with varying degrees of certainty, what will happen in most similar cases. Thus science can tell us what, how and sometimes when. But it cannot answer the why questions. This is an important point. ***Science was never intended, nor will ever be able, to answer the philosophical questions in our soul.***

Thus when a scientist analyses the facts determined by his observations, the conclusions he makes will be determined by the ‘original assumptions’ he began with. Thus, as often happens, two scientists may come to different – sometimes, opposite – conclusions to the same facts. Their conclusions are thus subjective; serving only to confirm what *they* expected. The nature of a scientist’s assumptions then directs his research to confirm, in most instances, ***what he is looking for***. We don’t see things as they are; we see things as we are.

This may at first trouble us; if science does not offer concrete, absolute answers to the why questions, where do we find these answers? But this puts too much expectation on the field of science; as mentioned, an expectation that it was not supposed to fulfil in the first place. Our faith ought not to be in science at all, any more than our faith should be in last night’s weather forecast. This is not to say that science is invalid. Of course not! Without science we would still believe the world is flat. But herein lies a useful lesson.

Science, in essence, did not prove that the world was flat. It only suggested the world was round giving some brave sailors the confidence to sail to the world's end...and find out from experience that it indeed was so. Thus science played an invaluable part but without human courage and the experience itself, we would still be speculating. And it is important to note – for this is the issue – that neither science nor human endeavour gave us the explanation to *why* the earth is round. Science simply does not answer the philosophical question.

Thus if our conclusions – even to scientific data – are based on our assumptions, then it stands to reason that the only objective place to start in our search for the answers to the existential questions of the human soul is ***within us***. I am in no way suggesting that we can answer our own problems. We can't.

Thousands of years of human progress have, in many ways, made us worse off...not better. As Aldous Huxley quipped, "Technological progress has merely provided us with more efficient means for going backwards". (Of course, we're better off in many ways. But take one very significant example: war. In all our progress as intelligent human beings we are now able to kill our enemies faster than ever; hey, we can now literally wipe out all of mankind. Progress? We consistently turn our progress into better means to exploit others; to line our own pockets and feed our own egos. As was ancient man; so is modern man. Only modern man thinks he is smarter).

I am not foolishly suggesting that we can solve the answers to the human condition. But it is in exploring the human condition – ***getting to grips with the questions we are asking*** – that we can begin to discern where the answers may lie. In case I have lost you through my waffle: let's finally accept that science is just as subjective as every other field of human research; let us then explore the only objective – or more correctly, least subjective – frontier we have.

Let's bring this to the very essence of the issue:

Why does mankind even ask the questions we do and why has mankind asked the same questions throughout human history, irrespective of the age in which he lived?

Before we do this however, please allow me to point out the subjectivity of science for those still not convinced by looking at two examples: evolution and the age of the earth/universe. If you are convinced, please feel free to skip the next two sections.

SECTION 2 – The Theory of Evolution (Example 1)

In putting together his Theory of Evolution, Charles Darwin could not have imagined the impact he would be making on the world...that he would become science's promised messiah (I'll explain my dramatic proclamation below). For one, he himself would not be a believer in his own theory today. In speculating how life evolved from its lowest forms, he based his theory on several core assumptions which today science itself has refuted.

In his book, *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin expressed his awareness of the frailty of his own theory. He entitled a chapter in his book, "Difficulties with the Theory," and wrote, "To suppose that the eye, with so many parts all working together... could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree". Before his death, Darwin having studied the principle of symbiosis began to doubt his basic assumptions behind natural selection and his theory of evolution. His doubts were justified. Since then, science has disproved the basic assumptions upon which Darwin's theory – I repeat, *theory* – was based.

Firstly, science has observed that while species evolve within the same type, this progress is actually de-evolution; **a regression**, not a progression. Science calls this the *Second Law of Thermodynamics*. For example, a species gets weaker, following the path of least resistance. Science has shown repeatedly that because of DNA instability, mutations are weaker, not stronger, and die out quickly.

The simplest example (that doesn't require laboratory research): if a wild animal is 'spoon fed' by humans, it quickly loses its ability to find its own food, becoming dependent on humans for food. It devolves rather than evolves. Survival of the fittest, one of Darwin's core assumptions, is not a reliable characteristic to even help one species progress let alone 'magically' transform one species into a higher form of life. The silliest example (sorry, I can't help myself): how did the giraffe's neck grow fast enough to reach the vegetation out of reach before starvation signed it to the extinct list?

Secondly, science has observed that there are no in-transition species...none. Naught. Did I mention that there is zero, as in not one, in-transition species?

So why do scientists hold to the theory of evolution as fact without question? Simple...it comes back to 'original assumption'. Although Darwin's theory of evolution has been disproved, it is – too most – still the only option available. The alternative is to accept creationism. Since this option is a non-option to many, the conclusions of which would be to accept a Creator, faith is placed in the theory of evolution accepting that while Darwin was wrong, he began to point us towards the answer...and some day science will eventually find it. A scientist's messiah? It is clear, at least to me, that one requires 'blind faith' to believe in evolution...as much, I think even more, as those who are ridiculed for their blind faith in 'religion'. (To me, the Christian faith is based on reliable evidence; the theory of evolution is not).

Let me go so far as to say that some Christians brilliantly reconcile the theory of evolution with the Biblical record, and thus, in one sense, evolution need not be in conflict with the Christian faith. Did you get that? To be a Christian, one could believe that God created man through a process of evolution; just as one could be a Christian and believe that the earth was flat. I personally don't think we need to reconcile evolution with the Biblical record, simply because evolution has no basis of scientific fact at all; it is just a theory. But my opinion is not the issue here. ***The point is that science has put its faith in evolution – a blind faith – as the only alternative available.*** Thus based on this original assumption, scientists will twist – mostly without deliberate intention – the data to confirm what they believe. They too live by faith.

Let me say it this way: if you were a betting man, you would not even bother with the improbability of life forming from nothing.

“The distinguished Sir Fred Hoyle has proposed an analogy to illustrate [the difficulty of probability]. He asks, ‘How long would it take a blindfolded person to solve a Rubik cube?’ If he made one move per second, without resting, he estimates it would take an astonishing 1.35 trillion years! Thus, he concludes, when you consider the life expectancy of a human being, a blindfolded person could not solve the Rubik cube.

Hoyle then explains that it would be equally difficult for the accidental formation of only one of the many chains of amino acids in a living cell. And in every human cell there are about 200,000 such amino acids. Now if you were to compute the time required to get all 200,000 amino acids for one human cell to come together by chance, it would be about 293 times the estimated age of the earth (set at the standard 4.6 billion years).

In another analogy Hoyle bolsters his argument. He calls this the ‘junkyard mentality’ and asks, ‘What are the chances that a tornado might blow through a junkyard containing all the parts of a 747, accidentally assemble them into a plane, and leave it ready for take-off?’” (Paul Little, *Know Why You Believe*).

SECTION 3 – The Age of the Earth/Universe (Example 2)

This is an interesting subject. Again permit me to be slightly long winded here for the sake of illustrating how the original assumption leads to conclusions beyond the scope of science itself.

The Biblical record claims that mankind has existed for less than 10,000 years. (Some schools of Christian thought do reconcile the Bible with an old universe which we will refer to below). Because evolution requires billions of years for lower forms of life to evolve into *homo sapiens*, the theory of evolution demands a very old earth. Various dating procedures were developed to date the earth, confirming that the earth was indeed billions of years old. However, these are accepted despite remarkable inconsistencies in the dating procedures themselves.

There are three methods of dating used to date the earth's crust, fossils and the like: Uranium, Potassium-Argon and Carbon. In every test where an object was dated by all three methods, to check for accuracy, the dates determined were millions of years different. Even dating the same object several times with the same method yielded dates vastly different from one another. Below are some true examples of the spectacular failure of these dating methods:

- In the Auckland volcanic forests of New Zealand, the lava flow buried and preserved the forests at the base of the volcanoes. The wood from the forests were no more than 1,000 years old. When the rock surrounding them was dated, which should have yielded dates less than 1,000 years; dates of 145 to 465 thousand years were recorded.
- The Kaupulehu lava flow in Hawaii took place in 1800 meaning the rock is just over 200 years old. When dated with these methods, amazingly inaccurate dates of between 1 to 2.4 billion years were recorded!
- When dating a mastodon, the outside of the tusk dated at 7,820 years since death, while the interior of the tusk died 750 years later! In other words, if the dating method is correct, this animal died from the outside in over a period of 750 years!

Why do scientists hold onto these methods of dating? ***Simply because they claim that these dating procedures are the best we have available and they give us 'reasonable' estimates that fit into the theory of evolution.*** In other words, these dating methods are used, despite their inaccuracies, because they support the 'original assumption'. When one starts with the premise that God does not exist, then there are simply no viable alternatives left.

Listen to the incredible confession of Dr. Robert Jastrow, a self-confessed agnostic: "For the scientist who has lived his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries".

But surely the earth is older than 10,000 years?

There are new discoveries in the field of science that are claiming that the earth is young; that our earth is not billions of years old. For example, it is now a conclusive fact that the sun in our solar system is burning out. We need not fear, as it will continue burning sufficiently to support life on earth for another couple hundred thousand years! The important point is that some scientists now claim that our solar system cannot be older than several hundred thousand years. If this is true; then the earth cannot be older than this, and although this figure is still some way from the Biblical timeline, again we see the uncertainty involved when we attempt to find conclusive answers from the field of science.

Another fascinating study was done in the area of the development of the earth's gene pool and the distinctions between different races. Through this study it was revealed that mankind cannot be older than 10,000 years old! This is amazing. When the scientific age dawned on mankind, everyone thought it would be just a matter of time before science disproved the Bible. Time has elapsed now from the birth of rationalization and it seems that science is instead harmonising with the Biblical record.

Of course, the study of the cosmos says that the universe is indeed old. And so we have science in conflict with science. But here is an important point: to be a Christian does not mean that one has to believe in a young or old universe. In fact, several valid schools of Christian thought reconcile the Bible with an old universe/earth, others with an old universe/new earth and still others with a young universe/young earth.

There are valid Christian answers to the old appearance of the earth (in fact, geology not only supports but requires a worldwide flood that would have been the main agent in creating exaggerated weathering conditions and amongst other things, the fossil record), to dinosaurs (the Bible in fact, makes reference to what can only be described as a dinosaur in one of its oldest writings) and other possible points of conflict. Looking at these schools of thought is beyond the scope of this article for one reason: they are not essential to the Christian faith. Yes, they are beneficial and allow Christians to stand in the company of academia on its merits but for the sake of this article, which aims to look at 'objective inside information', it is not necessary.

Yes, I think we can and perhaps should have an opinion about the age of the earth/universe, dinosaurs etc. etc. But these opinions are not essential to the Christian faith any more than our choice of clothes are to being human.

SECTION 4 - Objective Inside Information

For clarity sake, I am not foolishly suggesting that science is invalid. I am suggesting that the conclusions scientists make are *subjective* and that this should not surprise us because we, human beings, draw our conclusions from our 'original assumptions'. It is remarkable to see how many scientists are now acknowledging the presence of 'design' as they look through their telescopes at the majestic order in the cosmos and through their microscopes at the marvellous genius of biology. Does not 'design' point to a 'Designer?' But now I'm getting ahead of myself and in danger of making a conclusion based on my 'original assumption'.

As mentioned, if we accept that science is subjective then we are left to explore only what is objective to us as human beings. This may be subjective to say a rock but let's for now assume that a rock actually is an inanimate object that cannot bring anymore objectivity to the human condition that we ourselves have.

Here again is the why question that summarizes the issue at hand:

Why does mankind even ask the questions we do and why has mankind asked the same questions throughout human history, irrespective of the age in which he lives?

Inside every human being is a foundational basis for morality. For sure, the accepted code of moral ethics differs from society to society and from age to age but **the universal essence of morality is captured in what some call the Golden Rule**. Simply stated: do to others what you would have them do to you. All the main religions of the world teach some version of this and it is simply the Rule by which all sane, reasonable men live by.

Even those who claim that morality is absolutely relative (which is a phrase that contradicts itself, of course) live by the Golden Rule. Those who hold to relativism state that there is no absolute truth for all people at all times; truth, or morality, is defined by the individual concerned. Thus "what is true for me is my truth; and what is true for you is your truth – even if we disagree," preaches the relativist. Sounds great...and inclusive...and tolerant...and peace-loving...until of course, reality checks in. If my moral truth allows me to steal from you, who are you stop me? It's my right...my truth...don't you dare preach to me that I can't!

We all believe – the exception is the insane person – we should not do to others what we would not want them to do to us. I wouldn't steal from you; I expect you to refrain from stealing from me. And this is not relative to you and me. If you stole from me I would find the rest of mankind on my side because we somehow know that there is a moral law, in its simplest form, expressed in this Golden Rule.

In an argument, when we say things like, “How would you like it if someone did the same to you?” or “I would never treat you the way you treated me,” we are again referring to this basis of morality. Of course, when confronted by these kinds of questions, our immediate response is not to denounce that such a standard exists; rather we make excuses to justify why we did not hold to this standard, explaining that based on our particular circumstance we were absolved in some way from it.

It is probably clear to you that this Golden Rule, this inbuilt standard of behaviour, is not simply made up by mankind or passed on from generation to generation. One’s particular code of moral ethics – the more complicated package of how our culture or religion understands and practices it – may be but even a simplistic study of cultures both ancient and modern reveals this universal Moral Law.

When individuals or groups break this Golden Rule, defrauding other individuals or groups, we collectively pass judgment – irrespective of our cultural or religious persuasion – with a loud, incensed cry of “Foul play!” In this we confirm our acknowledgement of some standard of justice defined by the Golden Rule. We don’t put what the offenders did down to bad genes, bad hair styles or bad weather...and we do not allow their excuses to justify their actions. (Although, of course, the modern legal industry has become infamous for doing just this; but that is another matter altogether). Yes, their circumstances may draw our sympathy (or not), but we are ruthless in our intolerance when people abuse others in ways we know they would be wronged by.

Thus, on the one hand, all human beings have an inbuilt standard of morality to define right from wrong. On the other hand, ***it is seems amazing that we, all human beings, seem incapable of keeping this very standard of morality we know so well.*** We know what is right but find it easier to break this standard than keep it. Every parent knows that we have to teach our children to do right; they find doing wrong very easy. Selfishness flows so easily from the human soul and it is selfishness – putting me first – that blinds me to the Golden Rule.

Forgive me if it sounds like I’m preaching. I am not. I can only be honest with what happens in my own life and the lives of my precious, beautiful children. I find it so easy to put me first; and so do they. It is hard work to regularly and consistently put others first. Even my children’s angelic moments are often motivated by what they will profit from. And you know what? This doesn’t surprise me. As a human being, I am intimately acquainted with our – or at least my – condition. I know what is right and wrong but I struggle to choose right over wrong perfectly. And there have been periods in my life where it seemed that I almost perfected choosing wrong over right!

O the condition of the human soul! This is who we are. We are creatures of such incredible potential, yet are bent on misusing that potential...at our horrible worst, abusing our potential...at our very best, failing to fulfil our potential.

SECTION 5 – A Look at Religion

This is the reason for every religion the world over. Every religion accepts this two-fold state of being: we know there is a moral standard but we cannot keep this standard. Thus **every religion is built on the premise that if we work hard towards this standard we will gain salvation either in this life or in some other life**. Some realising the impossibility of the task add the mysterious elements of the supernatural to the package in the offer that we can – in some way – obtain salvation through self-effort and a little bit of magic. However, the premise is simple: **mankind must find his way to God**.

There is only one religion that claims that God has taken the initiative to make up this impossible task for man to find salvation through his own efforts. The Christian faith claims that God took this initiative to rescue us. Thus, the Christian faith then is not a 'religion' in its true sense, as 'religion' by definition refers to man's attempts to find God. The Christian faith is a relationship initiated by God when we recognise our need for that relationship, realising that no amount of human effort will ever get us to live consistently with the standard of morality weighing down upon us. I have, of course, got ahead of myself again. We are already talking about God and a Personal God for that matter. How did we jump from morality to a Personal God?

Not only is it reasonable for mankind, out of his realisation of need, to concur that there must be a God but the very universal nature of morality urges us to come to this conclusion. If we agree that there is a standard of behaviour true for all people at all times, we have to ask how it got there. **If there is an universal sense of government that all of mankind feels compelled to respond to; in other words, we are subject to it even when we try our best to get rid of it, it cannot come from us but it must in fact come to us from somewhere else...from 'outside' of us...from 'above' us**. And because this 'thing' teaches us to reason between right and wrong it must be something like a 'mind,' meaning it is more a 'someone' than a something. In its simplest form 'it' must be 'god.' Certainly it must be the 'god' of *mankind* – even if the rocks claim otherwise – because we are subject to 'it'.

Thus, for me, I cannot be an atheist. Not just because the entire universe screams at me that there is a Designer – from the beauty of the cosmos to the genius of the atom to the beauty of my children's unique personalities – **but deep inside of me I have been answering all my life to something, I mean Someone, for my actions**. Although I can fool others, I cannot fool myself...more correctly, I cannot fool 'it' who impresses on me the difference between right and wrong.

The atheist position is too simplistic. To say that there is no God because the world has gone wrong – that all of life is senseless and unjust – means that the atheist collides with the obvious. How did he arrive at the conclusion that there is justice and injustice? We cannot call a line crooked until we know what a straight line looks like. In rejecting God, the atheist does so using the very faculties of reason given to him by God.

But I couldn't settle for being an agnostic either. The agnostic claims that there may be a god but he cannot be known...he either does not want to be known or cannot be known for various reasons. While the design I see in the universe draws me to engage with its Designer, again I turn to the 'truth' bearing down upon me. I can reason between right and wrong, a function of my reason/mind, only because 'it' has a reason/mind. 'It' wants me to know 'truth' and therefore I am drawn to know 'its' mind. A god that cannot be known is not my experience, or my children's experience, they – like me – seem instinctively drawn to the *why*, the 'mind', of morality. "But why Daddy?" is my children's favourite question. This inner questioning must be inserted within us by 'it'.

Pantheism teaches that god is either an impersonal force above creation or the force within creation, making all of creation god. Thus god is in the tree or the cow. Without being patronising, for me, I could never settle here. While we ought to look after the tree or cow – it is an essential part of creation – the 'mind' that impresses on me the difference between right and wrong could not be the tree or cow.

The 'mind' impresses on me how I should view the tree or cow and therefore is separate – high above – the tree or cow. An architect is not part of the house he designs; he is not the wall or floor. He is 'outside' or 'above' what he designs. In the same way, 'it' is above mankind – the highest form of life we know – and therefore could not possibly be less than mankind in personality and intellect. The creation cannot be as big as, let alone bigger, than the One who created it. Thus the wonder of the human mind and personality must be smaller – and I think a lot smaller – than the mind/person who created us. The very fact that the Golden Rule governs the entire human race – past, present and to come – leads me to conclude that 'it' is in fact an awesome Mind/Person.

Thus we don't really jump...but easily crawl from morality to God...and in fact, a Personal God.

This does not mean that I didn't want to settle for the position of an atheist or agnostic in my journey. At times I thought it would be easier. (At other times, for me, I know it would be much harder to assume those positions with the morality question continually pressing me, on the one hand and the beauty of a revelation of a Personal God drawing me, on the other). But easy has nothing to do with it. Easy may offer relief in the short term – very short term – but only an honest search will bring peace and fulfilment in the long term.

If atheism, agnosticism and pantheism are not valid responses to the morality issue then what are we left with? Monotheism. (I did not have the time in this article to show how one form of pantheism – that there are many personal gods – breaks down for me. Suffice to say here, if there are many gods, then the morality issue will either mean they are not really gods – if they were subject to it too – or that there was in fact one principle god over all the gods to whom they were subject. Thus the inevitable result of this kind of pantheism is monotheism).

Monotheism is our only alternative. But don't despair, it is not a case of, "we have nothing else to choose from but this lame-duck option". For me, it is the most reasonable and satisfying choice of them all. Initially I wondered why it was that I had to go through all the non-options to arrive here in the first place. Many don't need to do this and see it straight away. They are blessed in this regard. For me, it was important to be true to my journey to follow this path. (I guess, if you're reading this, you have more affinity with me than them).

The basis of morality – upon which all reasonable men agree – urges me to consider a 'Mind'...a Person...to whom I am subject. And there are a few monotheistic 'religions' that may help me to begin a journey of effort to attempt to bridge this enormous gap between my knowledge of right and wrong...and my inability to live consistent with my convictions. My choice is in the main, of course, Judaism or Islam. And it is in Judaism that we get a hint that this Personal God is in fact initiating a relationship with us.

Through the prophets of the Jewish people, God repeatedly promised to cross this insurmountable gap between mankind and Himself. But to embrace Judaism today will require that you join them in waiting for this fulfilment some time in the future. Until then you will be required to get on the treadmill of religion. True relationship and salvation is dependent on how well you pound away at that treadmill. Only in Christianity – which many forget began as a Jewish faith; thousands of Jews living from around AD 33 claimed that their Messiah had come, giving birth to what we now call the Christian faith – do we have the sublime claim that relationship and salvation is not just coming in the future sometime, but it is available now...today.

However, to embrace the Christian faith means to depart from religion in its true sense – as a set of religious rules that, if perfectly maintained will earn one salvation – and accept God's invitation into a first-hand relationship with Him through redemption provided by Jesus Christ. And because this is so different from religion – so high above what religion is – we often find it so difficult. Several questions keep getting in the way.

This is one of those times in which I feel tempted to explain why the Christian faith teaches that once we enter into a relationship with God, our nature is changed and we then, from that point, are strengthened to live a life that is consistent with the Moral Law. Just because the Christian faith is not a religion does not mean that Christians are not to live moral lives. That would be moronic thinking. But I am way beyond my purpose in writing this article.

So let's have a look at the questions that trip us up.

SECTION 6 – The Big Questions

A thousand questions arise. The two overbearing million dollar questions, of course, are: (1) Did we, the human race, not make up the concept of God? And if there is a God, (2) Why did He allow the gap between us and Himself in the first place?

Let's look at them one at a time.

Question 1

“Did we,” some ask, “not make up the concept of God so that we can sleep at night? Isn't he just a figment of our imagination?”

This question is at first glance plausible until you consider the morality issue again. We could not have made up this need we have; this black hole in our soul. We have all tried ad nauseam to avoid it, to get rid of it, to deny it and/or fill it...with everything, anything, we could find. In fact much of life consists of trying to fill this bottomless pit with relationships, possessions, achievements, entertainment, pleasure...infinitem. But each time we only seem to make this hole deeper; or more correctly, each time we simply end up confirming just how deep it is.

We did not create this need. It was, as we have said, created by something, or Someone, outside of us...above us. Thus, just as we did not invent this need, we did not make up the concept of God who is the answer to this need.

Even if there was no God in answer to the need, if we lived in perpetual subjection to this need, then the 'need' would in fact be god, a higher power that we are subject to. Fortunately we do not have to camp in the despair of a god like that.

Without question we can make up misconceptions of God. We can, for sure, come to wrong conclusions of what God is like. But misconceptions only exist because there is a true conception in the first place. For me, the evidence of design throughout the universe confirms what I know in my heart. I did not make up the concept of God; I simply acknowledge that He exists...and desire to meet Him.

Question 2

“If there is a God and He is a Personal God, why on God's green earth did He allow this huge gap between us and Himself to exist?”

Before I offer you a suggested answer here (on one hand, I don't want to sound like I'm preaching; while on the other hand, to not offer a valid answer would be unfair and uncaring on my part), keep in mind if you can that as important as this question may be, it actually does not affect our response to morality. It does matter to us on an emotional level because it asks “why?” And this ability to ask the emotive questions serves as further proof that the God who created us has emotions too... and is, in every way, a Person as we understand personhood.

To be clear then: while this question is emotional and thus valid (as it reflects on God), it is not essential to our response. If we discovered that the god who allowed this gap between us and himself was a cruel tyrant, it would still be reasonable to subject ourselves fully to him because he is our god. We would never emotionally connect with a god like this and would always struggle to trust him, but submitting to him would be the only true and honest response to the issue of morality that presses on us. For more bad than good we would be obliged to serve a god like this. To rebel would be to be squashed...swiftly and mercilessly.

Fortunately God has revealed Himself in a drastically different way. But the point must be clear. The exact nature of who God reveals Himself to be is not the essential issue right now. The weight of the morality question urges us to submit to God irrespective of the answer to this pertinent why? question. But we can breathe a deep sigh of relief that God has, according to the prophets, invited us into a relationship in which He Himself would span the gap that is impossible for us to cross. Thus, while we must subject ourselves to Him as His creation without question; He lovingly invites us to be His children, encouraging us to ask every question that troubles us. And I personally find the answer mind-blowing; in fact, humbling, that God would grant me such a gift.

The beauty and wonder of creation draws us to a God of emotion. Our own highest responses to the moral question – which we must admit are still way too short – lead us to act in ways that are emotional. I don't mean emotionalism, where emotions are the object. Rather when we, through use of reason, **choose** right over wrong we receive as a result emotions that are delicious...even when the **choice** of right over wrong is at our personal expense.

These delicious emotions are best captured in the word 'joy'. Not empty happiness but deep-seated, soul-enriching joy. And it most fully ravishes the heart when we show love to others; not mushy, sentimental love but selfless, sacrificial love. Of course, we show this 'divine' quality so seldom and even when do, it can be flavoured with our agenda for self-fulfilment or self-advancement. (I am talking about my own soul lest you think I am becoming preachy again).

Thus notice what happens. (And I highlight the words 'choose' and 'choice' here and above only to show how easily and logically this follows). When we **choose** right over wrong – using the ability to reason given to us by God – we are filled with joy, to some degree or other. Often heroic **choices** of right over wrong – choices made at personal expense to us – move us to an emotional, ecstatic high; often tears of strange delight stream down our face as if we have touched something noble within us. We know that we're not intrinsically noble; in the next inglorious moment we will just as easily choose wrong over right. But we touch something in our finer moments that gives us a hint of what God intends when He has 'saved' us; or spanned the gap we can't cross.

What is this something? It is a glimpse of something godlike, or more correctly, something like God Himself. And here we run into a possible answer to the question: Why did God allow this gap to exist in the first place?

God is a God of love. He loves His creation and for some strange reason desires our love in return. (Only since becoming a parent can I understand this desire in God's heart for two-way relationship; for me, another indication that we derive parenthood from Him). But to allow us to experience the God-like privilege of true love, God needed to create us with the **gift of choice**. (Hence, my choice to highlight the word 'choice' repeatedly above).

God did not just want robots wired to love Him; programmed to obey on command. We all know how cold our computer buddies are. God wanted children who would love Him and learn from Him; who would share with Him and represent Him. (He is the Personal God). **But without the gift of choice, we could never choose Him; we could never truly love.** We could never be like Him. And without the distinction between right and wrong, choice would be a misnomer...meaningless.

Of course, the consequence of rejecting Him – of choosing right over wrong – would introduce into our world pain and suffering. Yet – and this is where trust comes into the equation – God apparently thought the risk worth it. In fact, it is probably the only scenario possible for the complexities involved. If there was a better scenario that could have involved both love and freedom of choice while minimising the consequences of hate and bad choices, well, I for one think God would have created it. Evidently, this is the best (or only) option.

I apologise for taking so long to offer an answer to this question. Perhaps it is because I fear it sounds too simple. But on second thought if it were anymore complicated I would abandon hope. As Einstein said: "When the solution is simple, God is speaking". It ought to be simple (not simplistic) and it is. It ought to be obvious (not contrived) and it is.

For clarity then. Only human beings, above all the created world, have the potential to love like God does; and thus to relate to Him as He desires us to. But in order to share His glorious nature, God gave us the gift of choice. Without it we would be androids unable to love. With it, we can either choose to love Him and follow His leadership or choose not to. Love is not love until it is voluntarily given. Choice is our gift from God; what we do with it ought to be our gift back to Him.

CONCLUSION – Judaism, Islam and Christianity

I contend that we all – every human being – live by faith. Even the atheist and scientist live by faith. Monotheism, the belief in One God, is – in my opinion – a reasonable man's choice of faith.

Only the Christian faith claims that God has stepped into our need to reveal Himself to us. This would be, to me, the logical conclusion of a Personal God who has inserted into our nature the basis of morality by which we would start to search for Him; a needle that points us to our True North. Not only has He put within us this itch for His Divine touch; He has – without sounding irreverent – graciously scratched the itch. And the relief is eternal.

Judaism claimed that God would step into the gap between us and Himself. When Jesus arrived on planet earth – secular historians prove without question that Jesus of Nazareth did historically exist – He directly fulfilled over 300 references in the Old Testament. This is remarkable and not just a fact that speaks of the authenticity and validity of the Bible but gives remarkable witness to the claims of Christ.

Yet for several reasons most of the Jews did not receive their Messiah. This too was predicted by the Old Testament prophets. Of course, many Jews did, and continue to, turn their hearts to Jesus, the promised Messiah. But the explosive inception of the Gospel among the Gentile world of the first century meant that Christianity has since been the prevailing faith of most people past and present.

Over 600 years after the birth of Christianity from Judaism's bosom, Islam was born. Mohammed, disenchanted with the Christian's doctrine of relationship founded on grace and confused by the concept of the Trinity, proposed a return to 'religion' in its true form. He was further frustrated at the sloppy grace of Christendom of his day and claimed that he received a visitation from god. In this visitation from Allah, Mohammed was told that he was the final prophet of revelation and that he must, in essence, return mankind to religion.

Although Mohammed's early work was a sincere attempt at a system of ethics, he later turned to propagating his religion through domination and violence. Although the early days of his religion were attractive – in the sense that he championed a fresh reverence for god and necessity for righteousness – his 'religion' was a massive back step in religious understanding. He took his followers not just back to the religious sweat and effort of Judaism but imposed on them an even stricter brand of religion motivated primarily by fear. In my opinion, the regression continued in other areas too; in areas such as the value of women, the view of the age to come, etc. etc.

Thus, to me, the Christian faith is not just the most satisfying option before us; it is the only option in which God acts consistent with what a Personal God would do. The Christian faith is the most humane, most reasonable, most rational and most obvious option before us. Don't get me wrong. It is not necessarily the easiest to comprehend. If I was to invent a 'religion' it would be far easier. It would have seven steps to follow and it would be neatly sown up to fit into the comprehension of my mind. And then of course I would have created another "religion".

Christianity does not do this. No man could have invented it. There is no evidence of fabrication or corroboration. In fact, the God of the Christian faith cannot be squeezed into the confines of the human mind.

But then again, if He could be squeezed to fit into my puny little brain He would not be much of a God. Both you and I would be in serious trouble if God was no bigger than my ability to comprehend Him.

And in this I breathe a sigh of relief. He is so much bigger than I can fully comprehend, and for me, every day is a journey of discovering more about His wondrous and marvellous Personality. Hey, I've just realised one more thing. The Christian faith is also the most dynamic, exhilarating option too.

But I would like to stop right here.

In fact, in the first umpteen drafts of this attempted article I did stop right here.

Since then I have been asked to finish with more clarity than this. So I have added one more stream of thought but included it in the appendix that follows.

For most of you, I would recommend that you stop here with me.

For those really curious, the Appendix may serve some help. *Please be warned, I could not refrain from making clear my confidence in the Christian faith in this appendix.* For me, to add more clarity requires tackling the heart of the Christian faith: Jesus. And for me, the evidence is unmistakable.

(You still have the chance to put this article down right here!)

A recommendation:

Finally, I would like to highly recommend C.S Lewis' book, "Mere Christianity". Although the language is old (he did the talks on which the book is based on BBC well over fifty years ago) and he often repeats himself, it is a classic book based on the premise of this article. I was, of course, inspired to write my own thoughts down because of this brilliant book. His book covers in so much greater detail, and with such greater expertise, that which I have tried to tackle here.

APPENDIX – About Jesus

This brief section is based on a C.S. Lewis' concept.

When we consider Jesus Christ of Nazareth we are left with four options: Either He was just a Legend, or a Liar, or a Lunatic or He was who He claimed to be, Lord.

Legend?

Was Jesus just a myth? Did He really exist?

Jesus was, without a shadow of doubt, a historical person. Secular historians, such as Josephus, Tacitus, Seutonius and Pliny the Younger, confirm beyond question that Jesus of Nazareth was in fact a historical man. The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (*Antiquities*, XVIII, III), wrote a lot about Jesus, saying, "Now there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was the doer of wonderful works..."

Encyclopaedia Britannica uses 20,000 words in describing Jesus, using much more space than that given to Aristotle, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Buddha or Mohammed. It concludes: "These independent accounts prove that in ancient times the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus Christ".

Roderic Dunkerley said, "It would never enter anyone's head to ask whether Jesus had lived, unless before asking the question the mind has been darkened by the wish that he had not lived".

Liar or Lunatic?

Wasn't Jesus just a good man, a great moral teacher?

In the face of the reality that Jesus actually walked this earth, many people state their position in words similar to Billy Connolly (Comedian and actor, of "The Man Who Sued God" fame): "I can't believe in Christianity, but I think Jesus was a wonderful man".

Jesus simply never gave us this option. On one hand, if Jesus was not who He claimed to be, then He was certainly not a good, moral teacher. If when Jesus made His claims He knew He was not God, then He was lying. And if He was a liar, then He was also a hypocrite because He taught others to be honest, whatever the cost. And more than that He was evil personified because He told others to trust Him for their eternal destiny. If He could not back up His claims and knew it, then He was unspeakably evil. He would be worse than a liar; He would be the devil himself. Finally, He would also be a fool, because His claims to being God led to His crucifixion.

On the other hand, if Jesus was not guilty of intentional deception; in other words, if He believed His own lies – that He could forgive men's sins and give them eternal salvation – He was not just a good man; He was a raving lunatic, a complete nutcase.

We cannot simply conclude that Jesus was merely deluded. For someone to claim they are God in our very open-minded society today will get the “skew-look” and a quick call to the “funny-farm”. We have seen even in our day people like Jim Jones and David Koresh claim these things and, but for their brain-washed victims, we all – Christian and non-Christian – knew they were desperately sick men.

We must remember that for someone to claim that He was God in the first century in Israel, in a culture so fiercely monotheistic and completely narrow-minded, and then to tell others that their eternal destiny depends on believing in Him was no slight of fantasy but the thoughts of a complete madcap. As C.S. Lewis so brilliantly said, “On the level with a man who says he is a poached egg”.

Thus we have to either claim that Jesus was a liar or a lunatic. The only other alternative is to believe that He was who He said He was. And make no mistake; He claimed to be Lord, the only way into relationship with Father God.

Jesus said: **“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”** (John 14:6).

Listen to what friends and foes have said about Him.

J. S. Mills (philosopher, sceptic and antagonist): “[There is no] better translation of the rule of virtue...than to endeavour to live so that Christ would approve of our life”.

William Lecky (One of Great Britain’s most noted historians and opponent of the Christian faith): “The simple record of [Jesus’] three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists”.

Philip Schaff (Christian historian) sums it up best: “How, in the name of logic, common sense, and experience, could an impostor – that is a deceitful, selfish and depraved man – have invented and consistently maintained from the beginning to the end, the purest and noblest character known in history with the most perfect air of truth and reality? A character so original, so complete, so uniformly consistent, so perfect...so high above all human greatness, can be neither a fraud nor a fiction.... It would take more than a Jesus to invent a Jesus!”

“Is such an intellect – clear as the sky, bracing as the mountain air, sharp and penetrating as a sword, thoroughly healthy and vigorous, always ready and always self-possessed – [capable of madness] and the most serious delusion concerning His own character and mission? Preposterous imagination!”

Thus, we all have to make our choice. ***Who is Jesus to you?***

We can’t leave this up to our parents or to our friends. We cannot put it off for another day because we are not guaranteed another day. I am fully persuaded that our answer to this critical decision determines our destiny. At least that is what He taught.

Who is Jesus?

This article is entitled:

Blind Faith in Religion and Science.

For other resources please contact us...

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