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I-Think-I'd-better-Think-It-Out-Again!

## Foreword

A person of faith is a person on a journey.

For the person of faith, walking by faith produces the evidence to reinforces that faith. Evidence deepens faith. What other people call 'long-shots' chances become evidence because these 'coincidences' occur far too frequently to be random but always seem to be in answer to prayer.

The more faith grows, the clearer our spiritual insight becomes. The clearer our spiritual vision, the more spiritual attributes like: hope, love, joy, peace, assurance and patience become part of our character. These are what the Bible calls fruits of the spirit, and they are all fertilized by faith.

However, this process cannot be separated from the mental processes of questioning, debating and arguing. Questions and arguments do not counter the reality of faith nor do they suggest doubt, instead they formulate doctrines. Peter advocated this process saying, *'everyone should be able to give account of the faith within'*<sup>1</sup>.

Doctrines are not the essence of a believer's relationship with God, spiritual experience is. Doctrines are flexible

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1 1 Peter 3:15

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hypotheses expressed from the experience of faith; they are formulated from growth in faith. If doctrines dictate a person's belief then the relationship with God is second hand. If relationship dictates the doctrine then the doctrine will become flexible. One thing relationship with God teaches us is that God will not be put into a mould. God does not act just because our doctrine dictates. If experience and established doctrine conflict it is doctrine that must give way. Like the scientific hypothesis, a doctrine is a prediction laid out at the end of the questions. From there on a person is on a journey of faith to discover if the hypothesis is true or false. Without this journey of proof, hypothesis is at best wishful thinking or at worst superstition. After the journey of proof, a hypothesis is usually modified and corrected, becoming the stepping stone for further discovery.

The danger comes when the person of faith transfers his or her trust from the still small voice to doctrinal consensus. When the doctrine carries more weight than the relationship, it stunts the relationship. When doctrine is subject to the relationship, doctrine gets modified, insight becomes clearer and the spirit grows.

To a scientist, relationship itself has to be proven. A scientist might match two sets of genes to prove mother and child relationship, but a genetic mother may not be in a motherly relationship with her natural offspring. Whereas, a non-genetically related adult may well relate

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as mother to a child. The scientist experiments on the basis of immovable material laws, the concept of the spiritual is not bound by material laws and has to be observed in relationships. There can be no material law that proves the relationship of a mother and child if their relationship is not genetic. A lawyer might prove relationship by legal ruling or producing a piece of paper to show a child has been adopted for example, but legal evidence is relevant to disciplines of law not evidence to satisfy science. Each field of expertise will have its own set of rules to determine proof but the discipline of that must satisfy those rules have been met to claim 'proof'. Consensus in understanding relies on the integrity of the different disciplines to agree base rules. So, the statement in paragraph one of this book is as given. A person of faith is a person on Journey

I-think-i'd-better-think-it-out-again is a revisiting of my arrogant and dogmatic youth in the light of mellowing ageing. It is *'a turning out of clutter in my mental shed'*, it is a review of all the things I stored away to become obsolete with the advancement of technology and experience. It is based on a relationship with a creator God which began in my young days and has continued through the mellowing years of insight. Coming from a lifelong engineering bias, it is what I call an engineering review of the situation.

I told one or two people I would write a theological book

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from an engineering point of view and I could see them scratch their heads as to what I meant. An engineer is someone who thinks from outside the box based on a knowledge of what goes inside it. I realised I was biased toward engineering when, as a child, my parents asked why I had to take everything apart. I could not look at a clock accepting it told the time, I needed to know *how* it knew and *how* it expressed its understanding of time. Taking it apart did not alter the nature of time, nor did it take away the knowledge that time exists. It simply examined the way a clock delivers its expression of time.

An engineer starts from a different point to a scientist. The engineer presumes there is a design behind everything. When an engineer looks at a machine he will take account of material laws such as laws of leverage or stress or strain. He will never assume that the machine adapted itself to accommodate these laws. No! The natural assumption is that a designer took these into account long before he looked at which material he or she would use to build the machine. Even in a day of Artificial Intelligence the Engineer recognises the foundation and limits are set by a designer; Natural assumption presumes that there is a purpose behind the machine. Also assumed is the machine was built to fulfil a function. Also assumed is that the machine did not decide the function for itself, a designer stroke inventor set its purpose.

One famous philosopher put it like this, '*There is only one*

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*chair – that is the original concept - all the others are copies'*.<sup>2</sup> An engineer assumes a creation has started from an original thought or need, turned into a concept, proposed in a statement of mind and tested by feasibility studies through thought and logic. From this concept, it then travels through the desire to build, through the thought process and on to the planning stage. Next it is modified through choice of materials and limitation of purpose. Only then is it communicated through words and drawings. All this comes before it appears in the concrete world as an article.

Even after this, as new materials are found and new principles are laid, an engineer, while happy to romance in yesterday's steam train, moves on in practice for the sake of efficiency modifications, say with diesel or electricity in the case of a train. Such re-examination of design makes far better everyday sense. The train concept still exist to pull freight or passenger, but the driving power is different due to latter day technology, material development, and advancing ideas.

So it is in this book – read on if you will!

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<sup>2</sup> Plato I Think?



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## Introduction

If I were to ask you to define the term god, I suspect any number of people might put this book straight back on the shelf.

The clever Darwinian might answer, '*There is no such thing as a god and therefore it cannot be defined*'. The equally clever philosopher might readily explain, '*If we could understand god enough to define him we would be better than him and he would cease to be god*'. The theologian, presupposing the existence of a god might argue, '*We can observe some characteristics but never completely define Him*'. Mankind has debated god from its earliest reasoning. Cave drawings allude to such, one, found in the cavern known as '*The Sanctuary*', was drawn around 13,000 BC. Looking more like a devil than a god, it is an early evidence of mankind recognising 'a higher power'. Certainly, by the Babylonian era, the idea of higher powers was well documented.

The Biblical account opens with the first man and woman of human-species living in the presence of their creator, whom they named God<sup>3</sup>. The great Arian debate<sup>4</sup> of the third-century CE, inadvertently debated the question,

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3 'God' is the poor English word equivalent – an interpretation of several original words they used to define their relationship with this third being in the story of Adam and Eve.

4 Arianism is the theological teaching attributed to Arius (ca. AD 250–336), a Christian presbyter in Alexandria,

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'How can we discover God'? Arian argued we look from the bottom up, that is, we look at nature and deduce the character of the Creator from what he created. The result of this approach, is we cannot prove if there is a god at all. Science today works from this 'bottom-up' principle. It does not prove or disprove a god. Religious-scientists, (those who start with a predisposition that there is a god), offer a diversity of gods, (from Animism to Unitarianism), leaving the world is totally confused. Atheist-scientist, (those with a belief there is no god), conclude we are here by chance or some other unknown phenomenon. Without giving proper thought, such people are logically stating that chance or some other unknown phenomenon constitutes the higher power.

Athanasius,<sup>5</sup> opposing Arius in the great Arian debate, argued in essence, God is a life form outside of material. God is spirit and not subject to human logic or law<sup>6</sup>, therefore he must reveal himself to mankind by any means he can communicate. Athanasius' says God did this by becoming the person Jesus. In so arguing, the great Arian debate split the church between Trinitarian and Unitarian - one god or three. The non believer in a scientific world, still asks today 'How can a god be both spirit and

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5 Athanasius of Alexandria, also referred to as St. Athanasius the Great, St. Athanasius I of Alexandria, St Athanasius the Confessor and St Athanasius the Apostolic, was the 20th bishop of Alexandria.

6 A Poor illustration of this might be found in virtual reality or a novel where scientific and material laws can freely be ignored.

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material'? How can your god be three things yet one thing? With the same logic science will happily argue the intrinsic nature of light is both particle and wave. Sometimes acting as a wave, sometimes as particle, it is still light. It is how we observe light's behaviour rather than the essential nature of light that causes the confusion. Light has no problem being either wave or particle just as God has no problem being God. In fact he is reported as answering Moses' question '*Who are you?*' by saying '*I Am who I am!*'

Such discussions only demonstrate the need for my opening question which was not about defining God but defining the term god. What do you understand by God? Talk to any two people of different religion and it will become clear that they cannot agree on the term *God*. Talk to any two people of the same religion and each will differ in a concept of God. To one, God is all love, to another he is Justice. Indeed, to one He is She; while to another She is it. How did we get to such diversity? Did we get here by trying to discover the nature of God from the bottom up, (Arius). Or by limiting the revelation of God to personal understanding, communication or experience, (Athanasius)?

To be fair to Athanasius, his principle is that God's nature is found in the history of all creation, not just in individual

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experience or interpretation, God is revealed in the character and design of creation. This makes the definition much more difficult because God might display justice on one occasion and mercy on another. Science also has a similar dilemma when, as we have discussed, it must define the nature of light as either wave or particle. Light is light but it manifests in different forms. God is God and '*manifests in mysterious ways*'.

According to anthropologists, we formed our definition of the term god by tracing back to the dawn of Homo-Sapien. As mankind emerged from his cave in early morning of history, he recognised he was subject to certain laws and conditions, laws and circumstances, which he could not control. Mankind is subject to weather, seasons, tides, life and death. In his primitive form mankind tried to appease these conditions, thus superstition began.

Take a short trip down the time-line and we come to mankind who has become civilised and organised into cities, leaders, and educators. Among the earliest education centres is Babylon university. Situated in the city of Ur in the land of the Chaldeans, Master Scientists of the day taught maths and astronomy<sup>7</sup>. These were no quacks, many principles taught then, remain as fundamentals of science today. Trigonometry began here as did Newton's third law of equal and opposing forces. Zoroastrians expressed this science in terms of opposing

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<sup>7</sup> Basic principles of trigonometry and calculus were formed here an at this time.

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gods such as good and evil or light and darkness, these were in contest via nature. Babylonian scientist observed invisible powers like the moon's gravitational pull on sea and the sun's relationship with seasons. Ur university observed that star patterns were different during different seasons, therefore, they argued something must move. Recognising man could not manipulate these powers they coined the term god<sup>8</sup> to describe them. An early Babylonian understanding of the term god was a magistrate or ruler with autocratic powers he had dictatorial and final powers over his subjects. It was not intended to describe the nature of the powers, only to describe its absolute right to exercise its power because it is the higher power. In the same way no one questioned the right of an autocratic ruler to do what he chose, so no one had the right or ability to interfere or question the right of the behaviour of these god laws.

Having established this as a basic principle, they were able to formulate laws - to divide the year into 365 days, the day into 24 hours, and the hour into 60 minutes for example. All this was based on a belief that the gods of heaven although autocratic, were consistent. The gods or powers behaved predictably. Science grew out of observation and belief. By recording observations, science could demonstrate consistency as evidence. By applying logic to consistency, there came forth prediction. By

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8 Of course they spoke in a different language, god is the English equivalent.

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naming the gods they were limiting the domain of each god to make them easier to understand in their field of expertise.

### **The main gods of Babylon were:**

Ilou or Assur, (probably Ahura-Mazda - sun god to the Assyrians). He was the god of life and light representing the powers of creation and sustained life.

Assur produced Anou, the “*lord of darkness,*” (seen as a figure of a man with the head of a fish and the tail of an eagle). He was the god of creation. Later he represented the force that opposed light which became associated with evil.<sup>9</sup>

Bel, the “*sovereign of spirits,*” (Illustrated as a king on the throne). He was the god of authority and Justice who looked after order and hierarchy.

*If a first and basic definition of god was 'a higher power to which mankind gives deference' it would not be long before dignitaries appropriated it for themselves.*

Nouah, “*master of the visible world,*” distinguished material from spiritual; The seen from the unseen forces.

Babylonians recognised that the physical was subject to spiritual laws and powers. Far from superstition, the Babylonians were scientists doing no more or less than

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<sup>9</sup> Some have pointed out a similarity with Lucifer who rebelled against God after helping with creation.

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scientists do today, observing, ordering and hypothesising the habits of the universe, they built on the knowledge level of science in their day. Knowledge has increased to the level of today only by building on their platform of understanding.

Having observed *what* the planets did, Philosophy, speculation and superstition grew up around the question of *why* these heavenly gods behaved as they did. These are questions of motive and cannot be answered by science. Try as it may, while science can state the sequence of an occurrence, it cannot say why it is desirable that it should occur that way. The term god to early science, simply recognised the right of the universe to behave as it does.

When leading wise and learned masters propagated formulae for appeasing the gods' behaviour, they ceased to be scientific and moved into the world of speculation. Thus, astronomy gave birth to another Babylonian study discipline, Astrology. The further speculation moved from a scientific base, the deeper it went into superstition. Later in the history of science, the term god became associated with superstition rather than the Higher power.

If a first and basic definition of god was '*a higher power to which mankind gives deference*', it would not be long before leading dignitary's around the world appropriated it. Pharaohs of Egypt, seeking

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unquestionable obedience, asserted they were gods. What started as a practice, continued down the time-line, through Roman emperors claiming to be gods, Even to today where the Japanese Shinto religion believe their Emperor is a god. Today you can choose any god you like from the supermarket, from Allah to Rajah or Zeus. You can further choose the brand of god, from Islam's Sunni or Shea to Christian Conservative, Liberal or Charismatic. You can even get one from the delicatessen counter if you wish, mixing and matching to taste any ingredients from good works to faith, 'big society' or separation sects. We cannot separate early Jewish or Christian understanding of God from these progressions or digressions.

Early cave drawings portray gods but we do not know what was going on in the mind of the artist. We interpret, speculate and assume, from a distance of many thousands of years; We speculate but we cannot know. Similarly, Christians pick up a copy of the Bible and read a modern English interpretation of an ancient Hebrew script. Interpreters have diligently translated words, pondering long and hard as to which modern word best expresses the original context but how is the interpreter to know what was going on in the head of the original writer? Small wonder we argue among ourselves about the literal, poetical, scientific and spiritual value of each verse or word. Small wonder we find it difficult to discuss with a

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