

April 29, 2017

Dear Alien,

Thank you for your recent questions. I don't know how things are on your home planet, but here on Earth we Humans worship God via a number of religions. These are sets of ideas about what God is like. Humans take these ideas, their religions, very seriously, often to the point of being willing to kill or maim each other over them, or otherwise psychologically torture each other, by compelling someone to deny their sexuality, for instance, or to be celibate or monogamous. It is all so terribly sad, especially insofar as these acts of brutality and suppression had a love of God as their original inspiration somewhere at the beginning. That kind of perversion is a classic Human move: we love to corrupt our own well-intended inventions.

In any case, the motivating animus of these terrible acts is most often a combination of zeal for God mixed with a belief that one's way is the one right way. Now, the zeal for God I understand completely; I do believe myself to be on fire with love for God. It's the belief that one's, and only one's, understanding of God is the one and only correct one that gets Humans into so much trouble.

Perhaps you can see how we fall into this trap as a creature outside of our solar system, never mind our species. The problem is that God has given us a strong sense of Itself, without allowing us to know It specifically. The written history of Humanity is a story of almost universal native perception on our part of the fact that we most likely *have* a Creator (that is, most all Humans, at some point in their lives, and without any prompting on the part of another Human, will look up at the stars and be unable to avoid the conclusion that such majesty simply must have a Designer) combined with deadly disagreement about what Its nature is or might be.

For mine own part, I have a somewhat anomalous Human experience in this area: I was raised Atheist (that is, my parents did not outwardly believe in God, nor did they indoctrinate me in any particular religion growing up, save for a handful of half-hearted attempts to take me to the church of their parents' religion when I was a child, presumably to please my grandparents), and militant Atheist at that; my parents taught me to disdain people of faith as credulous and gullible, almost to be pitied. It took going to college (a place of higher learning here on Earth) for me to be introduced to, and forced to accept, the fact that our history is rife with brilliant people who were also deeply faithful.

Shortly after college, My God saw fit to lead me down the path of Faith myself, a blessing for which I am eternally thankful. It has been a very odd experience, coming to terms with my Faith after a childhood of Atheism preceding it. For one thing, I have no text, no dogma, no church; I have only me. I am the sole authority on my relationship to God. This situation has been both a literal blessing and a metaphorical curse. But I have more recently realized that all we Humans are in this situation: even if our text is venerable, our dogma profound, and our church robust and passionate, we are all alone with our faith in God.

This is why I call my God "My God" (and I call It "It" because My God doesn't have a gender.) Because I can only reliably report on *my* experience with God; I know with absolute certainty that everybody else will have a different take on God than I do (this, helpfully, saves me the trouble of feeling the need to proselytize.) From where do I get my certainty on this point? By looking at the facts of my species' history and present moment.

As I've described to you in previous letters, we Humans have had no small measure of good fortune at God's hands in It allowing us the capacity to perceive and exploit to our benefit the Laws of Physics, which you have verified operate on your planet exactly as they do here on Earth. We call this application of the Laws of Physics to the solution of Human problems Technology, and Technology has afforded us with safer, longer, healthier lives, and innumerable incredible increases in capabilities (such as the ability to locate and communicate with alien lifeforms in galaxies impossibly far away from our own. : ) This situation exists because we Humans, as a species, have been blessed to be able to develop the capacity to communicate the facts of the Laws of Physics to each other in a reliable way (namely, via Science.)

Obviously, these Laws of Physics sprang from the mind of God, as definitional Creator of the Universe in which said Laws operate. Yet our Universe's Creator has not seen fit to allow us to develop a similar capacity to communicate the facts of *It* to each other in a reliable way. Otherwise, there would be one understanding of God across our entire species across time in the same way that there has been (eventually, more or less) one understanding of the Laws of Physics across Humans over our history. Yet such is obviously, painfully, not the case for us and never has been, and, worse yet, that which *is* the case threatens daily to end our very species via religious violence combined with (ironically) Scientific prowess.

Even one from a distant planet can see the special nature of the idea of God in our language, in my aforementioned personal history. The very word Atheist is unusual in our species for describing a sizable percentage of us by an idea we *don't* believe in. I can't think of another word that describes "a group of Humans who don't believe in the idea X" with anywhere near as many adherents as Atheism. There is a kind of implied confession in the label which many Atheists resent and deny, but it does seem that one can't refute God's existence without admitting It exists first, somehow. I mean, there are countless Human ideas out there that I don't bother self-labeling and publicizing my disbelief in. Nonetheless, I presume that at least as many Atheists publicly self-label in opposition to the social dimensions of religion as due to the question of God's existence.

Anyway, what's interesting about Atheists is, here's this sizable percentage of our entire species that is saying, "We don't believe in this one really important thing that the overwhelming majority of Humans (if you put together all of the adherents of every religion ever) have reportedly believed over the course of our entire history." Yet they are still accepted as sane, rational members of our societies by nearly everyone else. What this means is that the overwhelming majority of Humans of faith are able to conceive of disbelief in God, or at least in their God, as a not-insane idea. This is, to put it mildly, very telling.

Additionally, our formal systems of faith have been fractured from the day of their inception till now. There have been, sadly, numerous bloody examples of Human-compelled systems of faith for short periods of time over limited areas of land over the course of our history, but never a universal faith adhered to spontaneously and effortlessly, akin to how we adhere to the Laws of Physics.

If one is of the belief, as I am, that all of God's acts were, and are, most likely intentional, perfectly executed, and freely chosen by It, one is, unfortunately, left with the seemingly unavoidable conclusion that God *could have* instilled in us the capacity to understand It and Its acts in a way at least similar to the way we understand the Laws of Physics if It had wanted to, but that It, for some ineffable reason (which we will almost certainly never know, much less understand) chose not to do so. Attempting, however fruitlessly, to comprehend the mystery of that apparent decision on Its part is the burning question of my life.

Again, somewhat ironically, the above seems to say that the *one thing* we Humans apparently can know for sure about God is that It doesn't want us to understand It, at least not in a mutually intelligible way as a species, despite all the bloodshed and mental and emotional anguish that that state of affairs entails for us. Thus, another (perhaps the only other?) thing we can know for sure about God: It has a wicked sense of humor.

Finally, I have to point out that the above obviously inexorably implies (again, quite ironically) that any Human religions that claim to know and provide access to the one true way to the one true God are automatically falsified in so claiming.

I hope some of the above answers at least some of your questions. It's time for bed. I'll write more soon, including more questions of my own. I look forward to your response to the above in the meantime.

Be Well,  
Graham Arthur Mackenzie