

Why My Spirit is Christian and My Logic is Not

by Mehdi Djadali

It is a cold, lightless and bitter feeling to think that death is the very end. Be that as it may, this is the feeling that I struggle with almost every day of my life. I wish I could honestly with all my heart say that God does exist, but I cannot. I long for answers to my nightly prayers, but there never are any. I yearn for a peace within my spiritual being that I can never find. For numerous months I have been going to the "Christian Bible" for answers. The truth is, the more I peruse the Bible, the more I accept it. However, I still question the many contradictions between the Old and the New Testaments and at times find its writing deceptive and improbable. Do I have no faith, or have I just not been conditioned? I was not brought up in a religious family. I never attended church, never prayed, and never talked about the mere existence of God. My claim is that if one man was able to Nazify a whole country, just imagine how parents can manipulate their child's actions, understanding, and, most easily, their beliefs. I reach out to God because there is something within me that cries out for satisfaction, for hope, something only God can fulfill. However, it is the incomprehensible stories in the Bible and the practices of religion that keep me away from spiritual completion.

What inspired me to even open the Bible were the words of a close friend who two years ago told me, "The Bible might be a letter your father has written to you. Don't you think you ought to at least read it?" However, after having looked through the Bible, I have found a curious piece of prejudice in my heart against God's words that needs an explanation. I have a hard time believing a superior and loving power exists above us when there is so much atrociousness in this world. Bad things happen to good people: an accident they couldn't prevent, an illness they couldn't avoid, a misfortune they didn't foresee. I do not believe that is God; I believe that's life. Some are poor, some are rich, some are white, some are black, and some live great lives, and others come to the point of suicide. Accepting God is accepting that Satan is the ruler of this world. If God really loves me, then he wouldn't send me to burn in eternal damnation just because this world made it difficult for me to understand Christ. What kind of a compassionate God is that? I believe a god would love his children for who they are and what they do, not for what they believe in. Take this scenario as an example. A man murders an eight-year-old who is undecided about his belief in Christ. Twelve years later while that man is on death row, he begins to feel sorry for what he did and asks Christ for forgiveness. According to the basic principles of Christianity, that eight-year-old child goes to hell and the convict goes to heaven. I don't want to believe in a god who judges in such a manner.

We perceive that there is good and evil because we witness it in this world. We perceive that there is heaven and hell because we experience it right here on earth. Doesn't the enjoyment of heaven come from eating delicious food, keeping the company of young women or men, wearing exceptional clothes, and using celestial perfumes? Doesn't the pain of hell come from the troubles that arise from wars, weapons, diseases, and tragedies? Perhaps Christianity believes in the good and the bad because we have a jealous god (Ex. 20:5). But wait—I thought that God is perfect, just, true, and righteous (Deut. 32:4). I guess we will never know because no man but Jesus himself has ever ascended to heaven (John 3:13). But wait—I thought that Elijah ascended to heaven in a whirlwind (II Kings 2:11). Possibly we might find out when we are raised from the dead to be rewarded or

punished (John 5:28-29). But wait—I thought the dead would have no further reward (Ecclesiastes 9:5). Maybe Jacob from the Old Testament knows the answers; he saw and wrestled with God (Genesis 32:24-30). But wait—I thought that no one has ever seen God (John 1:18). How can I put complete faith into a book that at times contradicts itself? Imagine you find several mistakes in a history book. What does that say about the book's credibility?

If God intended religion to be helpful, He and His disciples did a very poor job constructing it. The Christian religion has ironically "been the principal enemy of moral progress in the world" (Russell 826). It has been the cause of millions of deaths; at the Salem witch trials, for example, numerous innocent women were burned alive. Bertrand Russell said it best when he wrote,

You find as you look around the world that every single bit of progress in humane feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step toward the diminution of war, every step toward better treatment of the colored races, or every mitigation of slavery, every moral progress that there has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by the organized churches of the world. (827)

Why should I have faith, when religion is responsible for the millions of Holocaust victims and many others murdered thoughtlessly. Try convincing them a god exists. Where was Christ when they were suffering?

Perhaps many Christians look past those ideas because even with all that humanity has done, it cannot provide a guardian. On the other hand, the belief in God can. My good friend Dorothy Tessier said, "If I am all alone I have Christ to turn to. There is always someone there for me." I think the feeling of safety plays an overwhelming part in people's aspirations towards discovering God. Tessier went on to say, "I would bring my children up in a Christian home with Christian values... ; however, the choice will ultimately be theirs." My argument is how much choice does a child have when the only thing he or she has been exposed to is Christianity and the preaching of Christ? I sometimes wonder if God even exists in form, or if he is just a figure of our imagination. As Russell said in one of his essays, "I don't think God exists ready-made. I think he is an idea we can conceive and can do something to create" (qtd. in Herrick 220). It perhaps may be offensive to some, but might it not be true that perhaps we created God? Mark Twain's writing agrees with such thinking. He wrote, "A thousand wild and tame religions, each nation believes it has the only true religion and the only sane system of government, each despising all the others, each an ass and not suspecting it, each proud of its fancied supremacy, and each perfectly sure it is the pet of God" (qtd. in Herrick 212). The people of every country believe in a system of religious teaching that fits their culture. Just think of the countless number of various religions that people rely on, yet every nation would fight to the end for what they have faith in. People in a culture are brought up to believe in a god of their kind. This is the reason why in certain countries 95 percent of the population is Hindu or Muslim or Buddhist. Why the different beliefs if Jesus Christ is the one and only? Why the different religions if God's true words are written in the Bible?

In fact, I find many Christians to be hypocrites. Many ignore the strictures mentioned in the Bible, against lying, against divorce, against killing, and the like. Who gives Christians the right to decide what commandments to follow in the Bible and which not to follow? Christianity is no less vain, no less superstitious, no less false in its principles, and no less ridiculous than any other religion.

As an adult, I expect to get reasonable answers to my questions and not responses such as, "Because the Bible says so," "It's a miracle," "You cannot know the mind of God," "God works in mysterious ways," or "Just have faith." If I assume God exists, I must also assume the existence of extraterrestrials, unicorns, dragons, and so on. All of these creatures have been witnessed, but yet cannot be verified as being true; and arguing that dragons exist because no one can prove they don't is not logical. Most Christians say that one has nothing to lose by believing in God (Stevens). However, I cannot act out belief. I don't want to spend my precious moments of life worshipping a false God; that is why I am questioning the Bible. In the words of David Coppit, a University of Virginia graduate, "I believe though that people can convince themselves of almost anything. Just as a superstitious person will attribute getting fired to the black cat from earlier in the day, a religious person will praise God if they have a child when the doctors said they couldn't." I find it difficult to accept a religion that does not condemn slavery (1 Peter 2:18-21), that commands its followers to kill people who try to turn them from God (Deut. 13:10), and consistently considers women as being of less worth than men (Ephesians 5:22-24) (Mackay). Coppit makes a good point by saying, "I have a hard time believing that God's chosen people, largely Jewish, are going to hell for not believing in Christ." Billions of people have felt Christ personally and billions of people have felt Allah's presence. Are the Muslims wrong? Why are their experiences less acceptable and less real than a Christian's experience?

I still remember the first time I walked into a church. It was nothing like I imagined. I can recall the cracked stone slates leading to the front entrance and the rusty hinges of the white wooden door whose paint flaked and deteriorated with every slam. As I walked in I didn't see colored stained glass or heavenly artwork. What I saw were six rows of benches, vandalized with name carvings, each with a tiny stool up front. I didn't think much of the place when I first entered it, but as the church began to fill up with people of all races, and ages, I began to spiritually feel the presence of God even in that old, dilapidated church. I have a feeling He is there, but I cannot feel Him through the Bible. He is more than words can describe. Clive S. Lewis wrote that the central idea in Christianity is that Christ died on the cross for our sins and He came to provide man with the opportunity to enter heaven (809-810). However, if people couldn't get themselves to believe when Christ was present, why should we believe today when he may be just a story?

My spirit is my heart and my logic is my intelligence. The words of God first flow through my heart and make me accept. Then those same words flow to my mind where they are questioned from every angle. I accept my existence on the basis of inference and experience. Science fits everything into a picture and things appear to work. Conversely, I cannot say the same about the Bible. It is much like a puzzle as I view it through my eyes: everything is in pieces and relies on faith. I feel that faith is more than just believing in God, for there are people out there who believe only out of fear. I don't just want to be content with the Bible. I want to fall in love with it. However, it is very difficult for me to commit myself to something that has so many unanswerable questions, because there will always be a sense of uncertainty within my inner being. We are forever searching for our purpose in life. Sadly, not until we die do we know what life is all about, what is its plot, why we exist, but by then it is too late. As Robert Jenson wrote, "I cannot justify my actions, except by dying" (17). I just hope a forgiving god awaits me—in my belief, and in my unbelief.

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