

What to Believe, Abductive Reasoning

"Many religions invoke God as "Father." The deity is often considered 'the father of gods and of men.'..."
-Catechism of the Catholic Church #238

There are three popular methods for arriving at the Truth in philosophy: the Deductive, the Inductive and the Abductive Reasonings. The Deductive and Inductive methods rely on making premises and arriving at a conclusion. The difference is that *all* premises in the Deductive method *must* be known to be true to arrive at the correct conclusion while the Inductive method allows for reasonable assumptions. Abductive Reasoning, however, seeks to identify all possibilities and then use facts to exclude all but one. Easily the most famous example of this is Sherlock Holmes when he said, "...once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth." (*The Sign of the Four* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, chp 6 pg 111).

A) Faith: Faith is often explained as believing in or acting on something when one has *no logical reason to do so*. Personally, I think this is a ridiculous definition. While an element of trust certainly applies to this word (the Greek word in the New Testament that is translated as Faith means trust), to claim that there is no rational foundation for this trust is simply untrue. All Faith has a foundation.

Some people's Faith comes from their parents or similar people have who told them since infancy that something is true. Some Faith is gained from what the media says. Some Faith is gained through personal experience and/or research on a subject. I do not consider the source of Faith itself to be a problem, nor what Faith one has. Christianity seems to tell us that it is better to have Faith in the wrong thing than to have no Faith at all: I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. (Revelation 3:15-16). As a Civil Engineer, this makes sense to me. Although it takes more effort, I can still build something with sub-standard materials; but I can't build with no materials at all.

That being said, we do mature with age, mentally and physically. Just as a grown adult cannot fit into the shoes he once wore as a toddler, we do grow beyond the initial Faith we learned as children. Being lazy in feeding this need to grow (a sin called Acedia) will not necessarily kill the Faith. It will, however, stunt it and leave one either vulnerable to a crisis of Faith or as a slave to an Absurd idea. Just like a starving person will crave anything to slake the hunger, so too will the mind seek to be reaffirmed in one's Faith. If we do not take an active part in our own education, then mainstream media and our small circle of friends will determine its growth. This is what I call immature Faith, but is more commonly referred to in philosophy as "bad faith." It can indeed be a strong Faith, but it is not a Faith fed on study, examination and self-reflection.

Fideism, the belief that Faith must be held without reason or even in opposition to reason, is obviously a form of immature Faith. While this could apply to any Faith, it is almost always used for Theists. What I find curious about fideists is they take a perverted pride in believing in Absurd; they do not want a rational explanation for what they believe in. Perhaps it is a consequence of the peaceful and secure culture we take for granted: they may very well look at fideism as the only way to prove their loyalty to God; a proxy for religious persecution. But that is a matter for psychiatrists, so I will move on.

Those who have an immature Faith are generally easy to spot, as they tend to be quite emotional

and defensive when confronted by their lack of knowledge of what their Faith really means. Unfortunately, this group is also the most vocal. Immature Christians will stand on street corners telling others they are damned for not believing in the Christ. Immature Atheists will resort to all sorts of hypocritical name-calling of the religious (uneducated, superstitious, silly, mentally disturbed, etc). Immature pagans will stay off to the side, assuming they can get all the benefits of Christianity without the "baggage" of being a Christian. Immature Agnostics think they have risen above the Christian-Atheist ruckus by being "open minded."

For those whose Acedia is so bad that they will refuse any ideas contrary to their beliefs out of hand, this paper is not for you. I don't expect what I write here to be accepted without question. If what I write is agreeable to the gentle reader, and he converts to Christianity because of it, then I still hope such a conversion came as a result of self-reflection as opposed to me merely being a nice guy with smooth words.

To a mature person, one's Faith is based on many factors that, having been thought over, compared and challenged, justify the trust given to it. One may very well trust a spare set of keys to one's home to a friend because he has a long history of being honest and responsible. We certainly don't *know* that he won't take advantage of this and rob the house, but our Faith in him is based on a rational and mature foundation.

But when new facts present themselves that are in conflict with this Faith, we also have a duty to reconsider our Faith in this new light. This isn't to say that one can't keep the old Faith, only that it needs to be re-examined. Perhaps the new facts are in error or misunderstood. Perhaps the contrary facts are minor to the big picture, and we can make minor adjustments to our Faith without discrediting the whole. But we should be honest with ourselves if the evidence warrants a radical change in belief. When I worked on construction projects, being rained out for one day did not necessarily diminish my Faith in completing the project on time, especially if we were ahead of schedule beforehand. On the other hand, the fact that a given company had a reputation of finishing projects on time did not justify believing a particular project would finish on time if the company was suddenly plagued with labor problems, equipment issues and supply shortages.

B) Religious Faith Choices: While the Faith I speak of can apply to any area in our lives, I am going to focus on how it applies to religion and various deities (Theism). It appears to me that one has very few choices in what to believe in considering religion. One can be an Atheist and deny gods and god-like beings. One can be a polytheist and believe in one or more races of deities. One can be a dualist and believe in two Theistic powers: equal yet opposite (which is technically a form of polytheism, yet I think it warrants its own discussion). One can be a monotheist and believe in one supreme deity. Finally, one can be Agnostic and have no Faith whatsoever concerning deities.

Before I go on, I want to emphasize that Atheism is a *Faith* that Theism of any sort is wrong. I say this because many so-called Atheists seem to think that it means simply not being a Christian. I am actually quite surprised how many people say something along the lines of "I'm an Atheist, but I believe in the pagan gods," or "I believe in a great Spirit." I will discuss these and other Faiths later. I've heard others say "I'm an Atheist because I don't know what to believe." In my experience (which seems to be common among others I have talked to about this subject), the overwhelming number of people who call themselves Atheist didn't know that being Agnostic was an option, much less know the distinction between the two. Just like a mature Christian, the mature Atheist has actually thought over the facts and observations available to him, only he concluded that there are no deities. And just as many self-proclaimed Atheists are really Agnostic, so too are a good many people who say they believe

in some type of spiritual reality. I'll go into this in more detail later (**Topic G**).

C) Atheism: To maturely deny the existence of something is itself an Abductive process: if something does not exist, then it is incapable of leaving evidence of its non-existence. Because these issues are of the Abductive kind, I have to discredit Atheism by showing the flaws in their logic and/or premises. I am not going to pretend to know *every* reason why one chooses to be an Atheist, but almost every experience I have had with an Atheist has revealed this Faith to be of the immature kind. As for those who have actually thought out their Atheistic Faith and cared to discuss their reasoning, I have found, without exception, a great many errors in their understandings on what Christianity really is. I will talk about some of what seem to be the bigger and more common issues here.

1) The Problem of Pain and Suffering: Pain and suffering is undoubtedly the single largest argument against an all-loving Jehovah. But this is ultimately an emotional argument, not a logical one. Christianity actually does a better job explaining and resolving pain and suffering than any other philosophy. But as long as the matter remains an emotional one, no evidence will change one's mind. Indeed, the more evidence provided, the worse the hurt is likely to become. When one has lost a child, being told "It's all part of God's plan," no matter how delicately is it presented, is among the worst possible things to say to them. As long as pain and suffering remains an emotional issue, it needs to be addressed with compassion, not logic. Only when one is ready to move past the hurt can one be ready to accept the logic, and even then it should be handled gently. So, as one who has experienced a great amount of pain myself, those who hurt have my sympathy and I hope they can find peace. But this paper is not the place to find it. There is a library worth of excellent books designed to deal with this and written by authors much better educated than me to handle the delicacies of this subject. I personally liked *A Grief Observed* by C.S. Lewis, *Why Does God Allow Evil* by Clay Jones, and *The Shack* by William P. Young.

2) The Historical Perspective: There are those, especially among the educated, whose intellectual pursuits into the details of the Faith caused them to lose sight of what the Faith was about (the proverbial "can't see the forest for the trees"). While I never got as far as Atheism, I have been down that road myself. These conversions to Spiritualism (as I defined in **Topic G.2**), Pantheism, Agnosticism or Atheism hurt the Christian Faith greatly, as they feed a great misconception that only uneducated people are religious.

While particular cases can and do vary greatly, it generally has to do with how realistic the Bible really is. Realistic in the sense that the miracles in the Bible are common events that actually do happen, it's just that the Biblical accounts happen in unexpected ways. We all know that trees burn, but we expect the tree to be consumed as a result. Yet Moses famously witnessed a bush that was on fire yet not consumed. We expect one farmer to produce enough wheat to feed multitudes of people, but we expect it to take weeks or even months. Yet Jesus famously produced enough bread for thousands of people in a matter of minutes (perhaps a couple hours at most). Finally, while the histories of the Bible (Old Testament in particular) may seem to be exaggerated to fit the narrative (such as the Angel of Death destroying the Assyrian army under King Sennacherib about 701 B.C.), they don't exactly contradict historical events either (the reason given by the commander of this army for their retreat was that mice ate the bow strings of his archers).

It becomes easy to assume that God had no part in the defeat of this particular army because historical records show that it wasn't a literal angel that saved the day. In fact, it is so easy to assume this that we miss the other fact that, while mice do cause a lot of trouble, eating bowstrings is not one of the problems they are known for. It is easy to say that the burning bush only *appeared* to not

consume itself, that Moses experienced some type of illusion. So easy, in fact, that we overlook the other fact that Moses, a humble shepherd, challenged the king of one of the most powerful empires of his time because of this. Seems a rather bold move if Moses was not absolutely sure of what he saw. Unless he was insane. And to call Moses insane fails to account for how singularly successful he turned out to be.

One can also try to explain Jesus and the multiplication of the bread as being something along the lines of those bringing their own food sharing with others. Yet to make this argument admits that the number of witnesses to this miracle were reasonably accurate (5000 men and their families), and we must also remember that there was at least a second mass feeding of several thousands as well (Matthew chapters 14 and 15 tell of two separate events). If we consider that at least some of the early Christians who were stoned, crucified or torn apart by animals during the persecutions must have either been present or knew someone who was, then we have to ask ourselves why they would endure such painful and humiliating deaths if the miracle were only symbolic.

3) The Euthyphro Problem and Other Dilemmas: Socrates, a well-known philosopher in Ancient Greece and teacher of Plato, was executed for challenging the religious beliefs of his fellow Greeks. Plato tells us of a question Socrates asked the pagan prophet Euthyphro before the trial which is now known as the Euthyphro Problem. It presented a "chicken or the egg" dilemma concerning the gods, and many today still think it is "proof" against Jehovah. It goes like this: "Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?" This starts a conversation between Socrates and Euthyphro that turns into an endless loop. If I may be allowed to summarize the rather lengthy debate and get to the point, what we come to is the following question: Is goodness what the gods command, or do the gods command based on what is good? If goodness is what the gods command, then does this not suggest that what is *called* good can change at their whim as well? If, on the other hand, the gods only *command* what is good, then does that not suggest a higher power than the gods? I will go into more discussion on why this dilemma does indeed discredit the pagan gods in **Topic D**. But Jehovah is unchanging, so we do not have a problem with the first half of the question: what is good now always was good and always will be good. He *is* the ultimate source of goodness, so there is no conflict with the second half either. Jehovah is not discredited by the Euthyphro Problem, He solves it.

We see very similar dilemmas presented by other philosophers as well. Epicurus asked a three-fold dilemma: "Is god willing to prevent evil, but not able? If so, he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil?" Such a line of questioning is answered by the Crucifixion of Jesus (Jehovah as incarnate man). Jehovah was so willing to save man from himself that Jehovah not only humbled Himself to be a human, but to endure the most humiliating and painful death known at the time (and quite possibly for all time). By suffering the punishment (also called a debt) for our sins, He was able to save us from it. As for the nature of evil, evil was not something Jehovah created, but rather the consequence of man rejecting Jehovah. Epicurus, like Socrates, predated Christianity. Again, what we see is that Jehovah answers the dilemma that pagan gods could not.

I've also heard an argument by Averroes (12th Century A.D.) that is quite popular. "Can an omnipotent being create a stone so heavy that it cannot lift it? If the answer is yes, then the being's power is limited because it cannot lift the stone. But if the answer is no, then the being's power is limited because it cannot create the stone." The problem with this argument is that, unlike Brahma (**Topic F.3**), Jehovah transcends our reality. To have a stone necessitates a space to put the stone. To lift said stone implies a direction, which also necessitates space. Finally, weight implies a gravitational

force pulling in a certain direction that, once again, requires space. By transcending the reality of this universe, key concepts of this argument become meaningless. Without a meaningful reference, the whole question becomes moot.

I want to point out that finding the answers to these three dilemmas did not require one to have much education. One only needs to read the first three chapters of the first book in the Bible: Genesis. In most Bibles, this is less than three pages of reading, and the symbology is rather simple and easy to understand. One only needs to take the time to try to understand what those pages mean.

4) The Role of Science: There are those who say that science has proven God does not exist. Actually, it required Jehovah for science as we know it to exist. While Aristotle is considered the Father of Modern Science, his impact could not be felt in pagan times. Science is based on the assumption that the universe operates on unchanging laws, even if we don't yet fully understand what these laws are. But such a belief is completely contrary to paganism, where the universe operates at the fickle whims of the gods. Prior to the advent of Christianity, the priest and the philosopher were equals who walked separate but parallel paths. The priests addressed the concerns of the masses, who were mostly simple and uneducated, while the philosophers addressed the concerns of the elite, who had complex matters to attend to and needed sound advice. As long as the priests didn't tell the elite what to believe and the philosophers didn't tell the masses what to do, an uneasy peace existed between the two. We actually don't know if most Classical Philosophers were religious or not. The best we can say is that ancient philosophers lived in pagan cultures but their role in society meant their belief (or lack thereof) in the gods was not important.

When Christianity began to tear the pagan religions down, Christians introduced a God who was both responsible for every motion of the universe *and yet* was unchanging: ...he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. (Matthew 5:45). The Christians introduced a God who answered the Euthyphro problem (**Topic C.3**). The Christians also introduced a high priest who was a philosopher. The Christians introduced a God who wanted everyone to be a priest and philosopher as well. The Christians introduced a God who gave us the universe for our pleasure, not for service to Him. The Christians introduced a God who not only claimed to be the Truth, but who wants the Truth to be known. In short, Christianity introduced a God who would not only allow but also greatly encouraged science and all other rational pursuits of knowledge in a moral fashion.

And the Christian priests have not sat idly by while scientists have gone to work. The list of priestly contributions to science is long and impressive, but I would like to point out two contributors whose impact on today's science cannot be understated: Gregor Mendel created the study of genetics and Georges Lamaitre developed the Big Bang Theory.

But while most assume that Jehovah is incompatible with science (and in all fairness, Fundamentalists (**Topic G.5**) are giving Atheists plenty of reason to believe this), the bigger mistake is assuming that science can somehow prove Jehovah does not exist. Too many people have assumed that all Truth must come from science. All they are doing is showing how ignorant they are of science. The credibility of science comes from being able to make predictions that were proven to be accurate after multiple tests. The more tests that are passed, the more credible the theory is. It is this credibility that is the foundation for mature Faith in Science. I've already mentioned of the unspoken assumption that the universe operates through unchanging laws, but that is a passive proof of Jehovah, and misses a bigger picture.

There are things we hold to be true that are not science. History is not science, as past events cannot be replicated. We cannot expect Napoleon to fight the battle of Waterloo the same way he did the first time even if he were given another chance. We cannot reduce ourselves to an embryo and see if our lives would be the same if we were born again. Art is not science, as it is by its very definition a singular event. Yet any connoisseur will claim to find much Truth from a single work. I could go on, but I will address one last topic: Philosophy.

Philosophy is the study of Truth through reason, whereas science is the study of Truth through experiment. Philosophy tends to be Rationalistic (using reason over evidence) whereas science tends to be Empirical (using evidence over reason). The two are complementary to each other. Philosophy can help point science in new directions, and science can help validate philosophical theories. Science can tell us how impaired one's judgment becomes from consuming certain amounts of alcohol, and one can run experiments to determine how likely one is to get into an accident at certain levels of intoxication. But it took Philosophy to suggest drinking could lead to accidents, and it takes Philosophy to decide at what level one is too intoxicated to drive.

So we must understand the limits of science if we are to say that it can prove or disprove a theory. And the biggest limitation science has is its ability to perform a test. Scientists can only use tools *of* this universe to test things *in* this universe. Pagan gods, who were manifestations of Earthly phenomenon and therefore *part* of the universe, were therefore easily discredited when no evidence of them could be found. Science provided evidence that the rotation of the Earth on its axis is responsible for the appearance of the sun moving East to West every day, not a chariot driven by Apollo. However, science is still limited in what it can explain about the Natural. It can explain paths objects take once set into motion, but it cannot explain the ultimate cause of motion. All motion is caused either by another motion or by some type of Will. There is no known example of motion spontaneously happening on its own. Indeed, the Newtonian laws explicitly state this: "Every object in a state of uniform motion will remain in that state of motion unless an external force acts on it." (Newton's Three Laws of Motion, CCRMA, Stanford University).

For example, if one could measure how much force a boy uses when tossing up a basketball, the initial angle the ball takes as it leaves the boy's hands and how far the boy is from a hoop, then science (through mathematical formulas) can predict if the ball will go through the hoop or not. But all this is meaningless if the boy does not toss the ball. Without motion, there is no purpose for science. Previous theories explaining the origin of motion are now largely discredited and the newer theories look very much like what the Jews and Christians have been saying for about 3,400 years! Any number of alternative theories can be made as to what set off the Big Bang, but they have no hope of being proved scientifically and, unlike Jehovah, are not able to explain anything other than this singular event.

Finally, science, like polytheism, fails on a very important matter: morality. Science (not to be confused with the scientists themselves) is singularly incapable of making moral choices. Science is about what *can* or *does* happen. Morality is about what *should* happen. My previous illustration of drunk driving is a perfect example of this. While science is an indispensable tool in gathering information so a sound moral decision can be made concerning blood alcohol levels, this is all science can do. At some point, one needs to stop gathering scientific information and make a Philosophical decision on what level is too much to drive safely.

5) The Fathers of Atheism: Many Atheists look at all the work done concerning the Philosophy of Atheism in the mid 18th to mid 20th Centuries. I, and many others I know of, call the

great Atheistic philosophers of this time the Fathers of Atheism. Many today find much wisdom in the Atheistic teachings of that time. Many respected Atheists who wished to contribute to the betterment of mankind are included in this list: Friedrich Nietzsche, H. G. Wells, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud just to name a few. Of course, the horrors of Socialism will forever be associated with Marx. Others, like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, transformed the depressing Nihilism of Nietzsche into the more palatable form of Existentialism. But there is a critical and essential assumption that went into almost all the Atheism that they preached: Classical Materialism. Only the Existentialist movement broke away from the Classical Materialism. Sartre makes this change explicit in his famous work *Existentialism is a Humanism*, while his friend and contemporary, Camus, expresses quite well the betrayal he felt from science in *The Myth of Sisyphus and other Essays*. We'll talk about them later.

Classical (as opposed to consumer) Materialism assumed that matter always was and always will be, which is in direct conflict with the Creation theory of Jews and Christians. For those who believed in Classical Materialism, Evolution became the answer to anything the Atheists wanted to believe in but could not prove otherwise. Given an eternity with an ever-changing universe, all things that can happen will happen, no matter how improbable (sorry, Sherlock). They therefore looked at morality as an Evolutionary step of mankind. They did not disagree with what the Christians were saying morality looked like, only that the Church did not invent it. They looked at the Church as a business claiming a monopoly on morality, and therefore the cause of all the evil in the world through the regulation of morality. As a result, most of the efforts of the early Fathers were to create moral and ethical codes that mimicked Christian teachings without grounding them in Jehovah. Contractarianism, Utilitarianism and Kantism are still popular today. But for Nietzsche to be able to make Nihilism popular among Atheists, it appears to me that at least some serious thinkers of Atheism were already seeing the fallacy of morality existing naturally. By the mid 20th Century (1960's in particular), this age of Atheistic thought was proven bankrupt although it is not yet forgotten.

All of the Atheistic governments (as opposed to merely Secular governments) proved to be the most horrific examples of government the world has ever seen, with Nazi Germany, the U.S.S.R, Communist China, and Communist Cambodia leading the pack. This should prove to any rational mind that a denial of Jehovah removes any grounding of morality (which Sartre agreed with). But it was not just a failure of morality that led to the downfall of this era. Quantum physics and the Big Bang Theory were also accepted by the scientific community during this time, and both left the premise of eternal matter and infinite time in shambles. In the space of less than 30 years, 200 years of thought by the Fathers of Atheism was destroyed. The foundation of their theories, Evolution, could no longer be used as a shield to deflect any question they did not want to think about. For one to properly draw on the wisdom of the Fathers of Atheism, one must sift through the rubble to see what can be salvaged and lay a new foundation upon which to build. And this foundation has to address the fact that life as we know it is an incredibly unlikely event and the life of the universe has been incredibly short for things to happen just right to support life. It also needs to find a way to ground morality without some godhead (preferably Jehovah) or dictatorship.

As mentioned before, only Existentialists recognized the fallacy of Classical Materialism, and the two most famous philosophers of it gave us two different ways to look at it. Sartre basically admitted defeat by saying "There is a God-shaped hole in the heart of man where the divine used to be.", while Camus clung to the old belief and essentially told his listeners to accept the meaninglessness of life without question. Both Sartre and Camus claimed that living without hope did not, by necessity, mean living in despair. Yet Sartre could never get past regretting that Jehovah did not exist, while Camus sought happiness in a peculiar form of madness.

6) Contemporary Atheism: For about 40 years, Atheism was very much on the wane and Christianity became more widely accepted. People such as Saint Pope John Paul II, Saint Theresa of Calcutta and Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., stood in stark contrast to the Atheist dictators of their own youths. But then 9/11 happened, and this attack was done in the name of religion. Righteous outrage against the attack, however, became corrupted into fear and hate. It did not matter that the attack was done by fanatics who were led by a man exiled from his own country. It did not matter that the attack was done by a religion that considers Judaism to be a heresy and holds Christianity in contempt for its defense of the Jews. All that mattered was that it was done by people motivated by religion.

Unlike the Fathers of Atheism, who respected what the Church taught concerning morality and Human Dignity, Contemporary Atheists reject anything associated with the Church. Whereas Sigmund Freud looked at homosexuality as a sickness that needed to be cured, contemporaries look at it as perfectly healthy. Whereas Marx was appalled at the abuses the elite imposed upon the masses, contemporaries seek to have the masses impose even worse abuses upon themselves. Whereas Nietzsche and Sartre mournfully recognized Nihilism and Existentialism (respectively) as the price to be paid for knowing the Truth, Camus taught the contemporaries to embrace the madness of Absurdity.

For the vast majority of Contemporary Atheists, there is no rational foundation for their Faith. It is very much an immature Faith. It was born from fear and suffers greatly from Acedia. It's not hard to prove this point; simply ask one why one is an Atheist. Most will actually prove themselves to be Agnostic. Many will state the "pain and suffering" reason (**Topic C.1**). Some will resort to glorified name-calling. Some will claim science has proven otherwise (addressed in **Topic C.4**). Others will simply play the "Skepticism" card, and question the validity of anything and everything they don't want to hear.

I find this brand of Skepticism to be particularly cancerous. While I encourage one to question why one believes in something, one must use those questions to seek answers. To simply be content with one's own ignorance is the ultimate form of Acedia. I agree that for me to present a case for Christianity, I must be able to justify my reasons. But there comes a point where my interlocutor needs to either accept what I say is true or prove me wrong. Suppose I say that I believe Jesus actually was a historical person and was crucified under Pontius Pilate because there are four contemporary biographies made by Jesus's followers. No other historical figure has had more than three contemporary biographies done for them, and the overwhelming majority only had one or even none. Furthermore, a noted Jewish historian (Josephus) and two noted Roman historians (Senator Tacitus and Suetonius) also agree that Jesus was a historical person killed by Pilate. My interlocutor needs to either accept Jesus was a historical person executed by Pilate, or provide me evidence that all seven accounts are wrong. It is not my duty to further prove that so many respected historians were being truthful in this detail.

There are those few who have done some serious research and looked to Classical Philosophy or the Fathers of Atheism and developed a fairly sound basis for their Faith, but they are few and far between. I do believe they have a mature Faith, but I also believe it is incomplete. If it were complete, then they would understand that Christianity answered the questions the Classical Philosophers were asking (such as the Euthyphro Problem in **Topic C.3**) and that science has discredited the fundamental assumptions on which the Fathers of Atheism built their theories (**Topic C.5**). These observations, of course, do not discredit Atheism, as the Truth might still be out there. But I do think it is fair to say that these modern, mature Atheists do not fully grasp all that will be required to create a consistent, rational Faith of denying Theism. I can say, without reservation, that it is a bigger leap of Faith to be a mature Atheist than to be a mature Christian. So much is left unexplained for the Atheist right now, and the

questions that need to be answered multiply with every new answer found. In contrast, these questions are easily answered with Biblical passages, proving the wisdom contained in them.

D) Polytheism: Here, I will talk about polytheism in its true form. Polytheism is primarily about the body (either to nourish it or to deny it) and the rituals that support this (example: getting drunk at the temple of Dionysus or fornicating at the temple of Aphrodite to nurture the body, or ritual mutilation such as tattoos and piercings to deny the body). By "body," I also mean it in the sense of "a body of people." Sacrifices to Hera to ensure good crops suggest nurturing. Offering human sacrifice (of all the pagans, only the Romans rejected this, although they had gladiators in lieu of) is a denial of the body through proxy. There is really no higher purpose to these religions (except for Hinduism, which I will address below in Monotheism (**Topic F.3**)). There were no philosophical insights to be gained from these religions, except that the purpose of man was to be the slave of the gods. The philosophical ideas that are famous from this era (Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, etc.) were done alongside, but independently of, pagan religion (**Topic C.4**). The only significant mention of the two crossing paths before Christianity was in the case of Socrates, who dared challenge the power of the priests. He was not condemned to death for being an Atheist, but rather for efforts to undermine priestly power and upsetting the commoners. And this is why, while technological advances did take place on occasion, science as we know it today could not exist then. One had to be affluent enough to support one's own projects and then not advance this technology so fast so as to offend the sensibilities of the masses. And history bears witness to this truth.

Pagan gods didn't so much come from *beyond* nature, they were aspects *of* nature. The gods usually *were* animals, or at least were associated with animals. In most cases, the gods lived in specific (if undefined) Earthly locations. Even the Native American and Norse myths, with their use of other dimensions, were like this. Their view of nature included places mortals couldn't go, but they were nonetheless extensions of a greater nature. And one sought the greater Truth at great personal peril. It was this fear of the gods' wrath that brought Athenians against Socrates. It took the Christian teaching of a loving Jehovah legislating the universe for the religious taboos against exploring the universe to be abandoned.

When science, fully supported by the Christian efforts of education, finally did come around, we saw the pagan religion destroyed but not the myths. Christianity discredited Apollo (for example) and therefore stopped the worship of him. With this hurdle out of the way, science proved that the sun was not carried across the sky in a chariot. But the idea that the sun's apparent movement across the sky must still be an act of Will is alive, and all efforts for science to discredit this concept have, so far, failed spectacularly.

And when we think of the Euthyphro problem, as well as the dilemmas of Epicurus and Averros, we can see how they were able to discredit the pagan gods. It is not hard to find humans given contradicting guidance from different gods in a pantheon, or even from a single god. It is not hard to find pagan myths where god could have intervened but didn't. It's not hard to find examples of supposedly all powerful gods failing in tasks.

E) Dualism: In the broadest sense, any two opposite but equal concepts can be described as dualism. In the religious sense (the sense we are concerned about here), this is the belief of exactly two gods (and possibly their Supernatural assistants) of equal but opposite power. These "gods" may or may not be worshiped as such. Several examples of Dualism exist, but the most famous is the Chinese Yin and Yang, symbolized by a circle made of two stylized fish: one white with a black eye and the other black with a white eye.

This Faith, in my opinion, is the most reasonable choice short of Christianity. C.S. Lewis claimed it was the most manly of all religions outside of Christianity (*Mere Christianity*, Book II *What Christians Believe*, Chapter 2 *The Invasion*). Dualism does explain the everyday quite well, as good and bad things happen in turn. It is also intuitive, as our minds are wired to deal with opposites. But Dualism, being based on opposites, becomes problematic when dealing with specifics. If someone went to another country and was asked about the weather when he gets back, it is easy to understand if the response is "hot" or "cold." But if the response is "comfortable," we have a problem. Does this person's idea of comfortable mean 68 degrees, 70 degrees, 75 degrees, or something else?

Religious Dualism is invariably divided along moral lines, although not in the sense the Western world considers morality. Anyone who thinks that Dualism suggests a "right" or a "wrong" is inserting a Christian concept into a non-Christian belief. In its pure sense, Dualist morality is more about "balance." Any great boon by one side must either be undone or matched by the other. And here we find one weakness in the theory. If society is to thrive, it must grow. But dualism says that this growth must be matched by decay, either simultaneously with the growth or as a catastrophic reversal some time in the future. Yet humans are not drawn to destruction. Some may aspire to self-advancement while others may be content with the status quo, and both attitudes can be destructive. For the first one, the goal was progress while the second one's goal was neutrality. Yet both efforts may benefit destruction in the end. Very few seek destruction for the sake of being destructive. So while Dualism may be justified concerning the balance that different events ultimately cause, it is clearly unbalanced in terms of the worship it receives.

But there is an even stronger reason to find Dualism suspect. Namely, if both gods are equal but opposite and all things fall under one or the other, then on whose authority did this division of responsibility come from? This is actually a variation of the Euthyphro problem discussed **Topic C.3**. Are we to assume that it was by mutual consent? If so, then why are they described as being in conflict with each other? This is analogous to the first half of the famous problem. If they were given their authorities from another, then this suggests a third and higher god (the second half of the problem).

In summary, Dualism seems to work well when dealing with superficial concepts, but falls apart when one looks deeper.

F) Monotheism: There are only four types of monotheism that I believe warrant attention: The Shadow God, Gaianism (the belief in Mother Earth), Hinduism (which is both a monotheistic and polytheistic religion) and Christianity (including its Jewish ancestry).

1) The Shadow God: Anthropologists suggest that, at one time, all of primitive man was a monotheist. Every early grouping of man had a faceless (and usually nameless) "god most high" they worshiped. But man, who is alone among animals with his Imagination, was not satisfied with having a faceless god to worship. Except for the Hebrews, an image of this most high god was created. As groups of men came in contact with each other, their gods formed a club of sorts and a pantheon was created. The very name of the Greek god Pan is testimony to this theory. Any particular god's standing within the pantheon was largely determined by how many followers it had, as can be seen by the marriage of the Greek king god Zeus to the Asia Minor's queen goddess Hera. But even then, the concept of a truly all powerful, faceless god only rarely disappeared (such as in Norse mythology). While the gods with faces were talked about publicly, most cultures secretly stood in awe and fear of the faceless one. The Greeks had the "Unknown God," the Native Americans had the "Great Spirit." Hindus gave a name to this faceless god (Brahma). But usually the Shadow God is not so much named

as described:

The Australian mystery-rites reveal a moral creative being whose home is in or above the heavens, and his name is Maker (Baiaime), Master (Biamban) and Father (Papang). The Benedictine monks of Australia say that the natives believe in an omnipotent Being, the creator of heaven and earth, whom they call Motogon. The Australian will say, "No, not seen him (i.e. Baiamel), but I have felt him". Waitz tells us that the religious ideas of the African tribes are so high that if we do not like to call them monotheistic, we may say at least that they have come very near the boundaries of true monotheism. "However degraded these people maybe," writes Livingstone (Missionary Travels, p. 158), "there is no need telling them of the existence of God or of a future life. These two truths are universally admitted in Africa. If we speak to them of a dead man, they reply: He is gone to God." Among savage tribes, where the supreme Being is regarded as too remote and impassive, he is naturally supplied with a deputy. Thus, e.g., Ahone has Okeus, Kiehtan has Hobancok, Boyma has Grogoragally, Baiame has Tundun, or in places Daramulun, Nypukupon in West Africa has Bobowissi. Sometimes, as in Australia, these active deputies are sons of the supreme Being. In other cases — e.g. Finnish Num, Zulu Unkulunkulu, and Algonquin Atahocan — this being is quite neglected in favour of spirits who receive sacrifices of meat and grease. In northwest central Queensland Roth describes Mulkari as "a benevolent omnipresent supernatural being, whose home is in the skies". In Australia the supreme Being cannot have been evolved out of ghost-worship for the natives do not worship ancestral spirits. Sir A.B. Ellis has repudiated his theory of borrowing a god in the case of the Tshi-speaking races. Waitz also denies that the higher religious beliefs of the Australians were borrowed from Christianity. His position is sustained by Howitt, Palmer, Dawson, Ridley, Gunther, and Greenway, who studied the natives on the spot. The esoteric and hidden nature of the beliefs, the usual though not universal absence of prayer, show their indigenous and ancient source. (from the New Advent web site, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04683a.htm>)

As further evidence for my supposition, consider the Norse mythos. Their religion gives every appearance of being based on deifying great heroes of old instead of personifying nature. By them being the exception (not having a Shadow God of ultimate creation), we can prove the rule. The superficial (and some not so superficial) similarities between the Norse mythos and Christianity are beyond the scope of this paper, but consider how Jesus and Odin both were born, died and rose again, how the cross Jesus used to defeat death looks like hammer Thor used to defeat giants, and how Ragnarok looks like Revelation as told by Saint John the Beloved. When the Christian missionaries arrived to the Norse lands, they had a uniquely easy time assimilating themselves with the culture, yet no other pagan religion was harder to successfully destroy. Just like the gods of old joined together so easily to form pantheons, from the Norse perspective, the "super-hero/king" Jesus was a welcome addition to the other deified heroes of Valhalla. In the myths that were created after the missionaries arrived, Jesus was often shown as the traveling companion of Thor. But with no eternal Shadow God to appeal to, and whose gods themselves were quite mortal, the missionaries had to teach the concept of an eternal God of creation to the Norsemen that the rest of the pagan world already had some vague but real notion of.

So, what we find in the Shadow God of most pagan religions is actually Jehovah as they saw Him before they tried to diminish Him. When He chose to reveal Himself again (through Christian missionaries), that what was forgotten was widely welcomed back.

2) Gaianism: This is a leftover of pagan religions. While the name is based on the Greek goddess Gaia, most other pagans have their own version of her. She is unique because, unlike most other pagan gods, Gaia has not so clearly been proved by science to be a counterfeit god. The sun may not be carried in a chariot and lightning bolts might come from clouds, but the Earth is still the source of all known life. The matter that we are composed of comes from Earth and all surface creatures directly or indirectly eat of the harvest that comes from the Earth. Even though science has proven that the Earth is an infinitesimally insignificant thing compared to the rest of the universe, it is difficult to truly think of the Earth as anything other than the most important and real thing in our lives. While this

helps explain the appeal of Gaianism, it still doesn't justify this as a rational belief. While Gaia may be harder to refute scientifically, she is also a goddess who does not communicate with humans. In this respect, worship of her, like Brahma, is more akin to Deism (**Topic G.1**) than true religion. Also, should we ever become a space faring species, I suspect even this holdout from the pagan days will end.

3) Hinduism: Hinduism, like Dualism, comes very close to being a rational choice for what to believe about Theism. It is remarkably similar to Christianity in many ways, and comes within inches of being the eastern equivalent of Christianity. Yet there are two small but critical differences.

The first is that Hinduism is a split religion, which is why I classify it as both monotheistic and polytheistic. As such, it has the ritual aspect to it like the pagan religions, and it has the enlightened side to it, like the philosophers that existed outside the religions in other cultures. But these two sides, like the priests and philosophers of the rest of the world (**Topics C.3 and C.4**), do not come together. A monk in his hut in the jungle may very well be contemplating the purpose of life and how to better mankind from this insight. While he is doing this, a nearby village may be having a ritual of some sort in honor of some deity. Both are practicing Hinduism, yet the monk has no requirement to join the ritual, and the villagers need not act on his insights. So we see the religious aspect is essentially paganism (**Topic D**) with a slightly more developed Shadow God (**Topic F.1**).

The second difference, and perhaps more obvious to Western people, is that the reason for man's fallen state is basically ignored by Hinduism. Like all the other great philosophies, man's fall is taken for granted. The fact that man is sometimes bad is well understood, but, when all is said and done, all this philosophy does is suggest a better way of life by not being bad. It doesn't fix the problem because the problem is not fully understood. In reality, man cannot stop being bad, because being bad is his natural state. If this were otherwise, then Christianity would not be needed because the greatest philosophers of social behavior that predated the Christ would already have known what to do. If man was not inherently evil, then the Socialist experiments of the 20th Century would have been a new Golden Age for man as opposed to a global tragedy of near worldwide genocide (briefly talked about in **Topic C.5**).

4) Christianity: While this is obviously a monotheistic religion and would normally be included in my list of such, the paper as a whole seeks to reasonably exclude all other options of Faith and leave Christianity as the last one standing. Therefore, I will talk more about Christianity in the **Conclusion** to wrap things up.

G) Agnosticism: Some may be surprised with what I am going to discuss here because, in the literal sense, many here are not really Agnostic. But I look at Agnosticism as a form of Acedia, and many so-called "Christian" ideas fit this description quite well. I would be the worst sort of hypocrite if I called out the Agnostic Atheists yet failed to do so to the Agnostic Christians.

Now, I can see one being Agnostic if confronted with new and/or confusing data and one wants to properly think it over. But this is a temporary condition, not a way of life. In my experiences, such cases are few and far between. Most Agnostics either don't care or are trying to not offend anyone by taking a "safe" position of neutrality. As Agnostics deny having a Faith for or against Theism, I have no need to discredit an argument that does not exist. But I want to touch on some Faiths that seem to be more of a facade of Theism or Atheism than true Faith.

1) Deism: This seems to be the favorite of those who want to stand out from their friends who

are Atheistic with scientific tendencies while at the same time not wanting to alienate them. Deism acknowledges that nature needed something to set everything in motion, but they deny that this being has any further interest in the universe (like Gaia and Brahma). No rituals are performed, no divine dictates to adhere to, and any call to a higher understanding is exclusively scientific in nature. Without any anchor to the deity they say they believe in, the tendency is to slowly drift away until all that is left is Naturalism (**Topic G.4**) or some variant thereof.

2) Spiritualism: Lest I be accused of not knowing what I am talking about, I am using this word here in a unique way. Technically, this topic should be called either Pantheism or Panentheism, depending on one's Faith. Pantheism has two definitions: 1) the universe and god are one (Gaianism on a universal scale) and 2) all gods are real. In this topic, I am using the first definition and in the next topic I will be using the second definition. Panentheism also claims that the universe is god, but the difference is that the universe is only a small part of larger god (Brahma could be considered an example if one does not believe that Brahma completely gave of himself for creation, or that at least some of creation has already come back to him). Since most people who embrace one of these two similar ideas consider themselves "spiritual," I use Spiritualism in this and other works of mine to represent those who believe that god and reality are united, regardless if this god also transcends reality.

Spiritualism is even less solid than Deism. At least in the sense that those who actually do have a more mature Faith tend to be more specific in describing themselves (Gaianism, or worshiper of Brahma, for example). But, such people are rare in my experience. I am sure I will be called out for presenting a straw man argument, but I am doing my best to be fair. When a Spiritualist who does not believe in a specific god can present to me a meaningful purpose to their Faith, I will be happy to revisit my observations below. But it seems to attract those who want to appear "enlightened" by claiming to search for transcending Truths, yet they never invest anything in this pursuit.

A claim is made that there is a spirit present, and that is it. What its role is, how it interacts with the universe, what its plans for us they cannot say, or at least not with any consistency or certainty. All they know is that it just "is." In this sense, not only is this a form of fidesm (**Topic A**), it is a very bare-bones type of fidesm. Many claim they are searching for the "Truth," but at the same time shy away from any intelligent discussion on this matter. Instead, they claim they are "Skeptical" that any Truth could truly be known with certainty, including the possibility of this spirit having a name or even a title. Remember that Faith, by definition, means one cannot be absolutely certain in the first place. Those who play the Skepticism card here not only practice an extreme form of Acedia, they are also engaged in a campaign of deception and deceit as well (and wind up fooling themselves more often than others).

3) Pantheism: As I mentioned in the previous topic, I am using the "all gods are real" definition here. This is the polar opposite of what I call Spiritualism theologically, yet it still gets one to the same place and for the same reasons. They believe all religions and Faiths are correct in some regard. In all fairness, I take a similar view. I, however, process all the other Faiths through the lens of Catholicism (as a rational person of any Faith should do, even if it is the lens of Protestantism, Atheism, paganism, etc.). I approve what passes the filter and examine the rest. Frequently, what does not pass the filter helps bring to light something new about my own Faith, but most often it is found to be flawed. Pantheists, however, have no such filter. Rather than take a "nothing goes" attitude toward Faith like the Spiritualists, they take an "everything goes" attitude. Such an attitude, of course, means they need not risk offending anyone. But if one believes in everything, one really believes in nothing. By definition, Truth must mean there is Untruth.

4) Naturalism and Scientism: This is the belief that everything *in* nature can be explained *by* nature. There are many different variations of this, most of whose names shed little light on what they really mean. Many Atheists with strong scientific backgrounds legitimately adopt these type of ideas for Faith and put the work into knowing what they say they believe. I find them to be some of the best people to have philosophical discussions with as they really push my own understanding of my Faith to the limit. However, there are those who simply look at the one-sentence description of these theories and claim them for their own. They assume that if science says so, it must be true. They assume science never changes, and ignore its limitations (**Topic C.4**).

Naturalism goes hand-in-hand with Scientism, which suggests that the only Truth that can be known is that which can be scientifically proven. The biggest problem with this is, since it is an "ism," it is a philosophy and not science. Therefore, Scientism is unable to justify itself as a result of its own definition. But, even if we were to overlook this contradiction, we would still come to a point where the concept fails, along with Naturalism.

The Big Bang is now almost universally accepted as to what created nature. But if it created nature, then it must be *outside* of nature. We can play word games here, and suggest that the Big Bang is part of a larger nature. After all, I admitted to the same thing with certain pagan beliefs (**Topic D**). But when it comes to finding evidence concerning the existence of Jehovah, we need to be consistent with what terms mean. If a Naturalist wants to limit Naturalism to this universe, then he has a problem when it comes to the Big Bang Theory. If a Naturalist wants to be able to include the Big Bang and what might have come before it as part of a bigger nature, then he is also opening the door to Theism as he is accepting that there are unknown things outside of this universe. Scientism is even more constrained, because it does not have the choice of exploring pre-Big Bang in a meaningful manner that is still scientific. For the scientist, the Big Bang is the de-facto Ultimate-Causation that everything science can examine comes from.

5) Fundamentalism: This is the logical conclusion of *sola scriptura*, that scripture alone is what one needs. Fundamentalism is an excellent example of what fidesism is commonly understood as, and is not as Absurd as Scripturism (**Topic G.6**). For Fundamentalists, the Bible is not only completely true in the literal sense, but that any outside source is automatically wrong, unless the Bible *explicitly* approves of it. There is quite often a strong Faith actually present here, but it is still very immature. The word "Bible" means "library," which is why it is organized into books. And just like a library building has different types of books in it, so too does the Bible. One will not expect a book of poetry to teach a Truth in the same way as a book of history, yet they both can be true. Likewise, books on law, fables and even romance can speak of Truths in their own unique ways. But to assume each word in the Bible is meant to be read as literal Truth ignores obvious contradictions. The fact that there are two creation stories in the first two chapters of Genesis is my favorite example, as it is literally the first two stories one comes across if one reads the Bible cover to cover. Just a few chapters later, we see Noah given two different sets of instructions on how many animals to bring into the ark. The Gospels and the Letters explicitly tell the reader that there are things not written that they are to do and to believe in. Fundamentalism falls apart so easily when questioned by non-Christians that it is hard for me to blame non-Christians for being so Skeptical about Christianity. I would abandon Christianity myself if this was the proper way to interpret the Bible.

While the mere overview on how to read the Bible properly is an entire college level course at most Seminary schools, I do want to remind the gentle reader of what the Bible really is and what it is not. While I hate starting off on the negative side, there is something about the way humans understand things that often makes knowing what something is *not* more important than knowing what it *is*. The

Bible is not a book on science, it is not a book on history, it is not a "Cliff Notes" of morality, and it was not a book found on a mountain top one day by either Moses, Saint Peter, Saint Paul or Saint John the Beloved. It is the story of God's revelation of His presence and of His plan of salvation for us. When one understands this, then all the "conflicts" and "contradictions" found in it go away. Acedia comes into play when one refuses to accept that reading the Bible properly takes effort. Unfortunately, Pride often prevents one from admitting they are being lazy.

6) Scripturism: This, along with Fundamentalism (**Topic G.5**), comprises most of the Christian-leaning Agnostics. Scripturism is a word I coined. While Spiritualism is a bare minimum form of fidesm (**Topic G.2**), this is a super-specialized form of fidesm. Not only do they reject reason in general, they reject much of the source they claim to believe in. Scripturists are famous for saying "Faith is all you need" (*sola fide*), which is a gross misrepresentation of what Saint Paul says in his letters. No matter how much scripture is presented to the contrary (including much of it from Saint Paul), they resolutely refuse to believe otherwise. And while *sola fide* is the most common example of what I mean here, Scripturism applies to hundreds of other examples I've been exposed to where choice passages of the Bible are held as a stand alone and absolute Truth, independent from the rest of the Bible and traditional Christian interpretations.

While this is still a form of Faith (and usually a strong one at that), it is an immature Faith as discussed earlier. There are those who are incapable of a more mature Faith, but I often get the feeling when talking to such people that it is more a matter of stubbornness than an inability to comprehend a higher meaning. One would do well to listen to Samuel Taylor Coleridge when he said "He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end by loving himself better than all." (*Aids to Reflection*, "Moral and Religion Aphorisms" no 25).

Conclusion: Up to this point, I have focused on where the more popular non-Christian Faiths fail. While I have spent most of my time discussing Atheism, I think the gentle reader might have been surprised that I actually saved most of my outrage for the various Christian "Faiths" discussed under Agnosticism. But I feel this is in keeping with the theme. If a teacher has to fail a project that a student did, at least the feedback from the teacher can be of benefit to the student for what comes ahead. But if a student fails to turn in anything at all, then what can the teacher say to help in understanding? I think this is what Jesus meant in Revelation 3:15-16 (**Topic A**).

As for those who do have a mature Faith, regardless of what it is, we need to avoid the deadly trap of Acedia. Charles M. Schultz, the creator of the famous Peanuts cartoon, is credited as saying: "It doesn't matter what you believe just so long as you're sincere." My parents put a large poster of Linus saying that on my bedroom door when I was a child, and I saw it every day for years. But with all loving respect to him and my parents, it is wrong. For those who Evangelize a Faith (even Atheism), this can have devastating consequences if we don't make the effort to mature our Faith as much as possible. It is not my intent to perform a character assassination of those who hold beliefs different than mine, but rather to call them to seriously look at their Faith. If they can reconcile their beliefs with the apparent inconsistencies I pointed out in a rational manner, then they have my sincere respect. I would genuinely appreciate their thoughts on this matter as well, as no small part of my Faith in Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular has come from looking to see what system of belief is the most consistent and all-encompassing. What you saw here is but a summary of my discoveries.

To me, Christianity does not so much say the other Faiths are "wrong," as to call them "incomplete" and/or "misguided." But while they are not "wrong" in an absolute sense, they must still

be discounted when using the Abductive Reasoning for finding the Truth. But Christianity is the "a-ha" moment when all the different valid points of other Faiths come together. As I said before, the Euthyphro Problem of Socrates did not discredit Christianity, Christianity found the solution to the problem. Christianity did not discredit Aristotle (the father of modern science), but allowed his ideas to reach their full fruition. Christianity does not discredit Sir Issac Newton (who was a man of strong Christian Faith himself) and his laws of physics; it explains why these laws are there. Religions of old converted easily enough to Christianity when the cultures were respected (North American Natives are the exception that proves this rule, as their cultures were generally held in contempt by those who sought to Christianize them) because Christianity answered the great mystery they had of their almighty Shadow God. The rituals of religion were blended with the philosophies of the greats, which shattered the divide between the elite and the masses. The philosopher must join in the ritual, and the commoner must contemplate a higher meaning. Christianity, therefore, is the only Faith left that has not been eliminated. By Abductive Reasoning, we find the Truth in Christianity.

In the end, we all must make a choice. Either Christianity is real, or it is not. Proof is a subjective thing - either one believes the available facts are sufficient or one does not. The same can be said for science or anything else worthy of belief. But there is one more thing about Christianity that needs to be considered: the eternity of Heaven or Hell. I have no desire to "scare (anyone) straight" into the Faith. If Christians are wrong, then no big deal. If Christians are right, then it is the only deal that truly matters. Regardless of where one's journey takes him, the Christian teachings of Heaven and Hell make it prudent to at least consider it rationally, especially since Christianity answers so many diverse matters. I don't fault one for not believing in Christianity if one has really looked into it, but I do believe it is the utmost foolishness to casually disregard it, or to base one's Faith on hearsay.

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