



What Good is Faith?

Illusory & Tangible Benefactions

"The fact that a believer is happier than a skeptic is no more to the point than the fact than a drunken man is happier than a sober one."

~George Bernard Shaw

The first thing that usually comes to mind for believers, when you ask them what good their faith has been, is that it's soothing to believe that a higher power is in charge of everything; it gives them hope and comfort.

But what sort of hope and comfort? That there will be relief from the pain and suffering of life after they die? Seems a backhanded comfort to me. This insinuates that our lives are merely a means to an end; we are only alive so that we can die.

I would rather have the comfort of friendship and love and purpose. I'd even prefer the comfort of good food, laughter, a soft bed and a cozy recliner. But this mindset of comfort after death steals our ability to appreciate the good things that come our way. If we are hyperfocused on the *later*, we never live in the *now*.

Another thing a believer will say about what faith gives them, is *a guide for living*. That guide, as I see it, is one of greed, anger, punishment, suffering, murder, rape, torture,

abuse, prejudice and fear. What kind of guide is that? How about the teachings of philosophy? How about the ethical core most of us innately have at birth?

Another argument for the benefits of faith is that it allows people to be part of something; to belong to a community, and have a support system to help them when life is challenging.

Believers will also say that the value of religion is that it makes them happy. A study¹ by Professor Andrew Clark, of Paris School of Economics, suggests that believers have purpose and meaning and life satisfaction. It's not clear whether this study included interviewing atheists, but the point here is that if you can only get your meaning, purpose, and life satisfaction from being a slave and worshipping an angry, petulant and evil invisible being, then I would contend there's something wrong with your discernment, not with whether or not you have faith.

On a less strident note, purpose, life satisfaction, and meaning can be found in many things and in myriad ways—in your children, your hobbies, your friendships, your volunteer and humanitarian work, your job, your home, your environment, your books, your music, your art; in the trips you take, the wine you enjoy, the evolution of your mind, the garden you grow, that first cup of coffee in the morning, cooking a great dinner for your loved ones, the jog through a park, the snowfall, a gentle rain, your loving pets, the wonders of the universe, rousing debate, taking photographs, keeping scrapbooks, talking on the phone with your friends, or meeting them for a cocktail...this list is voluminous. And limited only by the imagination of the individual.

Perhaps, then, the problem believers have is a lack of creativity and initiative. If they can't think deeply enough

¹ BBC News. "Religion linked to happy life." (18 March 2008). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/7302609.stm>.

and be self-actualized enough to discover all the many things life has to offer, then it's more a question of developing those skills than giving in to the easy way of having someone else tell you what your purpose is, and what's important in your life.

I say that all of these things—comfort, strength, hope, direction, and community—can be had without faith and without a god. Religion in no way has cornered the market on any of these conditions. The faith in relief of suffering when we die, can be had by simply dying. All suffering ends with death.

Strength can be found in our friendships and sometimes our families, and often in the development of our own characters.

Hope can be a choice, as well, and it doesn't have to be predicated on a fairy tale. Knowing that you have weathered a storm before, can encourage you to believe you can again.

Direction can be found in the plethora of materials from others who have had similar challenges, from self-actualization and a proactive mindset, and from the love of the people in our lives.

And community can be found in many places: mutual interest groups, circles of friends, co-workers, softball leagues, book clubs, sports, and all the permutations of your interests and hobbies and the collective manifestations thereof.

Yet, Christians believe in this after-here promise, and in the value of religion, while there is no evidence that prayer is effective, no guidelines that make any sense in the world we live in, no agreement on which God is the "right" god, nor any evidence that this deity even exists, and certainly there is nothing positive in the Christian sensibility that cannot be had by simply living an ethical life.

But still. Christians cling to their beliefs, insisting that belief in God and all the dogma that goes with it, brings them something of value unavailable from any other source, even from within.

Any perceived benefit, however, comes from the idea of its presence. Not from the actuality of it. Can we not gain hope and comfort from the many benefits that Science gives us? Can we not be comforted by the knowledge that it continues to give us answers to our riddles? Technologies that continue to make our lives safer and easier? Can we not be awed and inspired by the beauty of the mountains, the oceans, the cosmos around us?

These are all naturally occurring things that we, for the most part, understand. We know how they came to be the way they are and we can look at them and know that there is a greater power than us, and it's called NATURE. Is this not humbling enough? Do we then have to subjugate ourselves to Nature as if it were a tyrannous king?

Nature requires no worship, no servitude. It requires nothing of us. We are charged with the ability to respect it or not respect it, and that is at once a human challenge, and says nothing of gods or goddesses. Why must we make ourselves slaves in order to find peace and contentment?

More importantly, can we not seek comfort from within ourselves? And failing that, from the other loved ones in our lives? From that beauty of nature? From friendships...From reading the thoughts and encouragements of other thinkers...From watching a favorite program...Taking photographs of the snow-fall...Stroking a cat and feeling it purr under our hands...Tossing a ball and watching our puppy run after it...Helping a child build something wonderful from the items in front of her...touching and being touched....laughter and companionship...?

There is plenty in this life to appreciate and adore, and plenty to make us feel alive and purposeful. Why do we

need to throw a magical invisible Being in the mix who threatens us with unimaginable pain and suffering if we don't believe in him?

Yet, the faithful argue that Science is without mystery and wonder; that Science is cold and calculating and offers no comfort; that not believing in something bigger than yourself is a lackluster, meaningless way to live.

So if wonder and magic are what believers feel they will lose from turning away from religion, one glance at the structure of DNA and its ability to create something from almost nothing, and we are awed. One microscopic photo of cells dividing, viruses multiplying, tissue regenerating and we are amazed. One look at space photographs taken by the Hubble telescope, and our wondrous, "magical," universe is revealed.

But we are not looking at a picture from God's photo album. We're looking at the result of billions of years of natural evolution and cosmological development. We understand, through empirical data, how most of that process took shape. This in no way diminishes its magnificence.

Science has shown us this grandeur, and continues to show us. Knowing that a supernatural being did not create it all, doesn't make it any less fascinating, mesmerizing or wondrous. It engenders excitement in all the many things we will continue to learn; all the problems we will solve with our growing knowledge of how things work, and how we can use this knowledge for the betterment of humankind.

Believers only fear the loss of magic and wonder because they don't understand the wondrous, magical and amazing world in which we live. Rather than having their noses in texts written two thousand years ago by superstitious, uneducated men in another country, they could be reading and watching and listening to the wonders that Science has bestowed on our species.

Since Francis Crick announced that he had "found the secret of life" in 1953, scientists have understood the structure of DNA. From this discovery, and the subsequent details that arose from it, Science advanced to the Human Genome Project, and stem cell research. Researchers have revealed many other stunning in-sights, and we now understand quite a lot about how life develops into the myriad permutations it does.

The wonder and mystery and comfort to be found here, is in discovering more and more about the natural processes that operate in the minute cells of living organisms. And this understanding will lead to (and indeed already has resulted in) life saving procedures and medicines that would otherwise mean the damage and demise of many of us.



Philosophy, Reason & Intelligence

“Man’s mind is his tool for survival, but like all tools, it must be properly used. The mind manipulates knowledge, and knowledge can only be obtained through reason. Without reason, there is no knowledge, and thus no survival.”

~ Jeff Landauer and Joseph Rowlands

While I struggle with unanswered questions—things I cannot understand—I have an even bigger problem placing faith in those things. It is far too convenient to use the *ad hoc* explanations that Christianity offers; I believe in what is proven, or what there is the most empirical proof for; not what "sounds nice" or appeals to my needs, wishes, desires, or fancy.

That’s why understanding philosophy and utilizing its doctrine of reason, is at once a better choice.

Richard Carrier defines Philosophy in a succinct and edifying way.

Philosophy is what we believe, about ourselves, about the universe, and our place in it. Philosophy is the Answer to every Big Question, and the ground we stand on when finding answers to every small one. Our values, our morals, our goals, our identities, who we are, where we are, and above all how we know any of these things, it all comes from our philosophy of life—whether we know it or not

I believe there is a pressing need for our educational institutions to make the study of philosophy mandatory. Study in this area allows a person to learn not merely the importance of thinking, but shows them HOW to think, and in ways that produce real and tangible benefits. Carrier continues:

You either have a coherent, sensible, complete philosophy that is well-supported by all the evidence that humans have yet mustered, or you do not.

Without the ability to think rationally, the human being tends toward the mystical and magical to explain the wonders of our world. This is an effective way to avoid responsibility for self, and undermines the progression of evolution in our species. To cloak your reason with the raiment of religion, insures that you will not consider the very real and proven truths that exist since Science began to answer so many of these niggling questions for us. An example of this ignorance is to be found in this quote: "The Earth is flat, and anyone who disputes this claim is an atheist who deserves to be punished."²

Carrier elaborates:

...religion has become a factory-made commodity, sold off the shelf to the masses, who assume it must be good if it is really old and lots of smarter and better educated people say it's a good buy ("8 out of 10 experts recommend Christian Brand Salvation!"). People think they can just plug such a goodie into their lives, maybe with a few unskilled adjustments of their own, and never have to think about whether it is well-constructed, well-thought-out, or even true. Some people, more creative but no wiser, take a shallow glance around and tear pieces from existing products, or grab whatever pops into their heads, and throw together something of their own, with little in the way of careful investigation or analysis.³

There's a reason why reason is reasonable. It allows us to see the world as it is, rather than as we wish it were. It gives us tools for discerning the intrinsic value of behavior, decisions, relationships, and purpose.

² Sheik Abdel-Aziz Ibn Baaz, Supreme Religious Authority, Saudi Arabia, 1993.

³ Richard Carrier. *Sense & Goodness Without God: A Defense of Metaphysical Naturalism* (AuthorHouse, 23 February 2005), 3-4.



Logical Fallacies

*“Science is simply common sense at its best—
that is, rigidly accurate in observation, and
merciless to fallacy in logic.”*

~ Thomas Henry Huxley

I’m trying to stay on topic, but sometimes a bit of digression is necessary in order to understand the bigger picture. In the case of using logic to think properly and efficiently, you must grasp the under-pinnings.

The contemporary meaning of “arguing” is often relegated to a verbal fight between two people. From a philosophical standpoint, however, arguing is a skill with specific parameters and each person is expected to follow them. This is as much a sign of respect and consideration as it is an indication of inherent intelligence.

I’ve written frequently about my chagrin over the pervasive ignorance of many Americans, and often at the risk of sounding elitist. Put the point here, is that if Americans were better at following an idea or concept to its logical conclusion, we would suffer less, be more productive, more successful, and generally more peaceful and harmonious. This is not what I would consider a negative.

So, bearing that in mind, allow me to communicate what logical argument really is, beginning with what is called Logical Fallacy.

According to an article from the New England Skeptical Society,

Arguing is one of those activities most people do but few people do well. Many do not understand what a logical argument even is or how to do it correctly. Yet arguing is an essential skill of critical thinking. How we argue reflects how we think, how we evaluate our own

conclusions, and how we challenge the beliefs of others”⁴

According to the Skeptics Guide to the Universe, logical fallacies are defined as such:

All arguments have the same basic structure: A therefore B. They begin with one or more premises (A), which is a fact or assumption upon which the argument is based. They then apply a logical principle (therefore) to arrive at a conclusion (B). An example of a logical principle is that of equivalence. For example, if you begin with the premises that A=B and B=C, you can apply the logical principle of equivalence to conclude that A=C. A logical fallacy is a false or incorrect logical principle. An argument that is based upon a logical fallacy is therefore not valid. It is important to note that if the logic of an argument is valid then the conclusion must also be valid, which means that if the premises are all true then the conclusion must also be true. Valid logic applied to one or more false premises, however, leads to an invalid argument. Also, if an argument is not valid the conclusion may, by chance, still be true.

Top 20 Logical Fallacies

1. **Ad hominem.** An ad hominem argument is any that attempts to counter another's claims or conclusions by attacking the person, rather than addressing the argument itself. True believers will often commit this fallacy by countering the arguments of skeptics by stating that skeptics are closed minded. Skeptics, on the other hand, may fall into the trap of dismissing the claims of UFO believers, for example, by stating that people who believe in UFO's are crazy or stupid.

2. **Ad ignorantiam.** The argument from ignorance basically states that a specific belief is true because we don't know that it isn't true. Defenders of extrasensory perception, for example, will often overemphasize how much we do not know about the human brain. UFO proponents will often argue that an object sighted in the sky is unknown, and therefore it is an alien spacecraft.

3. **Argument from authority.** Stating that a claim is true because a person or group of perceived authority says it is true. Often this argument is implied by emphasizing the many years of experience, or the formal degrees held by the individual making a specific claim. It is reasonable to give more credence to the claims of

⁴ Steven Novella. "How to Argue." Neurologica Blog, 19 March 2007. <http://theness.com/neurologicablog/?p=499>.

those with the proper background, education, and credentials, or to be suspicious of the claims of someone making authoritative statements in an area for which they cannot demonstrate expertise. But the truth of a claim should ultimately rest on logic and evidence, not the authority of the person promoting it.

4. Argument from final Consequences. Such arguments (also called teleological) are based on a reversal of cause and effect, because they argue that something is caused by the ultimate effect that it has, or purpose that it serves. For example: God must exist, because otherwise life would have no meaning.

5. Argument from Personal Incredulity. I cannot explain or understand this, therefore it cannot be true. Creationists are fond of arguing that they cannot imagine the complexity of life resulting from blind evolution, but that does not mean life did not evolve.

6. Confusing association with causation. This is similar to the post-hoc fallacy in that it assumes cause and effect for two variables simply because they are correlated, although the relationship here is not strictly that of one variable following the other in time. This fallacy is often used to give a statistical correlation a causal interpretation. For example, during the 1990's both religious attendance and illegal drug use have been on the rise. It would be a fallacy to conclude that therefore, religious attendance causes illegal drug use. It is also possible that drug use leads to an increase in religious attendance, or that both drug use and religious attendance are increased by a third variable, such as an increase in societal unrest. It is also possible that both variables are independent of one another, and it is mere coincidence that they are both increasing at the same time. A corollary to this is the invocation of this logical fallacy to argue that an association does not represent causation, rather it is more accurate to say that correlation does not necessarily mean causation, but it can. Also, multiple independent correlations can point reliably to a causation, and is a reasonable line of argument.

7. Confusing currently unexplained with unexplainable. Because we do not currently have an adequate explanation for a phenomenon does not mean that it is forever unexplainable, or that it therefore defies the laws of nature or requires a paranormal explanation. An example of this is the "God of the Gaps" strategy of creationists that whatever we cannot currently explain is unexplainable and was therefore an act of God.

8. False Continuum. The idea that because there is no definitive demarcation line between two extremes, that the distinction between the extremes is not real or

meaningful: There is a fuzzy line between cults and religion, therefore they are really the same thing.

9. **False Dichotomy.** Arbitrarily reducing a set of many possibilities to only two. For example, evolution is not possible, therefore we must have been created (assumes these are the only two possibilities). This fallacy can also be used to oversimplify a continuum of variation to two black and white choices. For example, Science and pseudoscience are not two discrete entities, but rather the methods and claims of all those who attempt to explain reality fall along a continuum from one extreme to the other.

10. **Inconsistency.** Applying criteria or rules to one belief, claim, argument, or position but not to others. For example, some consumer advocates argue that we need stronger regulation of prescription drugs to ensure their safety and effectiveness, but at the same time argue that medicinal herbs should be sold with no regulation for either safety or effectiveness.

11. **The Moving Goalpost.** A method of denial arbitrarily moving the criteria for "proof" or acceptance out of range of whatever evidence currently exists.

12. **Non-Sequitur.** In Latin this term translates to "doesn't follow". This refers to an argument in which the conclusion does not necessarily follow from the premises. In other words, a logical connection is implied where none exists.

13. **Post-hoc ergo propter hoc.** This fallacy follows the basic format of: A preceded B, therefore A caused B, and therefore assumes cause and effect for two events just because they are temporally related (the Latin translates to "after this, therefore because of this").

14. **Reductio ad absurdum.** In formal logic, the reductio ad absurdum is a legitimate argument. It follows the form that if the premises are assumed to be true it necessarily leads to an absurd (false) conclusion and therefore one or more premises must be false. The term is now often used to refer to the abuse of this style of argument, by stretching the logic in order to force an absurd conclusion. For example a UFO enthusiast once argued that if I am skeptical about the existence of alien visitors, I must also be skeptical of the existence of the Great Wall of China, since I have not personally seen either. This is a false reductio ad absurdum because he is ignoring evidence other than personal eyewitness evidence, and also logical inference. In short, being skeptical of UFO's does not require rejecting the existence of the Great Wall.

15. **Slippery Slope.** This logical fallacy is the argument that a position is not consistent or tenable because ac-

cepting the position means that the extreme of the position must also be accepted. But moderate positions do not necessarily lead down the slippery slope to the extreme.

16. **Straw Man.** Arguing against a position which you create specifically to be easy to argue against, rather than the position actually held by those who oppose your point of view.

17. **Special pleading, or ad-hoc reasoning.** This is a subtle fallacy which is often difficult to recognize. In essence, it is the arbitrary introduction of new elements into an argument in order to fix them so that they appear valid. A good example of this is the ad-hoc dismissal of negative test results. For example, one might point out that ESP has never been demonstrated under adequate test conditions, therefore ESP is not a genuine phenomenon. Defenders of ESP have attempted to counter this argument by introducing the arbitrary premise that ESP does not work in the presence of skeptics. This fallacy is often taken to ridiculous extremes, and more and more bizarre ad hoc elements are added to explain experimental failures or logical inconsistencies.

18. **Tautology.** A tautology is an argument that utilizes circular reasoning,⁵ which means that the conclusion is also its own premise. The structure of such arguments is $A=B$ therefore $A=B$, although the premise and conclusion might be formulated differently so it is not immediately apparent as such. For example, saying that therapeutic touch works because it manipulates the life force is a tautology because the definition of therapeutic touch is the alleged manipulation (without touching) of the life force.

19. **Tu quoque.** Literally, *you too*. This is an attempt to justify wrong action because someone else also does it. "My evidence may be invalid, but so is yours."

20. **Unstated Major Premise.** This fallacy occurs when one makes an argument which assumes a premise which is not explicitly stated. For example, arguing that

⁵ Though "begging the question" and "circular reasoning" are often used interchangeably, some textbooks maintain that this is not quite correct in the strictest sense. In this view there is the following difference between them: Circular Reasoning is the basing of two conclusions each upon the other (possibly with one or more intermediate steps). That is, if you follow a chain of arguments, the conclusion of some argument is used as a premise in one of the earlier arguments that eventually led to that conclusion. Begging the question can occur within one argument; on this understanding, begging the question occurs if and only if the conclusion is implicitly or explicitly a component of an immediate premise. (NationMaster.com).

we should label food products with their cholesterol content because Americans have high cholesterol assumes that: 1) cholesterol in food causes high serum cholesterol; 2) labeling will reduce consumption of cholesterol; and 3) that having a high serum cholesterol is unhealthy. This fallacy is also sometimes called begging the question.



Antonyms That Vex Us

“Learning without thinking is useless.

Thinking without learning is dangerous.”

~Confucius

Before launching too far into this volume, I feel it necessary to offer definitions of certain terms. These are not scientific terms, nor esoteric terms unfamiliar to the general public. They are, however, terms that continue to be redefined to fit into the ideas offered by those who ignore the importance of speaking the same language. The dictionary was developed to ensure that when we communicate, we are all saying the same things. For instance, there is a difference in *knowing* and *understanding*.

Knowing vs. Understanding

Know—(verb) to perceive or understand as fact or truth; to apprehend clearly and with certainty.

Understand—(verb) to perceive the meaning of; grasp the idea of; comprehend.

One can *know* that rain will often produce a rainbow, but not everyone *understands* how rainbows are formed. One can *know* how make a call on a cell phone, but not *understand* how the call manages to reach its destination.

Thus, the distinction between these two terms is a vital one, if we are to make sound decisions about what is true.

Truth vs. belief

Truth—(noun) conformity with fact or reality; verity; a verified or indisputable fact, proposition, principle, or the like.

Belief—(noun) confidence in the truth or existence of something not immediately susceptible to rigorous proof.

Thus, when I use the terms above, that’s how I mean them. I don’t mean “I know this because I feel it.” Nor do I

mean “This is my personal truth.” Nor, “It’s a fact based on what I feel in my heart.”

Fact vs. Hypothesis

Fact—(noun) something that actually exists; reality; truth.

Hypothesis—(noun) an assumption used in an argument without its being endorsed; a supposition; an unproved theory; a conjecture.

The common declarations by the religious often include statements like “God exists, that’s a fact” or “I know for a fact that Jesus was real” or “I know for a fact what God wants.” None of these statements are true if using the accepted, agreed-upon definitions.

Reason vs. Insanity

Reason—(noun) the mental powers concerned with forming conclusions, judgments, or inferences.

Insanity—(noun) a severely disordered state of the mind usually occurring as a specific disorder.

If insanity is the opposite of reason, and religiosity is on a spectrum, moving away from reason in degrees of devotion, then the more religious a person is, the closer they are to insanity. In fact many psychological definitions for things like delusion and psychosis fit nicely into the description of religious zealotry.

Clearly, all of these terms are linked in many ways, as they cross linguistic paths frequently. But discernment only comes with understanding definitions, usage, and context, a skill that seems all but absent to the religious mind.



Unreasonable Ideas

“When did ignorance become a point of view?”

~Scott Adams

In the usual insipid manner, Fundies⁶ present outrageous ideas, framed in a declaration of truth, but ultimately they are unreasonable, and cannot be taken seriously. There are the obvious ones like dinosaurs walked the Earth with humans only 6,000 years ago, and that God sent Hurricane Katrina to cleanse New Orleans of homosexuals, the godless, and for legalizing abortion.⁷ And then there’s that one about Halloween being Satan’s Birthday Party and that most of the candy handed out during this time has been prayed over by witches.⁸ And that dinosaur bones are actually the skeletons of demons, planted there by Satan to confuse us into questioning the existence of God. There’s so much wrong with this one, but I’ll just mention this: if the Devil is trying to get us to doubt God, doesn’t he realize we would notice that no GOD meant NO SATAN? Oh, right, many Fundies won’t think this hard about it.

But there are other examples of unreasonable ideas.

Lying and Language

In the Bible, we find many examples of God as Liar. In Genesis, he tells Adam and Eve that they will die if they eat the fruit on the tree in the Garden of Eden.⁹ Yet, we know from the rest of the story that they did not die. Then later, after Cain slays his brother Abel, he is cursed by God to

⁶ colloquial reference to Fundamentalist Christians.

⁷ Media Matters for America. (video). “Religious conservatives claim Katrina was God’s omen, punishment for the United States.” 13 September 2005.

⁸ See previous volume, *Cosmology of the Dark Side*.

⁹ But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die (Genesis 3:3).

wander the Earth¹⁰ and yet he is shown to have married, had a child (Enoch) and founded a city.¹¹

Consider these contradictory verses about lying:

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. (Numbers 23:19) versus, The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent (1 Samuel 15:29)

Thou art that God, and thy words be true (2 Samuel 7:28) versus, In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began (Titus 1:2).

It was impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18) versus, Now, therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee (1 Kings 22:23).

Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets (2 Chronicles 18:22) versus, Ah, Lord GOD! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people (Jeremiah 4:10).

O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived (Jeremiah 20:7).

And if a prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet (Ezekiel 14:9).

For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11).

In Romans, Paul makes it clear that God isn't the only one allowed to lie. "For if the truth of God hath more abounded by my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also adjudged a sinner?" (3:7).

Ergo, lying is okay, as long as you're lying for God. What happened to *Thou shalt not bear false witness*? That commandment should be reworded to say *Thou shalt not bear a false witness*. In which case, we ought not put up with God.

¹⁰ "...you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." (Genesis 4:12).

¹¹ *Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.* (Genesis 4:16-17).

Language and Communication

What about this one:

How Does God Communicate to Us?

God communicates through language. When he made the first man, Adam, he had already “programmed” him with a language, so there could be communication. Human language consists of words used in a specific context that relates to the entire reality around us.

Thus, God can reveal things to man, and man can communicate with God, because words have meaning and convey an understandable message. If this were not so, how could any of us communicate with each other or with God?¹²

I am floored by the naiveté it takes for people to believe statements such as these. Never mind that we have documentation on the development of almost all languages, and how they have evolved over the course of thousands of years.¹³ Even in all the many translations of the Bible, itself. We also know that language requires either audible sounds or visual representations of sounds (such as with sign language). If you can't hear the person speaking, except inside your own head, and can't see them signing to you, it is not language. According to the World English Dictionary, it is *“a system for the expression of thoughts, feelings, etc, by the use of spoken sounds or conventional symbols.”*

¹² Ken Ham. “Could God Really Have Created Everything in 6 Days?” <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/nab/could-god-have-created-in-six-days>.

¹³ “Most European, southwest Asian and Indian languages come from the same single Indo-European linguistic family. Together these form a huge group of eighty spoken languages which is the largest single one. Scholars have never found any written evidence of the parent language but they have managed to reconstruct part of it by comparing the languages within the group and have coined a term for the parent tongue: Proto-Indo-European. There are differing opinions on where and when Proto-Indo-European was first spoken. Some academics claim that it was originally the language of farming peoples in an area of north Eastern Europe in about 4000 BC. Others hold that it was spoken by various nomadic tribes that roamed across south Eastern Europe and southern Russia.” (<http://factoidz.com/short-history-of-the-development-of-human-language/>).

Prayer doesn't count, because there is no reciprocal speaking going on, except as a matter of imagined responses. What this contention means is that if you think thoughts in my direction, and I don't say anything, you can decide to hear my response. On what planet does that make any rational sense? The belief in this sort of thing is entirely predicated on a precursor belief that an all-powerful, all-knowing, invisible being exists, and he listens to you, personally, and talks to you *psychically*. This, by any other definition, is considered a mental defect.

So Ken Ham (and others of his ilk) uses supposition and fiction to bolster his nonsensical beliefs, which then fall away under rational scrutiny.

Blaming the Victim

Certain leaflets distributed by Christians blame crimes of violence on something the victim must have done wrong. Like one given to a young woman at a Virginia fast food drive-through, which included the statement: "some rape victims would not have been raped if they had dressed properly. So can we really say they were innocent victims?"¹⁴

Another example, directly related to religion, would be this:

We are all supposedly born "condemned already" with a depraved, sinful nature that is somehow inherited from a "morally perfect" man and woman who somehow became morally imperfect by disobediently picking and eating some forbidden fruit. All this happened quite long ago, and although no one alive can be said to be at fault for the decision of these prehistoric fructose lovers, everyone born since that fateful day is declared guilty-by-association.¹⁵

¹⁴ Religion Gone Crazy: Blame the Victim, 6 March 2010.

<http://www.religiongonecrazy.com/blame-the-victim-crazy-religious-leaflet-claims-%E2%80%98ungodly%E2%80%99-dressed-women-provoke-rape/>.

¹⁵ Ex-Christian."Christianity: Blaming the Victim." 25 March 2008.

<http://articles.exchristian.net/2008/03/christianity-blaming-victim.html>.

According to the writer on this site, this is tantamount to saying, "Hey, your long dead forebear did a no-no, so you will be punished with everlasting, horrific torment!"

Then there's the ever-insipid Pat Robertson saying that Haiti is cursed because they swore a pact with the devil and that's why they've suffered so much tragedy,¹⁶ as well as his contention that almost every natural disaster was a punishment by God for those who do not believe or who reject him as the one and only god. Here's a few more examples of that:

- **9/11** Following the devastating attack, the televangelist Jerry Falwell said 9/11 occurred because of pagans, abortionists, feminists, "the gays and the lesbians" and the ACLU.
- **Hurricane Katrina** Weighing in on the crisis, pastor John Hagee said "I believe that New Orleans had a level of sin that was offensive to God, and they were recipients of the judgment of God for that." Hagee later retracted that statement.
- **The 2006 American Tsunami?** On that year, Robertson predicted that in America, there will be "earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, tornados—volcanic eruption. The coasts will be lashed by storms and disasters and, yet, this still isn't the big one. Bigger ones are even coming."¹⁷

Post-Rapture Post

By way of clever reprisal, another unreasonable idea was devised by an innovative atheist has devised a money making idea that is both creative and an abject slap in the face to another stupid Christian idea, the Rapture.

Joshua Ritter, of Orlando, created the Post-Rapture Post website. For a small fee, he offers to deliver messages to loved ones left behind after the Rapture takes all the good Christians to Heaven.

"I get about 80% hate mail," Ritter acknowledged. The other 20% fall roughly into two categories: people who

¹⁶ WallyCrawler. "Blaming Victims." 17 January 2010.

<http://wallycrawler.blogspot.com/2010/01/blaming-victims.html>

¹⁷ John Hudson. Cliché Watch: Pat Robertson Blames Natural Disaster Victims." The Atlantic Wire, 22 January 2010. <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/features/view/feature/Pat-Robertson-Blames-Natural-Disaster-Victims-602>.

appreciate the satire, and fellow atheists—offering their services as postal workers after the Rapture.¹⁸

Leviathan Vs. Delusional Adherent

This next quote is by far the finest example of stupid Christian ideas run amok. Notice the amount of gullibility it demands, even before his story is heard:

Leviathon is a spirit I have battled as well. It was a hard battle but was won. It was about four months or more ago. My wife and I were in McDonalds and were having a conversation with an angel and Leviathon had come up. I told the angel that i wanted to fight this demon and he said I could. On the way back to the hotel I asked the angel if he could bring the demon to a predestinated place and he said yes. I figured that since Leviathon was from the depths of the sea he would be used to the cold water so I filled the tub up with scalding hot water and blessed the water. The angels (there were two now) brought Leviathon bound to the tub and fought with me. We all pulled our swords from our hips and began running this demon through with all my strength and everything I had. I would say it took at least half an hour or more. We were all spent but the battle was won.¹⁹

Is there any better example of the level of delusion present in Christianity? Notice also that he continued to misspell *Leviathan*. But he also expects his readers to accept his credibility while contending that he had a personal chat with an angel. Note also that this brave, stalwart ~~slave~~ servant of God battled a “bound” Leviathan. How did that become a difficult task took all his strength? The real story is seeping through in the sentence, “*We all pulled our swords from our hips and began running this demon through with all my strength and everything I had.*” First, the angels were fighting with him and before the end of the sentence, he is doing it

¹⁸ Katherine Boyle. “Atheist Offers To Send Letters Post-Rapture.” *USA Today*. 9 September 2007. http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2007-05-08-post-rapture_N.htm.

¹⁹ nautical999, Quote # 60847. Fundies Say the Darndest Things! <http://www.fsttdt.com/Top100.aspx?archive=1>.

by himself. And does he know that a Leviathan is NOT a demon to begin with?

And this commenter must surely recall the verse in Matthew 26:52-54 which says"

Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"

So this guy on the Internet is so special that God sent him helpful warring angels, when he wouldn't even do that for his own holy son?

This leads quite nicely into the next subject....