



WHY IS GOD SO OBSESSED WITH DROWNING PEOPLE ?!

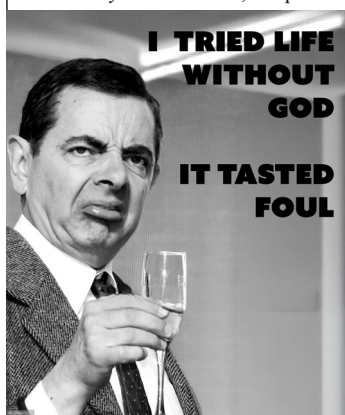
“What on earth do you mean, Stanley?!” I asked as I washed the grease out of two, still warm, baking tins. The raspberry and chocolate brownies were now cooling on the counter and in-between taking long whiffs of chocolate brownie goodness Stanley replied:

“Well I believe in God... but I just don’t like this idea of having to worship him every day because I don’t *know* that he’s good! First, with Noah’s Ark, he drowned basically the ENTIRE world. THEN after he parted the Red Sea, he drowned ALL of the people who were chasing after the Israelites. That is A LOT of drowning.”

Fair play Stanley. Pretty impressive thoughts for a 10 year old. This was my first time babysitting in a while and it was off to a great start.

The conversation had began with Stanley asking me “Cat, *how* Christian are you? Are you like, ‘Atheist-Christian’ or are you like ‘really-Christian’?”

“Oh, well, then I would definitely consider myself ‘*extremely*- Christian’”, I replied and continued:



“You know Stanley, I also used to wonder how a “good God” could be considered ‘good’ when there was so much that was evidently very

bad in the Old Testament, which all seemed to occur at his hands. But when I started reading the bible four years ago my *definition* of God changed!

“You see, God has two sides to him.

“God is good to those who are good to him. But he is stern to those who are bad.

“From the beginning, he laid down some ground rules for living on his planet. God said there would be blessings for following the rules and curses/punishments for breaking the rules.

“Now, it would be very unfair to hand someone a complex piece of machinery but give them no operating manual. Some actions which may seem harmless and even feel natural could have grave consequences for the machine! It’s the same with us. God didn’t leave us without a user guide. He gave Moses the Ten Commandments and a whole set of other rules that helped to keep the people safe at the time.

“But you see, in the Old Testament times, most humans chose to live for themselves and their own selfish ambition instead of living for God and for the good of all. This meant that humans began to play by their own rules instead of God’s, which meant they began to break God’s laws. This is what sin is.

“When the people disobeyed the rules, we see repercussions... and when they were *really* bad, we saw things like drowning *en masse* in the Old Testament. Which goes to show you *just* how badly the people were behaving! Now, throughout the

Old Testament you will also read about Priests - who were mediators between humans and God - sacrificing animals in order to make “*atonement*” for the people’s sins. “Atonement” means trying to get humans back to a clean slate with God so that the punishments can stop and our consciences can be clear. The people needed forgiveness from God for the sins. This is the same way as you would want forgiveness from your mum or dad if they were angry at you for something bad you had done so you could be on good terms again.

“Unfortunately the humans got so far off the right path of life that the blood sacrifices of animals were no longer enough to appease God. They got so far off, in fact, that most people stopped even believing in him. This is when God sent himself down to Earth in the form we call his Son, **Jesus**. He is the image of the invisible God, and came down to demonstrate to us what the right path of life is. He lived a perfect life, and then was sacrificed on the cross to pay the debt owed for the sins of all humanity, once and for all. Now, if we choose to believe that this sacrifice was enough to atone for our sins, then we can receive the forgiveness of God and we can live as we were always meant to, in **relationship** with him, loving God and loving our neighbours above ourselves.”

“Hmmm...interesting...” mused Stanley, as he ran off upstairs for his bath time.

How strong would you say is your love for Jesus?

Me:



i'M SPIRITUAL, BUT I'M NOT RELIGIOUS.”



Hey, I’m Cat. The girl who wrote the article above about my very interesting conversation with young Stanley.

To the left is another conversation which I constantly find myself having when talking to people about **my faith in Jesus**. I have asked my friend Matt to muse on when people say “*I’m spiritual, but I’m not religious.*”. And muse away he did! **You may find Matt’s Musings overleaf.**

Firstly, I wanted to share with you a bit about how I went from being on the ‘spiritual side’ to what some may now see as a ‘religious’ side.

I grew up firmly agnostic. I believed that *something* out there created everything, but that science would ultimately be able to explain all of the deep questions I had about the universe.

Painful arguments were a constant affair in my childhood home and I grew up in what I

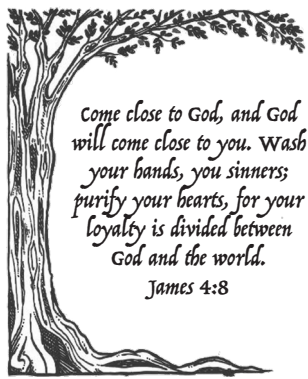
now understand to be a state of depression.

When I went to university I got locked down in my second-year in COVID with access to marijuana. Through the ‘weed-haze’ I had a spiritual awakening. I realised that **science was never going to answer all of my questions:** *Why are we here? What made the thing that made us? Where was my spirit before I was born? Where will I go when I die? Is it all black nothing... or is there something more?*

(continued overleaf)

Romans 11:22

“Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind to you if you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you will also be cut off”



What does it mean to be Religious?



What does it mean to be Spiritual?

In the simplest manner, it means an awareness that there is something more than the purely material world. This has been a normal, non-controversial understanding of the world for most humans throughout history. The sense that our being, whilst intrinsically related to our bodies, is not solely limited to the body. That we have a mind and spirit that transcends the body in some way. Still fairly uncontroversial.

We can take a closer look at the moment that separates life and death to illustrate this point. What happens in the body at the moment of death? All the systems that were previously humming along simply shut down, surprisingly fast, and decay begins at a cellular level. What was causing those cells to run before? Where did it go, and why now? There are plenty

of cases where a medical reason for death seems lacking, other than that someone "gave up the will to continue." A further step into the world of spirituality is to say that there are other spiritual beings, who don't have bodily form. This is where beliefs diverge and vary considerably as to what manner of creatures populate the spiritual realm, and their varying levels of benevolence or malevolence towards us (think angels, demons, spirits of the dead, etc). Finally you could say we come to the level of deity, a class above the rest. The Divine. Again, ideas have abounded through history. Are there many gods of different powers, localities and characteristics? Is there only one God? Is the universe a part of God, or a creation apart from God?

Words have a changeable nature. It's always helpful to go back to the roots, to take something on what it was originally intended to be and mean. Religion comes to us from a Latin word which means "rule" or "straight", as in a metre ruler with which to get things accurately laid out.

An oft quoted sentiment is "I'll believe it when I see it." Which seems reasonable enough, until you realise that the eyes are not always (or even often) a reliable source of information alone. Optical illusions being one example of the ability to fool the senses. It strikes as very plausible that just as our physical senses can be fooled, so too could our spiritual senses.

True religion attempts to shine a light

into the shadowy spiritual world to help us get a sure footing and find a safe path through those perilous and mysterious lands. Giving each person a view of their life in relation to others, in the grand scheme of the world. In this way true religion is also very practical, as it very much alters how people treat one another (not all religions are created equal, nor have the same outcomes). One of the earliest Christian writings, from Jesus' half-brother says:

"Pure and genuine religion before God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress, and refusing to let the world corrupt you" (James 1) If your religion isn't helping the vulnerable and weak, it's not religion at all says James.



"I'M OPEN TO SPIRITUALITY, BUT I PREFER TO PICK AND CHOOSE THE BITS THAT WORK WITH ME"

We don't seem to think of spirituality as an area of knowledge, or in the realm of knowing. It has become purely experiential, and all experiences are valid. We don't treat other areas of knowledge like this. Gravity is a force which affects everyone and everything all the time, no matter what someone believes about it. Chemistry and biology react in certain ways, drink a poison and you'll face the consequences. What if that's true of spirituality

too?

That there are equivalent "laws" of the spiritual realm, and we ignore them at our peril? The philosopher Dallas Willard used to say that "Reality is what you bump into when you're wrong." How many people are walking off spiritual cliffs because they don't know the difference between a spiritual truth and lie?



(Continued from front page)



I will send you a free bible!



My best weed-smoking friend at the time, who had been raised Jehovah's Witness, once labelled herself "spiritual but not religious". Hearing those words cracked open a door in my mind and gave me permission to also call myself "spiritual but not religious".

This seemed perfect as, after all, religions were obviously the cause of most of the world's problems, and I did not want anything to do with them. However, clearly all these religions thought the spiritual realm was real, and they had each made an attempt to tap in to it's powers. Now was my turn to do the same.

I began calling the "thing that made everything", 'The Universe'. All I had to do was tap into the consciousness of 'The Universe' and I would get the life of my dreams.

I did Yoga every morning, I meditated for 30 minutes every day, I told myself positive affirmations, I tried to speak my dreams into reality. These formed a religion of my own making. It felt cooler and more socially

acceptable than the stinky organised religions I grew up hearing about. And I was certain it was my key to my dream future.

To cut a long story short, despite all my efforts to 'manifest' my dreams into reality, I ended up exhausted, isolated, addicted to drugs and on the brink of giving up. I didn't want to kill myself but I certainly didn't want to be alive anymore. All this work creating a religion of my own, but it hadn't brought me much closer to my dreams being a reality. Now what?

At some point along the line I had started interchanging "the Universe" with the name 'God' - Let me save you a lot of time right now if this is you too; if you acknowledge "the Universe", the divine consciousness that created everything... **this is God.** Congratulations, you are no longer agnostic.

When I realised that I did, in fact, believe in God, I got thinking that maybe all those religions were not purely problematic. Maybe there was a bit of truth mixed into them too. My mind opened to maybe giving God a go in

a more traditional way. Although it sounded crazy, it might be worth a try. But *which* religion to pick when there were so many at hand? Ultimately I felt I had basically already tried Buddhism, I really enjoyed bacon, and I love experimenting with different lengths of hair... and so...

...to cut an even longer story short, one day I prayed a prayer to invite Jesus Christ into my heart and be my God, although at the time I didn't yet believe in him.

I needed a new religion. With a humbled heart, I began reading the bible every day. I didn't know if it would work, but guys, **let me tell you, it works.** I didn't go to church. Ten minutes every night in the bible taught me what it really means to be "Spiritual". Like, *extremely spiritual.* **The Bible might as well be called "How to be Extremely Spiritual"**. It's funny to me now that I always thought Christianity was about blind and dumb religion.

The End
GOD LOVES YOU