

February 26, 2006 AM  
#1320

### *Is It Rational To Believe In God?*

If I say the word "God" what image comes to your mind? For some people God is a white haired old man sitting in a cosmic rocking chair benignly smiling down on most people just waiting to usher them into heaven when they die.

For others, he's a celestial policeman, patrolling people's lives with a big thick book full of laws, coming down hard on anyone who violates those laws.

Still other people see God as some distant, unknowable, force that set things in motion, but then has no involvement with this world and the people who live on the planet.

Some people see God as Gaia, the earth goddess, the primordial element from which all the gods originated.

Every theist has their idea of God. But is it rational to even believe in God? If all these ideas are people kind of making up their own god, why would we want to believe in something that's really just a figment of people's imagination?

We're in week two of a series we're calling "Heart, Soul, and Mind," dealing with the tough questions that often make it difficult for people to have faith.

These are questions like, Does God really exist?, Why is there suffering? How do we line up a belief in the existence of God with naturalistic explanations like materialistic evolution?

As we said last week, we're not looking just to give pat, simplistic answers to complex questions. We want to be honest with the evidence.

Believe me, if there is a God, He's not afraid of our questions. He's not angry with our questions. It's OK to doubt and question.

The only thing that's not OK with God is if we use our questions as an excuse to avoid God.

The 17th century French mathematician, philosopher, and scientist, Blaise Pascal said, *"The evidence of God's existence and his gift is more than compelling, but those who insist that they have no need of him, or it, will always find ways to discount the offer."*

If you're in that category this morning than there's probably not going to be anything in this message that's going to rock your world. But if you're open. If you're willing to say I'll go where ever the evidence leads me, then I trust that we can cover some territory that that will be vital to your spiritual journey.

In 1933, a group of secular and religious humanists joined forces in drafting A Humanist Manifesto. This was after WWI when people thought we had fought the "war to end all wars" and that science was going to be our salvation.

There were 43 signers of the manifesto, including John Dewey, the father of American education.

*It sated: Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.*

*Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as a result of a continuous process.*

*Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values.*

Basically it said we're on our own and we can make the world paradise.

WWII put and end to that, so in 1973 The Humanist Manifesto II was published.

*It says, As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to live and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith. Salvationism, based on mere affirmation, still appears as harmful, diverting people with false hopes of heaven hereafter. Reasonable minds look to other means for survival.*

*There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body.*

It was signed by such notables as, Isaac Asimov, Francis Crick, Alan F. Guttmacher, and B. F. Skinner.

Interestingly the US Supreme Court has defined humanism as a religion. Even though it denies God, the court said it is a carefully structured belief system.

They got it right. Atheism is something people take by faith. It's not saying "We don't know

if there's a God or not. Atheism says there is no God. It's just as much a religion (you have to take it by faith) as any world religion that has ever existed.

John Blanchard writes, "The core of that system is the bizarre conviction that man exists by accident and will end in annihilation, but in the brief blip separating the two he is of immense value and dignity and bears important rational and ethical responsibility. The humanist believes that he comes from nothing and is going nowhere, yet insists that the journey itself is of monumental significance."

For me, as I think through spiritual questions, this is the fundamental issue. This is the heart of everything. Do I have meaning and significance or is my life totally inconsequential and futile

You can't have it both ways. To say we're here by chance impersonal processes and when we're dead, we're gone and at the same time say that human life has value is a contradiction.

The only value life would have would be the value I personally ascribe to it.

Here at FCC we believe unreservedly, without apology that God exists, and people are made in His image.

We believe that every human life has value and meaning because our Creator has made us in His image.

Not only that, but we have disobeyed our Creator and deserve His wrath. But rather than just cascading His Judgement down on everyone God poured out His disapproval for our sins on His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

He sets the standards. He makes the rules. He sets the punishment. He provides forgiveness.

That's where we're coming from.

Now the question we're dealing with is, why? Why believe in God? Where's the rationality in that?

Let's look at some reasons why it's completely rational to believe in God, and I believe irrational to deny God's existence.

### *I. Things Exist*

Here's the paramount question that demands an answer. Why does anything exist at all?

Erik J. Olsson, Lund University writes, "The question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?", is a good candidate for being philosophy's most profound and disturbing question. Is it not a complete and utter mystery that there should be anything at all?"

When you were a kid did you ever ask the question, "Where did God come from?" I remember asking that. "Who made God?" The answer I was told was He just always was. He had no beginning.

That's the right answer but it doesn't work well for kids. Children think in concrete terms. Kids struggle with abstract concepts. They look around them and say, "Wait a minute. Everything starts some where, so if everything starts at some point then God must have a beginning."

They're right, aren't they. Everything we touch and experience came from someplace.

So if everything has a beginning, where did the beginning stuff come from. Every modern cosmologist I know of says all the evidence shows that the universe has a beginning.

It came from someplace.

Have you ever been up inside the arch in Saint Louis? It's truly an amazing piece of architecture. What's really interesting is to watch the video in the visitors center of how that thing was built. It's a technological marvel. They came up from both sides and met in the middle.

Now could you imagine someone asking, "Hey, has that always been here?" That would be a foolish question. Something doesn't just exist.

We know someone made the St. Louis Arch. And we know that someone made the universe. It didn't make itself from nothing.

The universe was caused by an eternal, non-contingent being.

This gives us very basic, but very important, information about God. Namely, that He is eternal and uncaused.

**Turn to Isaiah 40 pg 639**

## Read vs 21-22, 25-26

The Bible starts off with this simple but profound declaration: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

## Flip over just a couple of pages to Isa 45 Read vs 12 & 18

John 1:1-3 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

Why does anything exist at all? According to the Bible, things exist because God made them. They have a point of origin.

We can see that in the Bible. We can see that in creation. We can see how God's special revelation and his general revelation teach us the same thing.

I. *Things Exist*

II. *The Things That Exist Are Amazingly Complex*

Biochemist Franklin M. Harold, in his book, *The Way Of The Cell* write this: *"We should reject, as a matter of principle, the substitution of intelligent design for the dialogue of chance and necessity (in other words let's leave God out of the discussion) but we must conclude that there are presently no detailed Darwinian accounts of the evolution of any biochemical system, only a variety of wishful speculations."*

Bruce Alberts, president of the National Academy of Sciences, writes, *"We have always underestimated the cell. The entire cell can be viewed as a factory that contains an elaborate network of interlocking assembly lines, each of which is composed of a set of large protein machines. Why do we call them machines? Precisely because, like machines, invented by humans to deal efficiently with the macroscopic world, these protein assemblies contain highly coordinated moving parts."*

When Michael Behe was a student in biochemistry he'd come across enormously complicated biological systems, scratch his head, and say, "Gee, I wonder how evolution created that?"

Then one day, while doing post-doctoral research on DNA at the National Institutes of Health, he and a colleague were pondering what it would take for life to begin by naturalistic processes. As they enumerated the components that would be needed they looked at each other and said, "Naaaahhhh!"

That pushed Behe deeper into the place Darwin could never go, the cell. Out his study came the book "Darwin's Black Box, The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution."

His conclusion? Complex biological systems have yet to be explained by naturalistic means."

Dr. Allen Sandage, the best-known astronomer alive today said, "*The world is too complicated in all it's parts and interconnected to be due to chance alone. I am convinced that life with all of it's order on each of it's organisms is simply too well put together.*"

See, it doesn't matter whether we're talking about the farthest reaches of the universe or the molecular makeup of a cell, God's finger prints are everywhere and more and more scientists are denying atheism on the basis of their study of science.

Let's see what the Bible says, **Turn to Ps 19 Pg 489**

**Read vs 1-6**

The complexity of the heavens show us there's a Creator.

Our Milky Way galaxy has about 100 billion stars. The Hubble Space Telescope site estimates there is hundreds of billions of galaxies in the universe. A recent German super-computer simulation estimates that the number may be as high as 500 billion!

If the earth were slightly smaller and lighter than it is, the force of gravity would be weaker and much of the earth's atmosphere would have escaped into space.

If it was slightly larger the earth's gravitation would be stronger, and light gases, such as hydrogen and helium, would take longer to escape from the atmosphere.

If the orbit were more elliptic, we would suffer unbearable extremes of temperature.

In other words, the earth has all the myriads of right conditions to support life.

How about this verse? Psalm 139:14 *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made...*

Is rational to believe in God? I believe the truth is, it's irrational not to believe in God.

Look what God said 2000 years ago in His Word. **Turn Romans 1. Pg 999 Read vs 18-20**

The Bible says that the people who are adamant about their atheism are suppressing the obvious truth they already know. There is a God and we're responsible to Him.

I. *Things Exist*

II. *Those Things Are Amazingly Complex*

III. *Morality Cannot Occur Without God*

I'm amazed at how obvious this one is and yet how many people don't get it. If we are just cosmic accidents with no future other than to crumble in a coffin then there is no right or wrong.

There is no morality if there is no standard of morality.

If the universe is no more than matter, energy, time, and chance, how can 'right' and 'wrong' have any meaning? How can we derive personal morality from an impersonal universe? How could an impersonal reality make me feel any moral obligation to be honest, kind, or truthful?

As Ravi Zacharis says, "Thinking atoms discussing morality is absurd."

Not content with Manifestos I and II, we now have a Humanist Manifesto III. It's title is *Humanism and it's Aspirations*.

The first paragraph reads: *Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.*

It goes on to say, "Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience. We are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity..."

Think that through, because the contradiction couldn't be any more glaring. There is no supernatural. God doesn't exist. But people have inherent worth.

Why? What makes me inherently more valuable than any other part of nature? Why am I superior or more valuable than a kumquat, or a mosquito, or a poison ivy plant?

Why is it OK to crush the mosquito if it's bothering you, but not OK to crush me?

The truth of the matter is without God there is no morality. Without God life is just "grab what you can."

If the Mother Theresa route gives you a feeling of significance for the few short years you're alive great. If the Jeffrey Dalmer route works for you, that's great too.

You say, "Ed, that's terrible. How can you say that?" Because if we are just chance products of a sterile materialistic evolutionary process who die and that's it, then life is what you make it.

There's no ethics. There's no morality. There's no value to human life. We're just highly evolved dirt.

This isn't rocket science. William Provine of Cornell University, is an atheist to the core. He's an atheist who says if materialistic evolution is true then there are five inescapable conclusions:

1. There's no evidence for God.
2. There's no life after death.
3. There's no absolute foundation for right and wrong.
4. There's no ultimate meaning for life.
5. People don't really have free will.

Let me give you a premise and a conclusion about morality:

1. Objective moral law exists.
2. Objective moral law requires a Moral Law Giver
3. A Moral Law Giver must exist.

Objective moral law means that people all over the earth and all throughout history have had a sense of what is right and what is wrong.

Now, there's nothing in biology, physiology, genetics or anywhere in nature that can explain why we would all share concepts about what is right and wrong. It has to be something supernatural. A supernatural law from a supernatural Lawgiver.

Since no one has come up with a decent challenge to the premise "Objective moral law requires a Moral Law Giver", the only thing critics can do is to deny that objective moral law exists.

And that's just what atheist philosophers have done from Nietzsche to B. F. Skinner. They've denied that there is any such thing as objective moral values. There is no right or wrong.

That is so disingenuous. I don't know of any atheist who would say that feeding a starving child and torturing that same child to death are equal morally.

No one in their right mind would want to live in a world where there are no moral laws.

Even the famous atheist Voltaire said, "I want my lawyer, taylor, valets, even my wife to believe in God. I think that if they do, I should be robbed and cheated less."

The problem isn't that people don't know that there's right and wrong, it's that they enjoy doing wrong and have an aversion to doing right.

**Go back with me to Romans 1 again Pg 999**

We've already seen that the biblical explanation is that God has revealed his power and existence through creation. God has made it plain to them. His existence has been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

**Now pick up in verse 21-31**

The sociologist tells us that early cultures were polytheistic and crude in their beliefs about God. As time went on societies stopped worshipping trees, animals, and lightning and moved toward the belief in one God. Society evolved morally and theologically.

The Bible says the opposite is true. God created everything and people knew it but they denied what they knew. The culmination is elevating man to the place of God.

At that point God says, "You want it your way. Go for it."

The Russian novelist Dostoevsky reminded us, "Without God, everything is permitted."

Is it rational to believe in God? You'll have to answer that question for yourself.

I believe that the evidence for God's existence is overwhelming.

Everywhere I go, everywhere I look I see God in all His glory.

Music Video: "*Everywhere*" [Ignitermedia.com](http://Ignitermedia.com)