

THE PROBLEM OF GOD:

**ANSWERING A
SKEPTIC'S CHALLENGES
TO CHRISTIANITY**

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MARK CLARK

CHAPTER 1:
THE PROBLEM
OF SCIENCE

SCIENCE

- we turn on television and hear the host say, “Tonight we will be talking about faith versus science.
- Our first guest is a former Oxford University professor, evolutionary biologist, and bestselling author who believes that science holds the answers.
- On the other side of the aisle, we have Joe Smith, who home-schools his kids, thinks Oprah is the Antichrist, and lives in a swamp.”

SCIENCE

- The dichotomy between faith and science is misguided and created by a culture that thinks only in sound bites and extremes.
- It is a cultural myth that we must choose between the two instead of understanding the importance of both faith and science.
- Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris - faith is evading evidence and clinging to irrationality.

CHURCH VS. SCIENCE

- Atheists tell stories of the church's persecution of scientists - Galileo and Copernicus.
- Galileo was a friend of the church most of his life. He was never charged with heresy or placed in a dungeon or tortured. He was placed on house arrest.
- The church did not teach a flat earth. From the time of the ancient Greeks, people knew the earth was round (ships in the distance, lunar eclipse).

GARDEN OF CHRISTIANITY

- Christianity was not at war with science. It turns out that “the thing we presently call Modern Science was (actually) conceived and born, flourished in the matrix of Christian theism.”
- Most culture inhibited progress toward a scientific outlook: animism (deified objects), polytheism (answers are metaphysical), Buddhism (the world is an illusion).

GARDEN OF CHRISTIANITY

- Kenneth Richard Samples - ten variables:
 - The physical universe is objective reality
 - Laws of nature exhibit order, patterns, regularity
 - Laws of nature are uniform throughout
 - Humans have the ability to discover patterns
 - Humans are to take dominion over nature

EVERYONE HAS FAITH

- What we believe is filtered through a grid or worldview, which we have adopted over time.
- Richard Lewontin - he and the scientific community “have a prior commitment . . . to materialism . . . and we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes . . . we cannot allow a divine foot in the door.”
- What drives his science is not facts but philosophy.

CHAPTER 2:

**THE PROBLEM
OF GOD'S EXISTENCE**

MORALITY

- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, said that the reason he began to believe in God was because of the existence of morality.
- “Leave him alone, he isn’t doing you any harm” or “Come on, you promised.”
- He said that the man is appealing to some kind of standard of behavior, which he expects the other man to know about.

ATE YOUR SISTER?

- Skeptics say our moral values are not objective at all but come from our evolutionary development.
- In other words, they are socially constructed and a product of our culture.
- Mark Clark's discussion with his atheist friend while working at Michael's arts and draft store: Go to village, take your sister, they eat her. His response: "It is only something I personally disagree with."

NEED GOD TO BE GOOD?

- Atheists reject the idea that you need God to be good.
- Studies show no statistically significant difference between atheists and religious believers in making moral judgments.
- John Calvin - "There is no nation so lost to every thing human, that it does not keep within the limits of some laws . . . Some notions of justice and rectitude . . . as they could not otherwise distinguish between vice and virtue."

NOTHING

- Nobody times nothing equal everything?
- Today we have the “nothing hypothesis” - what caused the Big Bang? Nothing, it just happened.
- Nothing is something tired people say when they want you to shut up and go back to sleep.
- Whatever begins to exist has a cause. The universe began to exist. Therefore, the universe had a cause.

EVIDENCE OF DESIGN

- Biology - DNA is not random, it is an information code. Amoeba - data would fill 30 encyclopedias.
- Francis Collins calls it “the language of God.”
- Astronomy - William Paley - we know when we see design (wood, watch).
- Anthropic principle - universe is fine-tuned, all 122 variable have to be lined up for our universe to exist.

CHAPTER 3:

**THE PROBLEM
OF THE BIBLE**

BIBLE

- Many skeptics doubt that God exists because they doubt the legitimacy of the Bible.
- They have doubts about its accuracy, its trustworthiness, and its truthfulness.
- General revelation (creation, Romans 1:19-20)
- Special revelation (written accounts collected into a single book that provides answers to questions)

BIBLE CHANGED?

- In the novel, *In the Beginning*, Jewish boy and his elders dance with the Torah and wonders if the Gentiles ever dance with their Bible.
- Contradictions and mistakes - Bart Ehrman, *The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*
- Death of Judas (Matthew 27:5; Acts 1:18)
- Angels at the tomb (Matthew 28:5; John 20:12)

CULTURAL - PERSONAL

- Manuscript evidence
 - We have 5 copies of Aristotle's *Poetics* dated 1,400 years after the originals.
 - There are two ancient biographies of Alexander the Great, the earliest was written 400 years after Alexander died.
 - There are 25,000 copies of the New Testament, written during the lifetimes of the skeptics.

CULTURAL - PERSONAL

- Counterproductive content
 - Supposedly these accounts were written in order to gain power by showing Jesus favorably.
 - Jesus in Gethsemane is sweating blood (Mark 14) and cries out to God (Mark 15).
 - Peter denies Christ three times, James and John beg to sit on the left and right of Jesus.

CHAPTER 4:
THE PROBLEM
OF THE CHRIST MYTH

CHRIST MYTH

- His neighbor told him that “Jesus is just a made-up person” and “a myth modeled after Horus, Dionysis, and other mythological gods.”
- Books - *The Pagan Christ* (Tom Harper) and *The Jesus Mysteries* (Timothy Freke) and *The Christ Conspiracy*.
- Films - *Zeitgeist* and *Religulous* and *The God Who Isn't There*.
- Not taken serious by legitimate scholars.

CHRIST MYTH

- Horus, Mithras, Dionysus, and others figures:
 - Born as virgin on December 25
 - Twelve disciples
 - Three Magi visiting the birthplace
 - Miracles, walking on water, feeding many
 - Crucified, rising after three days

TAKING ON THE MYTH

- Horus
 - Virgin? - created from chopped up pieces of Osiris
 - Born in manger? - no evidence, no source listed
 - Visited by 3 Magi? - reference to Orion (3 stars)
 - Child teacher? - no source listed

TAKING ON THE MYTH

- Mithras

- Virgin? - formed out of a rock with dagger in one hand and a torch in the other
- Twelve disciples? - Persian version he had one disciple, Roman version he had two disciples.
- Buried and rose again? - No record of him dying
- Written 200 years after the Gospels were written.

CHAPTER 9:

**THE PROBLEM
OF EXCLUSIVITY**

INCLUSIVISM

- If you walk into a Starbucks you will see people reading books by Deepak Chopra, Eckhart Tolle, and Rhonda Byrne.
- These New Age books all include inclusivity - the idea that all religions have some part of the truth.
- Oprah Winfrey - "One of the biggest mistakes humans make is to believe there's only one way. Actually, there are many diverse paths leading to God."

HERESY OF RICKY BOBBY



RICKY BOBBY

- Help me, Jesus!
- Help me, Jewish God!
- Help me, Allah!
- Help me, Tom Cruise!
- Use your witchcraft to get the fire off me!
- Help me, Oprah Winfrey!

NOT ALONE

- Christianity is not alone in being exclusive in its truth claims.
- Islam is exclusivist - one God (Allah), heaven, hell, five pillars of Islam.
- Buddhism is an exclusive religion - rejection of many of the teachings of Hinduism and the caste system.
- American civil religion - be nice to everyone, highly critical of “narrow-minded Christians.”

BIBLICAL CLAIMS

- John 14:6 - “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
- Peter (Acts 4:12) - “There is salvation is no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

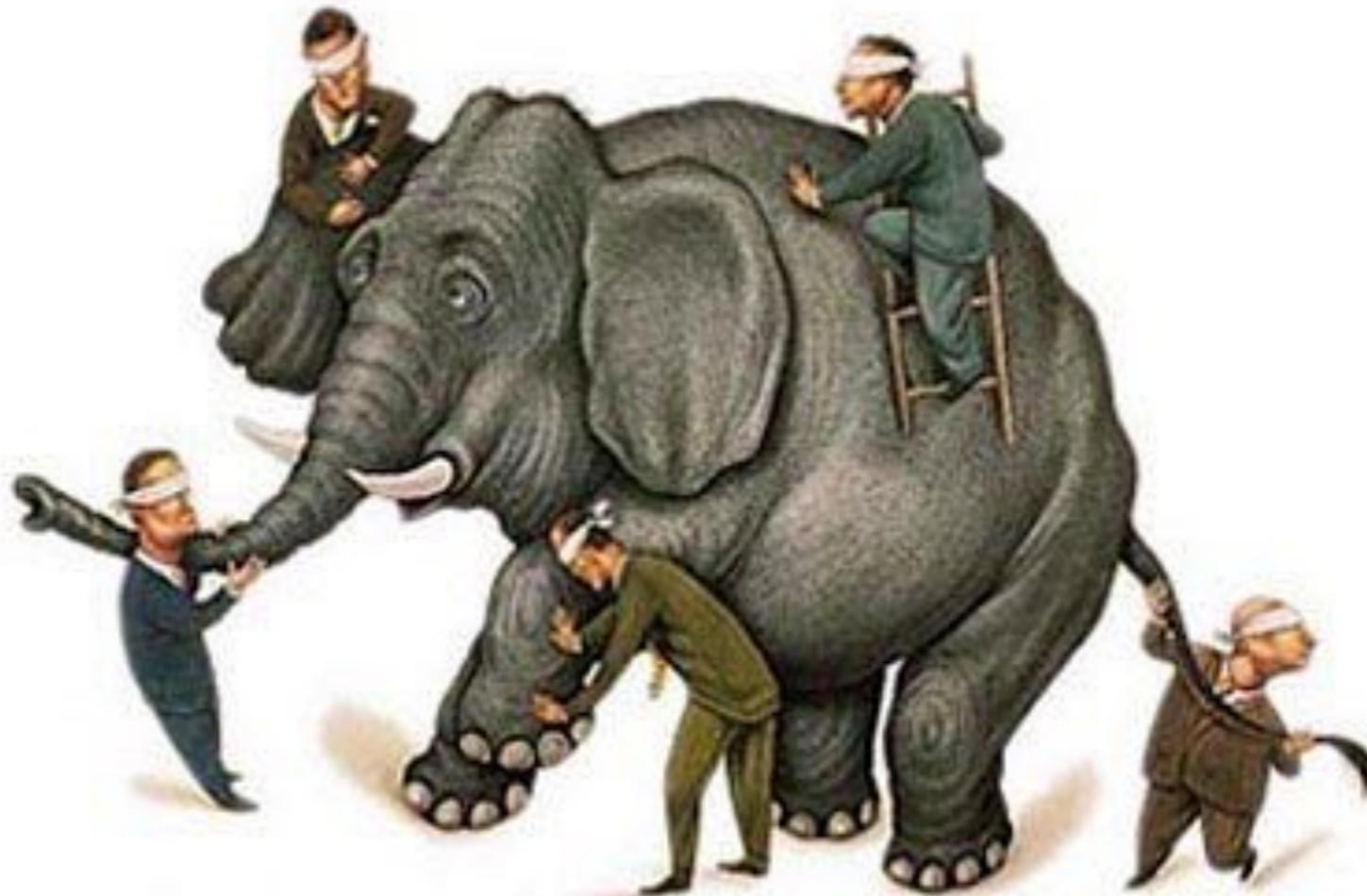


LOGICAL IMPOSSIBILITY

- Religious inclusivity is a logical impossibility.
- Religions present very different teachings on God and salvation that actually contradict each other.
- Timothy Keller - Jewish rabbi and Muslim imam: If Christians are right about Jesus being God, then Muslims and Jews fail to love God as God really is. If Muslims and Jews are right that Jesus is not God, then Christians faith to love God as God really is.

BLIND MEN - ELEPHANT

- Blind Men and an Elephant



BLIND MEN - ELEPHANT

- Lesslie Newbigin heard this story many times as a missionary to India for 30 years.
- The story backfires because it is told from the vantage point of someone who can actually see.
- He says it is the “immensely arrogant claim of one who sees the full truth all world’s religions are only groping after. It embodies the claim to know the full reality” which it claims that religions cannot.

JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD

- Direct claims:

- John 10:30 - "I and the Father are One."

- John 8:56-58 - "Before Abraham was born, I am."

- John 11:25-26 - "I am the resurrection and the life."

JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD

- Indirect claims:

- Claimed to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-10).
- Allowed others to worship Him (Matt. 14:33; 28:9; cf. also Acts 10:25-26; 14:12-15).
- Claimed to be God, Messiah, and the way to God (Mark 14:61-62; John 10:30; 14:6-9).

SALVATION

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 14:6

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