

Editorial: Blind Faith?

A couple of months ago I caught a trailer for a 3-part TV series exploring the 'new Britain' which, according to the show's presenter, prominent atheist Richard Dawkins, is increasingly moving away from what he termed the 'laughable absurdity' of belief in God. I, myself, have heard Christianity dismissed as a 'crutch for the feeble-minded'. People who concur with Richard Dawkins' views argue that there is no evidence for God's existence; they question how anyone could put 'blind faith' in a God they cannot see, and ask where is the reason and rationality for such a belief. Perhaps you, too, may be asking these very same questions. So, does belief in God actually stand up to scrutiny? In this editorial I will seek to address this vital issue.

As a Christian I believe that God created the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 1:1). Yet the widely accepted position now is that the universe, in all its great vastness, is the outcome of a big bang that occurred some 14 billion years ago, and that every living creature is simply an accident of evolution. But does this logic actually hold water?

Did an accident in an electronics factory miraculously produce your home PC or TV? Are the rows upon rows of neatly arranged books on shelves in your local library the result of an explosion in a printing press? Have the pieces of rock hurled into the air during a volcanic eruption ever neatly arranged themselves into walls or buildings? Did the Mona Lisa paint itself? Did the highly successful London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games all come together without the need for any prior planning, organisation and management during the events? 'Of course not' you say. One of the 70,000 Games Makers at last year's Olympic Games has told me of the huge logistical operation that had to be put in place to ensure everything went without a hitch – 30 million items had to converge on Britain for the Games. Now, if that is what it took to ensure the smooth running of one event, in one city, in one country on Earth, is it logical to believe that the universe simply exploded into being, and needs no Overseer to keep everything on track? Having lived through part of the 'Troubles' I witnessed the aftermath of many 'big bangs' here – and it was never a pretty sight! Explosions create disorder – chance never produces complexity, or chaos order. How could 'nothing' evolve into 'something', never mind the infinite variety of living things? If we honestly apply some *intelligent thought* to these matters, can we, hand on heart, dismiss the absolute need for *intelligent design*? The laws of science need a Lawgiver, and the mind-boggling design of nature surely requires a Designer.

The atheist may blame the Christian for exercising *blind faith in a Creator*, but do they not instead embrace *bewildering faith in coincidence*? To give a few examples:

Is it just a coincidence that the sun is just the right distance from the earth to sustain life, and that the ideal temperatures we enjoy on this planet are not duplicated in any other known planet in the universe?

Is it just a coincidence that the moon is exactly the right size and at exactly the right distance from Earth to exert just the right gravitational pull on our planet to regulate the ebb and flow of the tides, so that the waves sweep into land so far, but no farther? Were the moon much larger, destructive tidal waves would submerge large areas of land; if much smaller, tidal motion would cease, oceans stagnate, and marine life would die.

Is it just a coincidence that every living creature has an innate survival mechanism, and the desire to nurture and protect their young, and to carry on their species?

Is it just a coincidence that no two snowflakes are ever identical, and that no two of the seven billion plus people on Planet Earth ever have the same fingerprints?

Jesus lived before the invention of the printing press, radio, television and e-mail. Is it just a coincidence that centuries later we can still read His words, which God has miraculously preserved? And written materials are perishable. Is it also a coincidence that the Bible has survived book-burnings, riots and revolutions? Yet scholars tell us that its manuscripts have been accurately preserved through millennia of copying. God inspired the writing of Scripture, and has promised to preserve it through the centuries (Isaiah 40:8). As Jesus said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' (Matt 24:35)

Is there *really* no evidence for God? The visible evidence for God *is* all around us. It can be seen in the miracle of a newborn baby and the majesty of a sunset in the western skies. It is seen in the kaleidoscope of the changing seasons and in the infinite variety of living creatures. It is seen from the arid desert to the luxuriant rainforest, and from the lofty mountain peak to the depths of the ocean floor. And it is seen very powerfully in the lives of people who have been transformed by His saving grace. The evidence is there – unless, of course, we close our eyes and deliberately go out of our way to ignore it. 'For the invisible things of (God) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Rom 1:20).

Denying the existence of God does not dispel the mysteries of life or eliminate the persistent longing for more than this life has to offer. God has placed eternity in the human heart (Eccl 3:11), and blessed each of us with the gift of conscience which, in convicting us of right and wrong, surely highlights to us that there is a God whom we are accountable to – yet a God with whom we can have a right relationship through faith in Christ. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ... But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' (Hebrews 11:1 & 6) Faith is vital, as is the matter of whom we put our faith in.

There is a lovely acrostic for the word 'faith' - **F**orsaking **A**ll **I** Trust **H**im (Jesus Christ). But forsaking what exactly? Forsaking our self-reliance, self-righteousness, and anything or anyone that would hold us back from coming to Christ. God has made a way by which we can and must come to Him – through the Man who is the Way, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

But, does it make sense to place your life in the hands of someone you've never met and whom you cannot see? You may tell me you could never do that? Actually, you probably have already done that – every time you've set foot on an airplane! You are unlikely to know the pilot or even to have seen him. Yet you have faith in the airline, placing your life in the pilot's hands, trusting him to get you safely to your final destination. There is a little hymn which says "Jesus, Saviour, pilot me" and, just as I place my life in the hands of a pilot each time I fly, and trust him to get me safely to my destination, I similarly have placed my life into the nail-scarred hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. I trust Him to help me safely navigate through the difficulties and turbulence of life, and then to take me all the way from Earth to Heaven when I die.

Just because a person cannot see something doesn't mean it isn't real. I cannot see electricity – I don't even have a full grasp of how it works. However, I know it exists, and I can plug in, avail of its benefits, and experience its power.

So what does a personal relationship with Jesus Christ bring? (1) I can know that my sins – past, present and future – are forgiven, and that I am free from all condemnation (Romans 8:1). (2) I am made a new creation in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). (3) I know that I am totally and unconditionally loved and accepted by God. (4) I have the wonderful reassurance that I am never on my own, but that He is with me at all times, and will never leave nor forsake me (Heb 13:5). (5) I am allowed into God's very presence, and can have bold and confident access to Him in prayer, through Jesus Christ, 24/7. No earthly monarch could or would ever grant their subjects such a privilege. (6) I receive the gift of eternal life, and the assurance of a home in Heaven with my Saviour forever. (7) I share the honour of being used by God to spread the good news of His Son, Jesus Christ.

In contrast, what does atheism offer us? *No purpose* – we just live for the here and now, then die and are no more. *No accountability* – a convenient concept – if we don't have to face God, we can live as we please, treat our fellow man as cruelly as we like, secure in the 'knowledge' we are answerable to no-one. *No comfort* – with no loving Heavenly Father to succour and strengthen us. *No prospect* – with death meaning a cruel, final farewell each time a loved one dies. *No justice* – where the wrongs in this life are never righted. But, in a world where the greedy and powerful often exploit the poor and the weak; where paedophiles steal the innocence of children and blight their lives; where pornographers exploit women as commodities, corrupt minors and create addiction; and where criminals and terrorists wantonly kill and maim with callous disdain, I am glad there *is* a Judge who will one day *ultimately* hold all to account. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' (Gen 18:25) He will. The question is – will you meet Him as your Judge or as your Saviour?

Professor Dawkins berates those who believe in God and the reality of intelligent design as 'intellectual retards'. In considering this description, I remembered the words of a Christian song: 'Some may think me foolish, some may think me odd / But I'd rather be a fool in the eyes of man, than a fool in the eyes of God.' Which category will you be found in? Stop and ponder one of the few verses to occur twice in the Bible: 'The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.' (Ps 14:1 & Ps 53:1)

Christians instead recognise and accept the visible evidence of a wise Creator, place their faith in 'the invisible God' (Col 1:15), and 'walk by faith, not by sight' (2 Cor 5:7). They 'look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.' (2 Cor 4:18) Christian songwriter Michael Card has summed up the mystery of faith so well: 'To hear with my heart, to see with my soul / To be guided by a hand I cannot hold / To trust in a way I cannot see / That's what faith must be.'

I am glad that I'm not just an accident of atoms or a fluke of evolution, but am 'fearfully and wonderfully made' by the God who knew me even in my mother's womb (Ps 139:13-16), Who has a plan for me, and Who is sincerely interested in every aspect of my life. God knows the number of hairs on my head, the concerns of my heart, and even the condition of a fallen sparrow (Matt 10:29-30). He cares about you, too, and, despite your doubts and questionings, He will be found of you if you will seek Him. 'Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.' (Jer 29:12-13)