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ESSAYS

How Can You Believe?

From a human point of view, it is ridiculous to believe in a God who has always existed – one whose existence has no beginning or end. It is ridiculous to believe he exists in a supernatural dimension where there is a heaven of eternal reward and a hell of eternal punishment. It is ridiculous to believe in a God you cannot see. It is ridiculous to believe when He does not speak to us in an audible voice. It is ridiculous to believe that he exists when you cannot touch him and he does not have an odor or taste. It is ridiculous to believe that he is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient when you cannot prove his existence. It is ridiculous to believe that he created the universe or that he created you and me by his Word. It is ridiculous to believe that there is a personified evil called Satan or that there are angels or demons. It is just as ridiculous to believe that God gave us authoritative rules to live by. Even though faith in God appears to be ridiculous, 90% of people in the US still believe!

Some people who deny God's existence say scientists have answers to all the questions we have about origins. They think science has answered our questions about the origins of the universe and the origins of life. What are they? Well, they say that

there was once a “Big Bang” that was an explosion of a singularity (of energy?). It exploded in a void and then evolved into the elements that comprise matter. They, in turn, aggregated and the universe evolved. Suns and planets were formed, but why did it all happen? What decided that they should evolve in the way they did? Why did the universe and its galaxies end up relatively flat? Why did the galaxies evolve the way they did? Why did our solar system end up with the configuration that it has?

Why is the universe continuing to expand when scientists’ say that their calculations said that it should collapse? Theoretically, there should be a given quantity of matter in the universe. But they cannot find it all. Where is the missing matter in the universe? Is it the “dark matter” that scientists say has to exist to satisfy their calculations? Will they ever be able to see it, determine its mass and analyze its make up? So far they have no idea as to how to discover its existence. Someone has called the missing matter “the God element.” Therefore, they only infer that it exists, so the ultimate question has no answer. Where did it all come from?

More at home we can ask, why does our world have all the necessary conditions to support life? How did life evolve? There are those who believe that life had its origins in a primordial soup of molecules that organized themselves by accident, or when lightning struck the pool of soup. They believe these primordial chemical combinations then linked together and developed into one cell animals and plants. These cells first developed membranes that enclosed all the other cellular elements, and could pass nutrients and waste in and out of the cell. Cells have mitochondrial RNA, a nucleus with DNA in it and an intracellular syncytium to give it structure, yet this complex structure developed all by accident!

These single cells then aggregated to form multicellular animals and plants that evolved into more advanced forms and then after eons and more diverse evolution, an

ape-like creature came down out of trees and stood upright. They had to because the trees disappeared in the grassy savannahs, so they stood upright to be able to see danger. They then evolved into bipedal man as he is today. There was no need for guidance, for evolution's natural processes accounted for the advances made.

Originally the outcome of Darwin's original theory of evolution was due to "the survival of the fittest." For example, dinosaurs were wiped out because they could not survive in the world whose weather was profoundly changed by a meteorite that fell and exploded in the area of the Yucatan. They were not fit to survive, but a few small mammals were. Neanderthals were not as fit as Homo Sapiens so they died out because of competition from Homo Sapiens. But then we are led to wonder, where did the Neanderthals come from before Homo Sapiens arrived from Africa to compete with them?

Most people who want to deny the existence of God say that although there are unanswered questions we will in time be able to answer them. But can we? Will we discover concrete evidence to prove the theories?

We are finite beings and have finite minds. Being a scientist myself, I know that science does wonderful things. I began my career before modern medicine had really developed. The three areas that began to change medicine were surgical technique, antisepsis and vaccination. With them, we cured many diseases and wiped out some lethal infections by protecting ourselves from them. Of special importance were smallpox and plague. Advances in vector control have also allowed us to control malaria and yellow fever in many parts of the world.

When I started to medical school, there were only two antibiotics to treat acute infectious diseases – penicillin and sulfanilamide. We did have two drugs to treat

syphilis, but they were dangerous. There were no drugs to treat mental disease. All we had were several sedative drugs and one anticonvulsant. It was no wonder that we had to warehouse mentally ill people in big state hospitals. But that has all changed. We now have so many psychoactive drugs that we have to look them up in the *Physician's Desk Reference* to write prescriptions. Our early drugs had many side effects, but we have reduced the side effects so that they are minimal. This is not to say that side effects don't occur, for they do, but they are much reduced. We had electric convulsive treatment (ECT) for mental disease back then, but it had a high incidence of complications. Later we made real advances in making it safe. Electric convulsive treatment is now so safe that I have not seen an adverse result in 30 years.

Yes, science has made many advances, but they have not proved evolution and they have not answered the existential question that arises at some time in everyman's mind, i.e., what gives meaning to life. If I am but a biological entity that exists in a dangerous world, what can give my life meaning? Meaning to most people is the same as *significance*. Interestingly this has been one of the major concerns of the modern world. Victor Frankl, a psychoanalyst, wrote a book entitled *Man's Search for Meaning*. He, after surviving Hitler's concentration camps, observed that one got meaning when they encountered someone or something. Later Robert McGee, a psychologist, wrote a book that was similar called *Man's Search for Significance*. He felt psychotherapy that helped a person correct their self-concept and raise their self-esteem could give rise to significance. Even so, no one has been able to say that science can create meaning for us. In spite of all the advances in technology we have made we are still searching for meaning.

This is not a new search. The writer of Ecclesiastes looked at life and after much pondering came to the conclusion that nothing worldly could bring meaning. "In the practical part of the book (ch. 4:17 to 12:8) the author points out what man must do to

attain happiness. He must observe the commandments of God, submit to Divine Providence, refrain from inquiring too curiously into the ways of Divine Wisdom, avoid covetousness, sensuality, folly, ambition, and detraction, practice patience and mortification, be diligent in good, and remember death and judgment. The author cautions us against excesses of all kinds, strikes out for moderation and the happy medium in which virtue and morality consist, and concludes his investigation with the words: 'Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of every man' (<http://www.cathtruth.com/catholicbible/wisdom.htm>). Since science is this world's wisdom, it is foolishness when we expect it to provide meaning for life.

I can testify to science's lack of meaning, for I worshiped it for 20 years of my life and finally found that it was "blowing in the wind." When I discovered science's lack of meaning I wrote a paper entitled "Alexander the Great's Syndrome." How this came about is as follows. One of my very close friends with whom I collaborated in several important research projects reached the pinnacle of his career as a gastroenterologist. He came to my office one day and said, "You know, my life is a drag." My immediate response was, "If I did what you do it would be a drag for me too." He said, "No, no, that is not what I mean. I have four of the best fellows in my lab anyone could have. I have more than a million dollars in research and training grants. I have been president of most of the prestigious societies in my specialty. I am respected throughout my specialty, but what I am doing isn't any fun anymore." I then said, "Well, what is wrong with you is that you have Alexander the Great's Syndrome. You know Butler said that Alexander the Great sat down and wept when he had no more worlds to conquer. You have done it all and there is nothing else to do." His response was, "Hey, I like that." We talked about his problem and possible solutions for a while and he left.

Later I thought about the statement that he liked my view of his problem so I wrote an article entitled "Alexander the Great's Syndrome." It was published as an

editorial commentary in a respected journal called *Medical Research*. I was amazed when I got letters from more than 400 physicians who said they had the same problem. This article was picked up by the *British Medical Journal* and they wrote a commentary on my commentary. I was then surprised when hundreds of physicians from all over the world wrote me to say they, too, had the same problem. As I reflected on the response of others to my article, I realized that I was also infected.

In my article I said that people might be able to find meaning in doing good deeds. To name a few, I said they could work in noble causes, get more education, take part in boy or girl scouts or they could sky dive. I do not remember the other things I recommended, but none of them would have given meaning. It was not long before I was to find out what gives life real meaning.

My friend did not take the same road I took to find meaning. He instead tried a new scientific approach to his research. He went to Las Alamos and learned all he could about nuclear medicine. He continued his research career. While he was gone, my life changed so dramatically that we had only minimal contacts after he came back. We both continued our careers and observed one another from a distance. We had gone to undergraduate and medical school together, and had collaborated in several major research projects so I knew him well. He had always been cynical, and along with his cynicism, he also had a tendency to point out my faults. Even so, I loved him. Years passed, and he had to retire when he developed parkinsonism. With it he became increasingly bitter and cynical. He died with that outlook on life. He did not believe he had a life beyond the grave, and would not listen to the possibility that there might be eternal life. "I'll live on in my children," he said.

During the time he was in Los Alamos, I met the Lord and my life took on real meaning. I now had a futurology, and I had met someone that gave my life significance.

How did this happen?

I have detailed the transformation of my life in a book entitled *The Grace to Grow*, but the mechanism by which it was changed was not included in the book. I want to describe it for you now.

As the years passed, I learned that our mind is supernatural. This created what is known as the mind-brain problem many neuroscientists have tried to resolve. Two of them, Sir John Eccles – the pioneering neurophysiologist, and Wilder Penfield – the great neurosurgeon, along with scientific philosopher Karl Popper, have commented on this problem. They believed in what is called dualist-interactionism. This contrasts with an alternative that is called monism. In the latter, the mind and the brain are one. There is extinction with death. In the former, the mind and brain are separate but interact with one another as long as life exists. After death of the body, the mind continues to exist. These men did not comment on what happens after death. Christians, however, believe that it is installed in a spiritual body that is eternal and resides in supernatural places named either heaven or hell. I am sure these men believed as we believe, since I know Penfield and Eccles were Christians. Popper was an ethnic Jew whose parents had converted to Christianity. Whether their beliefs or his own beliefs influenced his view is unknown.

The importance of the dualist-interactionist theory is that it makes the mind a supernatural part of our being. C. S. Lewis says that to recognize its supernatural state all we have to do is think about thinking. Thinking is a supernatural phenomenon. We cannot taste it, see it, smell it, hear it, or touch it. It is unquestionably supernatural. Therefore, if we have a supernatural mind our supernatural God can interact with us in our mind. This is what he does through the Holy Spirit. This is why he transforms us when he takes up residence in our mind. God exists in the same dimension that our

mind occupies.

I have written elsewhere that I have learned that there are 11 mathematical dimensions of existence. We live in four of them, but Jesus demonstrated his existence in a supernatural state after the crucifixion by being resurrected, by translating himself from one place to another, and by appearing in a room where the doors were locked. He also demonstrated his ability to descend out of his supernatural state by eating fish. It is also true that, although he was seen alive, he did not bleed from the wounds that had been inflicted on his body. Then he ascended into heaven. These evidences witnessed by his disciples would indicate that he existed in a supernatural state.

But we have evidence that he continues to interact supernaturally with mankind today. Miracles still occur! The world denies they occur, but there are many scientifically verified miracles. I personally know of twelve that I have seen or have been witnessed to by more than two reliable observers. I think it important to note that courts usually accept the testimony of two witnesses who agree.

There is no question that Jesus' miracles were witnessed by more than two persons. He performed 17 individual miracles before he was crucified. These were witnessed by his disciples and others. His post-resurrection appearances were witnessed by more than 500 persons. At Lourdes in France, more than 40 miracles that transcend nature have been evaluated and verified by a committee of 20 persons – many of whom are physicians. I could personally cite many other miracles where a person was healed of a disease, but there is one other piece of evidence that is more convincing. It is the transformation of minds that occurs with conversion.

Christianity is a religion that is spreading over all over the world. Every effort to stamp it out has been in vain. The Communists and Islamists have been the most

aggressive, but they too have been only temporarily successful. When they take the pressure off their efforts, people once again begin to believe. We are seeing this in China and Russia today. Why? Because man is programmed to believe. God will not go away because we are hard wired to believe.

Conversion results in miraculous changes in attitude and behavior. The first thing that happens is a person develops a happy mood. Next, they perceive truths they have not perceived before. They also feel clean inside and out, and are certain there is a supernatural God who loves them. Then most dramatically, they have profoundly changed behavior. Alcoholics stop drinking, drug addicts stop craving and taking drugs, gamblers stop gambling, prostitutes become respectable ladies, homosexuals become heterosexual, criminals become law-abiding citizens, selfish persons become selfless and altruistic, and people filled with hate are filled with love. I could go on, but the witness of millions throughout the last 2,000 years corroborates my statements.

Earlier I mentioned that I gained a futurology when God met me. It is a part of my worldview. Conversion changes our worldview. We believe there is a supernatural God and that there is a heaven where we will live forever. Because man is infinitely interested in existing, the promise of heaven is appealing. This is why 90% of people think they are going to heaven when they die. We accept Jesus' promise of eternal life as an answer to our concern about the future. With conversion, our view of our human nature changes. We realize that sin lives in us, and that we have to deal with it.

We are, in our natural state, unable to control the sin. God has given us laws to tell us what is right and what is wrong, but we cannot stop doing wrong. We are morally paralyzed. We know that what we are doing is wrong even if we are not a Christian, but we still keep on doing it. But once the Holy Spirit resides in us, we can obey God's laws. We have an inhibitory power that frees us from our slavery to sin. This is not to say that

we will not continue to sin occasionally and feel ashamed and guilty, but God forgives us if we are repentant. We are cleansed of our guilt and shame. This is why we feel clean inside and out.

CONCLUSIONS:

After having examined this subject philosophically and scientifically, we still cannot prove the existence of God any more than we can prove evolution. There is inferential evidence for both evolution and the existence of God. We do, therefore, have to accept either theory by faith. If we chose to believe there is no God and put our faith in naturalistic evolution, then we believe that we have no future and life does not have been meaning. If we chose to believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and his son Jesus, we will have eternal life and real meaning because he lives within us. Our destiny is heaven, although we also believe that if a person has not been regenerated his/her destiny is hell. If a person believes and lives as if there is no God they had better be right!