

Faith is the basis for believing completely contradictory religions. If faith was a reliable path to truth, then we would expect all people of faith to reach the same conclusions. For an outsider trying to decide between Islam and Christianity or other faith-based beliefs, hearing that faith can lead someone to believe any of them is true, demonstrates how unreliable faith-based beliefs are as a pathway to truth. At best, assuming one of the world's religions is the correct one, faith has led at least 70% of the world's believers to the wrong conclusion. Of course, 100% could be wrong, and most likely are.

The following blog posts will examine just how wrong some of these beliefs are.

This first section is only for those who think atheism is the claim there is no god instead of the far more accurate and honest assessment that it is simply a lack of belief in the claim that a god exists.

If you already accept the vast majority of atheists simply don't believe the claim is true, then you don't really need to read this first section.

<http://faithaway.com/defining-atheism-and-exploring-the-burden-of-proof/>

Defining Atheism and Exploring the Burden of Proof

For those who don't know, the prefix "A" means without. Here are several examples to help demonstrate that point.

Abiotic – without any life

Antibiotic – against life

Prebiotic – before life

Moral – if something is moral, we generally consider it having a positive effect.

Immoral – if something is immoral, we generally consider it having a negative effect.

Amoral – it has no effect, or, is WITHOUT effect or relevance to morality.

Bisexual, heterosexual, homosexual, no matter how you define the first three, asexual is without sexuality.

Agnostic – without knowledge of

Gnostic – having knowledge of

Theism – having belief in god

Atheism – WITHOUT belief in god (lack of belief)

Antitheism – against belief in god

For the purpose of these discussions we must have an honest recognition of "hard atheism" as the assertion that there is no god. This position goes beyond simply not believing in god.

It is important to accept that vast majority of atheists fall into the category of simply not accepting the proposition of the traditional creator god existing as true or likely true, because they are unconvinced.

As a definition for atheism, without belief in god, is almost always the first or second definition found in any dictionary and as such is a valid use of the word.

Also, just because a person says "I am not an atheist," that doesn't make it true. What can also be true is that person chooses not to self-identify as an atheist, or perhaps they too have a misunderstanding of the word atheist.

Adding the prefix "a" means atheism is defined as "without a belief in a god or gods" is not the same as Anti-theism, not the same as making the positive claim that there are no gods. Atheism is simply a lack of belief in claims of existence of a god or gods. Using the court room analogy, someone can be found "not guilty" but that doesn't mean we know he is innocent. the verdict only refers to whether the jury was convinced of guilt. You can be unconvinced of guilt and still not be certain of innocence. If god were on trial accused of existing, I would not find him guilty based on the evidence.

By not accepting the claim that "a god must exist" and instead adopting a default position of "we don't know that a god exists," we cannot say "we are convinced" that a god does exist, and we are by definition, atheists if we are not convinced to believe in god.

The burden of proof falls on those who make a claim to support it, not those who don't believe the claim. Do you believe claims that bigfoot, fairies, the Loch Ness monster, or leprechauns really do exist? If your answer is no, then you are the equivalent of an atheist with regard to each of them. People who say if you don't believe "then where is your proof?" are shifting the burden of proof away from those who make the claim in which you don't believe.

The default position on accepting a claim like this (an extraordinary claim) is not to believe it until it is demonstrated to be true. If this were not the case, then as there is no evidence to prove they don't exist, you would be required to believe these claims and many others, some of which may even be in direct conflict, as is the case when accepting all the different unfalsifiable god claims from various cultures and religions around the world.

You can't just believe them all, which is why the logical default position is not to believe any claim until it is shown to be true.

<http://faithaway.com/does-god-really-have-an-opinion-on-morality/>

Does God really have an opinion on morality?

Do you really believe our sense of morality comes from God? Have you ever heard or said that "the existence of objective morality is evidence for the existence of God?" Consider the following...

Subjective morality, by definition, is based on preferences. An example of subjective morality is when we collectively agree that action x is moral and action y is immoral because the consequences of each action are understood, and the outcome of action x consistently leads to a collectively preferred outcome and, action y leads to a collectively unfavorable outcome.

Objective morality, by definition, is that which is considered moral or immoral regardless of preferences. Objective morality cannot be a matter of opinion.

If morality were truly objective then by definition it could not be God's opinion, meaning God is subject to the same morality we are, and we can see if god acts morally when measured against objective moral values. (He often doesn't)

If god is the source of morality, because he has a plan (defined as a series of steps to reach a preferred outcome), and as part of that plan he created the moral values that would best lead to his preferred outcome, then God dictates his morality based on his preferences and that kind of morality is subjective.

If God decides what is moral, then morality is subjective by definition. It's a matter of opinion, his.

In addition to subjective and objective morality we also have absolute morality which states that which is moral at all times regardless of circumstances. If you believe that killing is wrong all the time, no matter what, even in self-defense, or the defense of the innocent, then you subscribe to absolute morality. Of the three this is the most dogmatic, and least nuanced position. It is also apparent that we don't find ourselves in a world where an absolute morality is governing everyone regarding killing as we see killing all the time. On this basis we can rule out absolute morality for every other moral situation as well.

The modern understanding of morality that seems to hold the most weight with non-believers recognizes that if we commonly accept the goal of wellbeing (defined as that which minimizes harm and maximizes benefit) as the basis for our moral judgments, then with respect to our agreed goal, we can objectively measure any actions effectiveness. So, the initial premise that underpins our moral judgements is subjective, but the subsequent rules we decide to follow will all have results that are objectively measurable and can therefore be considered objectively good or bad with respect to our goal.

Non-believers typically think human wellbeing should come before the wellbeing of a god that can't be demonstrated to exist. Believers typically assert that their god exists and his wellbeing, his plan, his opinion, should come before that of humans. How about believers demonstrate their god does in fact exist, then we can argue about who's opinion is superior with regard to moral judgements, humans or God?

Ever heard of the Euthyphro dilemma, it is one of the oldest examples of this very issue. According to the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, Socrates asks Euthyphro, "Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?"

I submit to you that the answer to the ages old conundrum is found in our modern understanding of morality combined with our ability to recognize the flaw in how the question was worded. With respect to the latter, the presuppositions that gods exist and that they love that which is pious, are both unsupported. The very Gods spoken about here have been relegated to mythology. Of course, the substitution of any other god, even one you believe exists, changes nothing about the dilemma itself.

A better question is where does our morality come from? For those who are interested in the evolution of morality and a sense of fairness in social species, which is a somewhat well understood process, I recommend a google search, as it is getting clearer every day. Basically, social species like humans seem

to demonstrate a sense of fairness and empathy, that manifests in socially normative behaviors, which when violated, can lead to members of the group being rejected and banished. For members of a social species the benefits of living in groups yields higher rates of survivability and increased reproduction. Those members that have strongly developed traits that help them get along with others have more offspring than those who don't and over time populations of social creatures grow stronger and survive longer than their antisocial outcasts. We have quite literally evolved to be empathetic beings who care about the wellbeing of others in our group.

No superpowers are required to explain the emergence of moral behavior, and whenever we can demonstrate how something comes about from purely natural processes adding a supernatural element violates Occam's razor about the simplest explanation being more likely true. It is simpler to explain things in terms of the natural processes we already understand and see exist in reality, than to give a supernatural explanation which can't really be understood at all? Therefore, it is factually true to say "a God is less likely to be the source of our moral behavior than our empathy that we know exists."

<http://faithaway.com/is-it-possible-to-believe-something-you-cant-understand/>

Is it possible to believe something you can't understand?

Gibberish literally means nothing. It is defined as meaningless speech or writing that is nonsense. When using terms that have no understandable meaning or are perhaps contradictory you can't impart a discernibly consistent message, it's gibberish.

If your goal is to explain something, it must be done in terms that we can already understand in a way that is not ambiguous.

Example, is it even possible to believe the following explanation for gravity is true? Megolontiams engourge with plamorites to create an energy vacuum whenever they are exposed to tannerite, and since tannerite is timeless and spaceless by definition, their exposure must occur in a state of intense globularity which allows for gravity to come into existence through a spacial medium. Clearly this explanation gibberish. There is no way to determine if the statement is true because the terms used are undefined, or meaningless.

A quick rewrite to the following, a meaningless word interacts with another meaningless word, in a way that has no parallel in our current understanding, and therefore is an explanation for gravity, perfectly demonstrates the issue. Can you believe something you can't understand? No. Perhaps the real question should be can you believe a claim regarding causation is true when the claim about the cause cannot be understood? Also no.

Terms that have no consistent definition or understanding such as spirit, higher power, or something being described as having scientifically impossible characteristics such as timeless and spaceless (a contradiction to Einstein's well proven theory of relativity) have no real explanatory power.

With regard to the question "how did the universe come to exist?" Saying something like, "God did it with his power," is functionally no different from god did it with magic, and neither explains HOW acts of creation are done.

Where scientific explanations seek to describe how the mechanisms of the world around us work, and to demonstrate how those mechanisms reliably lead to a given outcome, (Example a planet coalescing from preexisting matter as an act of creation) a genuine common understanding can be reached such that a reproducible conclusion can be achieved by anyone.

Religious or other supernatural explanations can't be demonstrated or verified to be valid mechanisms and as their definitions are fluid and rarely agreed upon. And, we have no understanding as to how they actually work. They cannot be truly meaningful or informative. Explanations that can't possibly be quantified, verified, or even consistent with what we know about reality are nothing more than a placeholder for something we can't understand. Something that can't be understood can't be believed and people who claim they do understand that which is meaningless are literally pretending to understand gibberish.

If god exists and has a plan for me, in order to follow his plan (a series of steps to reach a preferred outcome) I must understand the list of steps to take. God cannot be speaking gibberish. Assuming he is all powerful, his plan cannot be something that can be interpreted multiple ways or even misinterpreted. If an all-powerful creator of the universe existed and wanted me to know his plan for me, it would be impossible for me not to understand it, if he had created me with the specific ability to understand it.

The very fact that I and many others either don't think such a plan exists in reality, or at least claim that god's mysterious ways are the reason they can't understand, actually disproves the claim that there is an all-powerful creator god who wants us to know about his message for us. It is a contradiction, either GOD is all powerful, and therefore can communicate unambiguously, or he doesn't really try to communicate at all in any really meaningful way to impart his most important message to us that we could ever receive, demonstrating he couldn't possibly want us to receive his message.

It seems to me that every single person has their own "unique understanding" of God, demonstrating that he cannot really be understood collectively with agreed upon characteristics. How is it possible for an all-powerful god to miscommunicate a message about who he is to every person who ever thought he talked to them?

On the other hand, if God's plan for any of us doesn't require us to act in any particular way, for example if his plan doesn't require us to act in accordance with his will, then he really doesn't need to tell us his will or how we should act, no list of steps to follow are needed, and perhaps we can say "God has a plan but how we act will have no impact on it." So, if nothing we can do changes gods plan for us, then there can be no consequences from God for how we act, feel, or believe.

In light of the above, it seems far more likely the actual perceived experiences with gods of every type and from every culture, are all human constructs with as many versions as there are people who can make up gibberish.

For those who argue it is possible to believe something we can't understand and for many of us quantum theory is an example of that. I would point out that "can't understand" is different from "don't understand". This speaks to the issue of whether something is knowable at all vs, I personally don't know it, but with the proper education in the fundamentals I could learn to understand it.

If you accept the preceding argument is correct you now have a logical disproof of any god who is described as both all-powerful and wanting all of us to understand his message.

If you accept the above reasoned argument against the existence of this type of god, how does it force you to modify your belief in god?

This is a perfect place for a quote from John Adams (1735-1826) Founding Father, 2nd US President. "mystery is made a convenient cover for absurdity"

<http://faithaway.com/congratulations-christians-youve-just-proved-islam-is-true/>

Congratulations Christians you've just proved Islam is true

Some of the most common arguments for Christianity are also arguments for Islam.

Muslim apologists commonly site the cosmological argument for god, or supposed scientific knowledge in the Quran, or predictions in the Quran they believe came true, the morality argument for god, god changed my life, or even that they look around and just "feel it must be true,"

If you agree that any of these well-known arguments for god are valid evidence for support for the claimed existence of the Christian god, then you are in agreement that Muslims are justified in using these exact arguments too. After all, if any of these arguments did really prove a god existed, it should be considered support for the claim a god exists, even if it doesn't prove which God exists.

And while all of these arguments for god have been debunked multiple times (search our favorite YouTube channels for hours of content handily debunking every known argument for a god) I don't need to debunk any of them no matter how fallacious the reasoning, to make the point that if belief in either religion can be justified based on these reasons that neither Muslims or Christians can justifiably deny the others use of the same arguments to prove god exists.

According to his words in the Quran, Allah says "I have no son." He also claims to be the creator of the universe. Yet according to the new testament Jesus is the Son of God the creator of the universe. Both cannot possibly be true simultaneously.

Therefore, the above arguments appear to support one's belief in either religion, but we know belief in one of them must be wrong. This demonstrates conclusively that in the case of Christianity and Islam, use of those arguments can and does in fact lead roughly half of the people using them to accepting a false god claim as true. I will humbly remind you that while both religions can't be right, they can both be wrong.

The cold hard truth is that a belief in practically any god can be justified by these common lines of thinking and for that reason, we can say for sure that they do not support or indicate any one god is true over any other. This literally means those arguments are not evidence for a specific god, and if you are a Christian and accept these arguments as proof of your god then congratulations you've just proved Islam also must be true.

<http://faithaway.com/it-happened-to-me-personally-and-i-believe-it/>

It happened to me personally and I believe it.

Common claims: “it happened to me and I believe it.” or perhaps “God spoke directly to me.”

Do you care about whether other people believe it too? If not, great then I don’t believe it happened exactly as you claimed.

This is exactly the same response one would give if you heard a person making a causal claim you know cannot be confirmed as true, and which conflicts with your understanding of reality? You must admit you would dismiss some peoples claims as not credible or you admit to being gullible and therefore have less credibility.

If in fact you do care that people believe your claim about the cause of what happened to you being divine, you must have something that would be convincing to others in support of your claim, the claim is not enough by itself.

If what you claim is supporting evidence cannot be verified or the conditions not reproducible, then one of the most important tenants of modern scientific method for understanding what is true is violated. (reproducibility)

If there are any alternate explanations for a given event, then simply claiming “it wasn’t any of those” is not valid support for one possible cause especially when unknown unlisted but sufficient causes may exist.

The very nature of a claim like this goes against another tenant of the scientific method which is that for one thing to be evidence of another it must be exclusively concordant (thank you Aron Ra) with that result. It must be shown if A is true, then B is also always true, and that if B is True it can only be because of A. If you can’t show this is the case then you don’t have valid evidence of causation.

In any case where an alternate explanation including a possibly unknown one, can be conceived of, you violate the exclusive concordance required for any explanation to be valid evidence.

This is a concept we all understand from the courtroom model. Defense attorneys can present an alternate explanation for the same set of facts which can lead to a jury having a reasonable doubt as to the truth of one theory of a crime over another.

We must first understand why claiming “it happened to me and I believe it” is being intellectually dishonest because it ignores others’ reasonable doubts as well as your own. This is another form of lying to ourselves.

People who are deliberately obtuse on this issue will continue to use these kinds of arguments because they have no choice, as long as there is no credible, reproducible, reliably predictable, or detectable evidence that is exclusively concordant with the existence of a god.

<http://faithaway.com/morality-from-god-i-dont-think-so/>

Morality from God? I don't think so...

Why do we not pass down unfinished prison terms to the children of prisoners who die while serving their sentence? Why is it not okay to punish the child for the transgressions of a parent? The reason is the recognition that we all are individuals and no person, even offspring, are responsible for the actions or debts of another.

Consider the concept of "Original Sin" and the "Fall of Man."

Why do people think that one mistake by one man long ago is a good justification to punish all of his offspring for all eternity?

For those that tell us the genesis story is merely a fable or parable, that it is not to be taken literally... and/or perhaps who recognize that the story is actually an adaptation of earlier mythos and not even related to Jewish tradition consider the following. Without a literal true "fall of man," because of committing the original sin, there is no reason for Jesus to sacrifice himself, as there is nothing for humanity to be forgiven for.

How is it right that if I do wrong to any another person or group, I only need to be forgiven by some third party (god or Jesus) who was not affected by my actions? If I hurt Fred, does Tom get to forgive me? If Fred is still pissed at me would the fact that I'm forgiven by Tom help Fred in any way? Obviously, I can't forgive your transgressions against someone else.

If God exists and forgives me but Fred doesn't, Fred sees no benefit. If God can only forgive me for transgressions against him (God) then my real social obligation is to seek to make things right with Fred. If I steal from Fred, I owe Fred the restitution, not a third party.

The whole concept of Jesus dying for our sins, presupposes, it is okay for a God to punish someone eternally for transgressions they did not commit and that it is okay for Jesus to forgive you for that sin through an act of his own personal sacrifice.

In light of bronze age societal moral development, this concept might fly, but it breaks down when looked at from a perspective of modern morality.

How can we come to the conclusion that god is good in terms of morality? If we accept that our own moral compass is broken from the start and cannot be trusted, how do we determine and make the necessarily moral judgment call that god is a good moral being to be obeyed.

Should one accept the morality of another, over their own personal morality when they conflict?

If you believe that indiscriminately slaughtering innocent women, children, and babies is wrong under all possible circumstances at any time, no matter who tells you to do it, but you also believe your moral compass is broken, because that's what your religious belief tells you, you can be convinced that god wants you to kill those you consider innocent. You can justify this as following orders and freely admitting that you can't understand god's "mysterious ways," but are willing to accept the morality of

another over your own without justification because you freely admit you can't understand that justification anyway.

The morality that we find in the bible corresponds perfectly with the time in which the bible stories were generated. Social morality has continued to evolve over the millennia, so that today our society finds many things that were justified behavior in stone age, bronze age, and iron age cultures, are not tolerated in modern western societies. Slavery, stoning people to death for disobedience, killing gays or nonbelievers, holding generations of family members responsible for crimes of someone who came before or for their unpaid debts, are all examples of outdated morality.

Why, if the bible is inspired by god, would he not teach a superior morality than what anyone could so easily find in that ancient society as well as many other cultures from that time in history? Clearly an all-knowing god would have at least the moral understanding that we humans now have achieved over time. After all we're not gods but we figured it out in spite of his teachings or lack thereof.

The idea that it is okay for parents to kill their unruly children may be okay with bible literalists but modern society has passed laws against it anyway, in spite of what god was reported to have said. If you think morality comes from god then you are blind to the obvious conflict that assertion creates with other assertions of his being all-knowing, or all-loving.

<http://faithaway.com/even-if-there-were-a-god-the-concept-of-sin-is-total-bullshit-here-is-why/>

Even If There Were A God, The Concept of Sin is Total Bullshit & Here Is Why.

While "sin" may have several different definitions, for this examination, sin is defined as a transgression against God, an action that is offensive to God, going against God's will or intent. A transgression against another person, or an animal is not a sin, unless it violates God's will, or is offensive to God himself.

Do you believe that we are intellectually close to God? To make a comparison, if God is to us like we are to other living things, would we be like other animals? Or when compared to god perhaps you think we are more like insects, or even just an amoeba or other single cell forms of life? On a scale of 1 to 100, if god is 100, Where would you put us when compared to God's intellect? While these questions are rhetorical, it is clear that the prevailing beliefs among various Christians and Muslims alike would place us very low on the scale, some would say we don't even rate a 1.

A person with an ant farm doesn't ever feel offended by the actions or beliefs of any of his ants. Even in the case when he or she may be trying to influence the ants' behavior and the ants aren't performing as desired, one wouldn't get offended.

Additionally if a bear, shark or a lion tries to eat me, or if any other animal should attack me, I hardly think it is trying to offend, nor do I take offense, even in the case that the animal holds mistaken beliefs about me or my wishes.

Our legal system understands that we can't hold young children to the same standards as adults when determining culpability, and we apply that to the mentally ill too, as we recognize that a person has to have the capacity to understand what they are doing is wrong.

How can anything that one animal does to another animal in the wild or even on a farm possibly be offensive to anybody, even to the farmer? By extension, how is it possible for one of god's flock to offend god by how he treats another member of the flock? Even in the case when people treat each other badly, clearly any people who are affected (including emotionally) by the behavior in question can be offended. How does this act offend god? What about when the offending person believes they are acting in accordance with god's will?

You raise us up to the level of God when you think we can hurt him physically or emotionally offend him by our actions or beliefs.

The concept of sin is by its very definition referring to the behaviors that offend god or hurt god in some way by not acting according to his desires. If you think we are like an amoeba when compared to the intelligence and understanding of god, then we cannot possibly commit a sin against god.

The whole concept of sin is obviously bullshit and it gives both Christians and Muslims a tool to oppress others and claim to be righteous and in accordance with God's wishes. For believers to accept that their idea of god is a being with the intelligence understanding and power to create everything in the universe according to his own design, and at the same time they think this same god would be offended by the actions and beliefs of humans on earth shows active cognitive dissonance. Why would a god design us to have brains that reason things out on their own and sometimes lead to behaviors that this super powerful being finds so offensive that they deserve eternal punishment torture and damnation?

The concept of Original Sin, as described in the bible is equally problematic when looked at with a modern understanding of morality. As a society we have moved beyond the obviously immoral notions of holding children responsible for the transgressions of a parent, or of substitutional atonement. Yet according to the bible, god has imposed an infinite punishment for the finite crime of disobedience, and, has declared all the descendants of Adam will suffer the punishment. Before Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, learning the difference between right and wrong, they could not know that what they were doing was wrong. Since the ability to understand why they were wrong is part of our modern understanding of culpability, and that was lacking according to the story, punishing them for what they could not understand is like punishing a mentally retarded person for not understanding the impact of something they've done. It's wrong.

There are those who would claim that the God of the bible is so advanced when compare to us that we can't possibly understand his ways. To them I call bullshit as I find it is actually quite easy to explain God's actions in terms of the bronze age morality that the bible stories account for us. Certainly, if you apply Occam's razor, it is a far simpler explanation that the source of this primitive morality is the crude tribal mentality of the human authors of the story.

For the last portion of this examination into original sin all that's required is for you not to deny what science has shown to be true in the matter of genetic bottlenecks. According to what we now understand, it simply isn't possible that there was ever a time when there were just two human beings alive, and a minimum population would be at least 50 individuals. The problems with limiting the gene pool are well understood and evolutionary biology teaches us that entire populations of primates evolved, not just two individuals. This means that story of the two first humans must be a myth.

If you accept the science, then you understand that means Adam and Eve could not have been the literal first two humans. You must recognize that the story about the “fall of man” and every human born after, being a descendant of Adam and Eve, is a scientific impossibility. If the whole point of Jesus’ sacrifice is for all who accept it to be saved from the punishment for an original sin that they did not commit, and, as shown scientifically, was just an ancient myth, then those who are “saved” have only been saved from a mythical punishment that was never a real danger in the first place.

<http://faithaway.com/obvious-problems-with-the-doctrine-of-hell/>

Obvious Problems with The Doctrine of Hell

In our modern understanding of justice, the punishment should fit the crime. Putting a child in a torture chamber and burning them alive for stealing a piece of candy, would be considered immoral and rightly so, when considering the impact on human well-being as the standard against measuring right and wrong. The concept of hell is that of infinite punishment for a finite crime, and it is therefore immoral for the same reasons as exemplified above with a child stealing candy. In the case where we are ignorant as to the impact of our actions, it is even worse.

Any being who is all-knowing and all-loving, would by definition understand this, and not create a place to torture people forever simply because they exercised the critical thinking skills they supposedly got from this god in the first place.

For Christians who believe in hell and that non-believers or those who don’t accept the unsupported claim that a god exists are sent there, you are saying that you are okay with notion that non-believers should burn forever simply because your God had his feelings hurt.

I would seem that the most popular Christian argument for this is, “God doesn’t send people to hell, they send themselves there by choosing not to believe the claims about god on faith.” Nobody sends themselves to hell, and here is how we know that.

The idea that people go to hell because they choose not to accept Jesus Christ as their lord and savior is predicated on the mistaken concept that belief is a choice. It is not. Belief is a matter of being convinced. You can be convinced of something for good or bad reasons and it is usually on a scale where we can be more convinced of the truth of certain things than others.

A simple demonstration is you catch your husband or wife cheating on you, perhaps you walk in on them, or maybe you set up a video camera which documents their infidelity, or perhaps they even confess to you that they have been cheating on you. It is not possible to think you can just choose to believe instead that they have actually been faithful in light of your new-found knowledge that they weren’t.

Another example is the belief that if you jump off a building you will fall. After you have come to an understanding of the effects of gravity in this world, you can no longer just believe that you won’t fall. This belief is not a choice, it is the result of your learning experiences in life. Believing you won’t fall after failing over and over, and learning exactly why you can’t fly, is not a choice you can possibly make. The

only real choice you have here is to deny reality, lying to yourself, and if you do so, you will still have to deal with the consequences of being wrong.

If a god exists, but provides no good evidence for his existence, one cannot be expected to be convinced he is real.

Good evidence would be anything that points exclusively to one conclusion over any other. As Faith provides a path to conclude any of the world's religions are true, it fails to live up to the standard of good evidence. An ancient book that makes claims about the existence of a god, yet is in direct conflict with other ancient books that also make claims for the existence of a god, or gods, is equally poor evidence as long as we can't show any of these books are true and no god shows up to clarify which religion has the correct account.

If an all loving, all knowing, and all-powerful god exists, then he should have no problem giving us good evidence for his existence. Clearly that can only mean he doesn't want us to have that evidence, and believers who claim you must take his existence on faith, are admitting that fact.

Those who claim that if god reveals himself to us such that we don't need faith to believe in him, often also claim that it would be a violation of free will for him to do so, ignoring the stories from their own holy books that tell us god did in fact reveal himself to many members of the story. Abraham knew god existed as he was reported to have had many direct interactions with him. Even the accounts of the devil tell us he is well aware of God's existence, according to the story, still had the free-will to oppose him. Saul of tarsus according to his story, became a Christian and became known as the apostle Paul, only after Jesus revealed himself to him on the road to Damascus, and The doubting Thomas only believed after Jesus proved himself directly to him. These accounts show us that according to the bible being a non-believer right up to the time God revealed himself is actually quite reasonable and revelation has no effect on free-will, nor on keeping one from going to heaven. Last, knowing you will fall from a building, doesn't keep you from exercising your free will to jump off the roof anyway.

Examining the doctrine of hell with the understanding that belief is not a choice clearly destroys that whole argument. If as most Christians believe, the only non-redeemable sin, is that of disbelief, all that would be required for a God's wishes to be fulfilled would be for him to just show up.

<http://faithaway.com/nothing-fails-like-prayer/>

Nothing Fails Like Prayer!

I was going to write another typical blog post about prayer and how it clearly doesn't work, but during the research for this entry I came across the following video from one of my favorite atheist thinkers that so perfectly summed up the position that I think anything I had to say would simply be redundant.

A huge thank you to Matt Dillahunty for his tireless efforts to point out the problems with religious beliefs, and to promote critical thinking among believers. Please check out his personal channel, and especially The Atheist Experience channel for nearly endless examples of religious thinking being totally destroyed.

In addition to the clip seen here, I am including a link to the NY Times article regarding the prayer study Matt referenced, as well as another article from Psychology Today that expands on one of his points.

In case you are worried about bias, please note that the study mentioned was primarily funded by the John Templeton Foundation for Spiritual Study. John Templeton himself was according to his Wikipedia page was an Evangelical Christian

HERE IS THE VIDEO -- **PLEASE WATCH** <https://youtu.be/Q2oIIFD55Q0>

Here is the mentioned study scientifically examining the efficacy of intercessory prayer for healing.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/31/health/31pray.html>

Article on the arrogance of prayer

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/ambigamy/201305/the-arrogance-prayer>

<http://faithaway.com/why-you-dont-need-to-fear-that-leaving-your-religion-also-means-giving-up-the-benefits-of-religious-traditions-or-community/>

Why You Don't Need To Fear That Leaving Your Religion Also Means Giving Up The Benefits Of Religious Traditions or Community

Let's examine the benefits of religious belief that believers are afraid of losing when they contemplate giving up their faith, and let's look at whether these benefits are in any way tied to the truth of their beliefs, especially the supernatural beliefs. And let's identify which of these benefits, can still be achieved by secular means

1. a sense of community.

This is something that every church or religious group offers that we all find very compelling, the feeling that as part of the group that we can rely on the group for support when needed.

Groups like Recovering from Religion and their growing initiative called the secular therapy project, offer both a community and a model for starting more communities specifically designed for those coming out of religion. Another example is The Clergy Project, a group now consisting of more than a 1000 former and current clergy members from all over the country who no longer believe in the supernatural claims of their religion, but are often still preaching a message they no longer believe is true, and have no other means of financial support.

Seeing members of our modern society come together to form communities revolving around every kind of human interest, we can say that building community is not exclusive to religion. As long as the members of a given group feel a sense of solidarity and empathy for those in the group, a support structure exists for its members.

As mentioned above there is a community specifically for former believers and it is growing every day.

While it is undeniable that religious groups do offer a sense of community, religious organizations are clearly not the only place to find community.

2. sense of joy, wonder, and feelings attributed to the holy spirit.

This is a far more subjective benefit, as we can never really be certain we understand someone else's emotional state of being. Certainly, people can get a feeling of enlightenment from reading a book and making intellectual connections that give the reader a new understanding about the material.

In fact it seems scholars in every field can tell us about a moment when they first came to understand a concept that had previously vexed them, and will often use terminology that mirrors that of believers who have come to a new or deeper understanding of a given point of religious doctrine. When scientists marvel at the amazing facts discovered to be true about the universe we live in, they often use words like awe and wonder to describe their feelings. In fact, for me too, I can confirm that feelings of wonder and joy are not limited religious experiences, nor have they diminished since giving up my faith. Many nonbelievers say that they are happier since they stopped trying to make their religious beliefs line up with what they know is true about the world we live in.

Tests have been done to study the brain states of people who pray or sing in church, and compare them to people who are listening to music and singing along, attending a concert, watching a movie, etc. Using MRIs scientist can show that the exact same parts of the brain are active in all those cases, producing the exact same chemical cocktails in our brains, and creating the same emotional experiences.

Once again this confirms that being in church does provide a certain type of emotional state that is not exclusive to being in church. Giving up church service doesn't mean giving up your sense of joy, wonder, or happiness. Also as long as there are currently more than a thousand priests, pastors, and church leaders from every denomination who don't any longer believe, and who are part of The Clergy Project mentioned above, we have a group of people, formerly the most devout people you could find, who confirm that the feelings they used to attribute the holy spirit, are no longer interpreted in that way.

The scientific inquiry above combined with the anecdotal accounts of former clergy members from every religion shows us that the feelings you get in your church are not actually tied to the truth of the religion. Every religion no matter what they believe all say that the feelings they get are proof of their god's interaction with them, but they can't possibly all be right if their supposed revelations, as we see, are in direct contradiction with each other.

3 heritage, culture, history, art, identity.

Religions from around the world with different origins, making different supernatural claims, and spouting messages that are in clear contradiction with one another have all influenced and contributed to amazing cultures, history, and art, and that is a clear demonstration that the truth of these religions is irrelevant to the fact that they have beautifully colored our heritage, and helped to define the identities of their members.

The well-known phenomenon of Jewish atheism

(<https://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/jewsdontbelieve/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_atheism) is an example of a group of people embracing their

cultural heritage, celebrating it, protecting it, and clearly valuing it highly enough to continue passing it on to the next generation. At the same time Jews have continued to excel in science, business, and entertainment, such that they are overrepresented in these areas. According to a quick Google search, there are about 14 million Jews in the world, making them about 0.2% of global population, yet of the approximately 900 Nobel prize winners roughly 20% identify as Jewish (at least culturally). This of course demonstrates conclusively that giving up their belief in the god of the old testament has not had a negative impact on the Jewish culture, history, art, or identity.

Growing up in a Jewish household myself My mother and I both identify as atheist Jews, and yet are still very proud of our heritage. My father identifies as a deist, rejecting that the god of the bible is real, in favor of the concept of a god who is completely hands off when it comes to earthly matters, yet he too still claims his Jewish heritage is highly important to him personally.

Now we are seeing a rise in “Cultural Christians” who have recognized that they too can find value in their heritage, and identity as Christians, without the baggage associated with belief in things that can’t possibly be true. The same applies to those now calling themselves “Cultural Muslims”. The simple fact that these terms exist and are self-adopted by former believers from every religious group, shows us conclusively that giving up literal belief in the god’s of our culture, does not diminish the pride we feel from our reflecting on our heritage, culture, history, and art.

4. losing empty promises is losing nothing at all.

To paraphrase the outspoken atheist Matt Dillahunty, if you were lied to as a child and told you are going to inherit a billion dollars on your 21st birthday, and then you don’t get it, the impact of not getting it would depend on whether or not you believed the lie. If you didn’t simply accept the claim as true and instead lived your life as though you had no expectation of the huge windfall that was promised, then in the event you don’t get it, nothing has been lost as nothing was ever really had in the first place. However, if you believed the claim you were going to be super wealthy at age 21, then perhaps you would live accordingly, frivolously spending money, or not worrying about getting a good education, or preparing for a career, etc., and this behavior will undoubtedly have very negative impacts possibly devastating effects on your life when turning 21 and not receiving what was promised.

This situation is analogous to being told you will live forever and be with all your loved ones again in heaven after you die. As this is the one and only life we can confirm or demonstrate we will have, just assuming there is an afterlife based on unverifiable claims, could easily affect one’s decisions in this life. Just one example is making amends with a loved one at the end of life. For someone who is convinced they will have the chance to see a dying loved one again in the future may decide that a long trip that requires resources and time away from work, isn’t really important because they will get another chance in the future, even if they won’t.

People who live as though this is the only life we have, will treat it as more valuable than those who think we will live again and or live forever. Rarity is a common factor in evaluation, the rarer an item, the more we value it and the opposite is also true. If we live for an average of just 80 years, in a universe that has existed and will continue to exist for billions of years, the rarity of our time alive is obvious. However, if you think we live forever then even the billions of years the universe has existed for is just a drop in the bucket when compared to infinity. An infinite lifetime relegates an eighty year lifespan to practically nothing at all, and when comparing the value of just eighty years to the value associated with

eternal life, diminishes the comparative value of our tiny lifespan. This conclusively demonstrates one way in which religious belief cheapens the value of our lives.

With regard to exploring the question of the benefits of religious belief being tied to the truth of the belief, giving up a supernatural belief in everlasting life, enhances the value to us of the one life we know we do have.

In the light of the above understanding that the regularly cited benefits of religious belief, are due to people, their empathy, and desire to always improve our condition, Matt Dillahunty has repeatedly asked for believers to come up with just one benefit of religious belief that can actually be confirmed to be tied to the truth of the religious claims, and no one has ever risen to the challenge. Hopefully this will help you to realize that all the benefits commonly associated with religious belief can be had without the supernatural bullshit, and when giving up your faith in god, you don't have to worry about losing anything at all, especially when it comes to the empty promises of the various religious traditions.

If a community is what you seek then come and join the rest of us who put the needs and desires of people above that of a completely unverifiable god character from an ancient book. Secular Humanists put humans first, valuing all humans, not just those who believe a certain religious doctrine.

I'd like you to consider a scenario where knowing whether I had a hundred dollars in cash (us) in my wallet right at this moment was the single most important piece of information to your future success, and because I am in another city from you, you can't verify the contents of my wallet.

Recognizing that for you the required information is not knowable is the most intellectually honest position.

Let's add that I refuse to give you a direct answer. And when you ask others you get conflicting answers where roughly half tell you I do have a hundred dollars cash, and the others say I don't. Also, if you get the wrong answer you will be put in jail.

As it turns out, the most intellectually honest position is still I don't know.

Recognizing you don't know also necessarily means you don't actually believe it is true.

Being intellectually honest with yourself about the situation functionally leads to the same place as being an atheist regarding god claims.