To God or Not to God

Adam Hellyer 8 June 2017



The Three Worldviews

There are many different worldviews. Each makes claims which, if true, render every other view false. Christians view Jesus as the Son of God who is God and died for our sins. Muslims view Jesus as fully human. They deny His substitutionary death on the cross, claiming He Himself was substituted by another who died in His place. Atheists believe there is no God and Hindus believe there are 33 million.

> While it is possible for one of these beliefs to be true, or for all to be false, it is not possible for every belief to be true.

While it is possible for one of these beliefs to be true, or for all to be false, it is not possible for every belief to be true. To discover which belief system holds up best under scrutiny, we must observe how each corresponds to logic and our observations of the world. We must also consider how coherently it answers question about our origin, the meaning of life, the nature of reality and what our destiny is. This may sound like an insurmountable task, as there are

countless worldviews, but you don't need to become an expert in each. As Solomon wrote, 'there is nothing new under the sun', and each worldview usually lands within one of three broad categories.

Everything is god

Pantheism, polytheism, paganism, new age practice, and most Far Eastern religions, such as Hinduism and Taoism, use 'God', or other interchangeable terms, not to describe the God of the Bible, but rather a life force, nature itself or even a collection of many gods. Many of these beliefs hold a circular understanding of life. Not only the cycle of birth, life and death, but also reincarnation and the concept of becoming one with everything, typified in the Zen ensō.

Like "The Force" in Star Wars, good and evil are two opposite forces that need to be kept in balance, as represented by the yin-yang in Chinese philosophy. Because everything is god or god is everything, God must be everything bad as well as everything good. These seemingly contrary forces must be seen as complimentary, even interdependent, often giving rise to each other in the circle of life. Sometimes good is equated with spirit and evil with the material world.

> If good and evil exist, and evil is truly evil, the very opposite of good, then God cannot be both good and evil.

This view approaches good and evil like parents approach vegetables and dessert. If you have enough of one you can justify a little of the other. But dessert is not evil in the way that murder is evil. A custard slice might be called a "guilty pleasure", but what law have you broken by eating it? We must understand that the universal moral law, engraved on each of our hearts (that code which prevents every well-balanced soul from committing murder or robbing their neighbour), is real. If good and evil exist, and evil is truly evil, the very opposite of good, then God cannot be both good and evil.

God cannot be everything. But He can be greater than everything. The Bible tells us that God made everything, He was before all things. He is not subject to His creation but Lord over it. Evil in the world is evidence of corruption brought about through sin. God has allowed this for a time, to demonstrate His patience and afford us a window in which to repent of our evil and choose to serve Him. But one day soon, that window will close.

Nothing is god

This view, most often called Atheism, also includes Materialism or Philosophical Naturalism. Unlike the non-theism of Buddha, who lands in the previous group because he still believed in the spiritual realm, true Materialists believe in only what we can see, hear, taste, scratch and sniff.

In ancient Greece, philosophers rejected the Pantheon of Olympus in favour of Materialism. In the 1700s, there was renewed interest in Materialism as people searched for answers outside the doctrines of the church.

> All the laws in the universe cannot explain why there is a universe.

The challenge for Materialism is that it is incapable of answering simple questions, such as why there is something rather than nothing. Materialists will point to the laws of nature, but such laws only describe what is already so. For example, gravity describes the law of attraction, but does not explain why such attraction exists. Would gravity even exist if there was nothing to which to be attracted?

All the laws in the universe cannot explain why there is a universe. This leaves the materialist only three options: either an eternal universe without beginning or end, which does not correspond to the reality we find; or a first cause beyond the observable material realm, which is inconsistent with a material view. Alternatively, they can keep looking for answers. But, those answers will only be found in God, the creator who made all things.

God Exists and Made Everything

This view is shared by the three faiths who claim Abraham as their father, and many of the cults and sects that sprang from these. For them, the separation of God and non-god, Creator and creation is key.

The oldest of these is the Christian faith. Old Testament Judaism no longer exists, but there is a clear and natural progression from Old Testament Judaism into the Christian faith. All the first Christians were Jews and they understood the Law and the Prophets and saw Jesus as the fulfilment of these.

The Judaism practiced by modern Jews originated after the birth of the Christian church, in the period following the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. The Temple was gone, but the law of

Moses remained. With no prophets to guide them, the Rabbis who rejected Jesus as Messiah had to develop a form of Judaism without temple sacrifices. Passover and Yom Kippur are still observed, but without atonement for sin. What did not change was their belief in the creation story of Genesis and their understanding of an involved, Creator God.

> In removing the sacrifice of Jesus, Muslims, like the Jews, have no assurance of salvation.

Islam bears only a superficial likeness to Judaism or Christianity, but still, Muslims agree that there is one God, the creator of all. Muslims view Jesus as only human. They deny His death, claiming He ascended bodily into heaven, escaping death. As G.K. Chesterton observed, 'Islam was something like a Christian heresy.' Similar to the early Gnostics, who '...had been full of mad reversals and evasions of the Incarnation, rescuing their Jesus from the reality of his body even at the expense of the sincerity of his soul.'* In removing the sacrifice of Jesus, Muslims, like the Jews, have no assurance of salvation. The best they can hope for is to outbalance their bad with good by avoiding major sins and do enough good to and receive mercy from Allah (Quran 4:31).

Answering the Questions

Biblical Christianity holds that God created the world, but is not part of it. He created time, space and matter, but is outside of time, not restricted by space, and not a material being in the way that we are. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all present in creation, all continue to be involved in sustaining it, and will ultimately bring creation to its end.

The Bible provides a world view that corresponds to truth, as understood through logic and empirical data, and is coherent within itself, without self-contradiction. It answers the question of our origin and that of the universe; 'In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth' (Genesis 1:1). It answers the question of the meaning of life: 'And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (John 17:3). It explains the nature of reality: 'And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever' (1 John 2:17). And tells us what our destiny will be, whether we serve God or not: 'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive his due for the things done in the body, whether good or bad' (2 Corinthians 5:10).

It is a frightening thing to face God's judgement. But Jesus died so that we could stand before God without fear. When we receive Jesus, the Bible tells us, we receive the right to be called children of God. God forgives our sins and we are given a clean slate.

If you have never received Jesus, do it today.

*The Age of the Crusades, A Short History of England

Also in this Series: Does a Fish Know it is Wet?