

# WHY GOD IS NOT REAL TO MOST PEOPLE

*Millions who claim to believe in God would be shocked if they knew the actual source of their belief and practice.*

by Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986)

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**I** WONDER if you are like the person who said to me: "I believe in God, but it seems like God is so far off – so unreal!"

Why do most people feel this way?

Then again, I have often wondered how it can be that so many have heard me explain the Message GOD sent to mankind by Jesus Christ, just as it is plainly recorded that Christ taught it, and yet have said afterward: "I surely enjoyed that. I never heard anything like that before, and it certainly makes sense" – and yet, even though they heard it, understood it, even expressed that it was the most logical and self-evident true explanation of life and its purpose they have ever heard – in spite of this, knowing it is the TRUE Gospel of Jesus Christ, yet they evidence not the slightest indication that this true Message from God is of any concern to them, personally – or that it has any connection with them, individually! Why is this?

## **What Is the SOURCE of Your Religion?**

The answer is bound up in two factors: the unreality of God to the average person, and the actual source of one's religion.

Let's understand this mystery!

What Is religion, anyway?

Religion is the obedience, service, or adoration rendered to the object of one's worship – a system of faith and devotion to a superior authority – the profession, practice or observance of whatever belief and practice is required by that SUPERIOR AUTHORITY.

The very source of your religion, then, is that superior authority. Whatever that authority that to you has appeared superior – you received your religion from it, and you profess whatever belief, and observe whatever practice it requires!

The question, then, now becomes: "What is that Superior Authority?"

Is that source of your religious belief and practice a Supreme, All-Powerful **personal** God? – a God who created all matter, force and energy – who created everything that exists?

The incredible answer, in nearly all cases, believe it or not – is NO!!

Many of the world's organized and recognized religions do not believe in any One Supreme, **personal**, All-Powerful GOD!

Most of the many sectarian divisions of the professing Christian religion do claim to believe that there is ONE Supreme, All-Powerful personal God – but, in reality, is such a personal GOD the real source of their religious belief and practice? The astonishing answer is NO!

Most intelligent people believe there had to be some original FIRST CAUSE – a FIRST CAUSE of all that we see and know about us – of the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the weather – of animal life and plant life – of human life. But is that first cause an actual personal Being possessing mind, intelligence, purpose – and the powers to bring into existence the things that we see about us – and the power to guide, direct and control the earth and the entire universe?

### **WHY God Seems Unreal**

If such a Supreme, Living, All-Intelligent, All-Powerful personal Being does exist, then why is it that this God seems so unreal to people – so far off as to seem nonexistent? Why?

I think we can explain that!

The hour that you were born, you knew nothing about any One Supreme personal God. You knew nothing! Whatever concept you have about God has come into your mind since the day of your birth. How did knowledge begin coming into your mind? There are only five channels through which any knowledge can come, naturally, into the human mind – that which you see, hear, taste, smell, or feel – the five physical senses.

There exist three dimensions. But the natural mind of a mortal human person is aware of only two. Babies grow into little children – and they grow toward adulthood with an awareness only of the within, and the around. You grew toward adulthood with no real knowledge of the ABOVE – for the above is spiritual – it cannot be seen – you cannot hear, taste, smell, or feel spiritual things, beings, or truths.

And so, if there be any One Supreme Spiritual Being who is God, you couldn't see Him – you couldn't hear Him – you had no actual personal contact of any kind with Him – you could know absolutely nothing of God through any of these natural channels by which you receive knowledge.

There are many millions of professing Christians who say they believe in such a God – and who profess to know more or less about Him. How did this happen?

The answer is that they know what they have read or been told by those *around* them – what they have received from other people. What most people know about God – or think they know – often has not come from the ABOVE – not from God Himself directly, in any personal contact – but from the AROUND – purely from what they have heard, read, or been told by other people. And where did these other people acquire their "knowledge?" Well they, too, received it from other people – and in the main, all these other people constitute a deceived world that has *no direct knowledge* of or contact with any one Supreme Spirit Being, who is God!

Of course, although most people neglect Bible reading some have read about God in the Bible – but their concept of God has been so firmly implanted into their minds by other people during childhood, before they started reading the Bible, that they continue picturing Him in the same way.

Well, no wonder, then, that most people who profess to believe in such a God say that God seems unreal to them. They are like the patriarch Job. He thought He knew all about God. But after God actually revealed Himself, and spoke directly and in person to Job – after this personal contact had been established – Job said to God: "I have HEARD of you by the hearing of the ear: but NOW, my eye SEES YOU!" (Job 42:5.) Yes, now, God had become REAL. Job's source of knowledge previously had been from the around – He had heard about God by the hearing of the ear – from other PEOPLE. God wasn't real to him. But once that direct personal contact was established, GOD BECAME REAL.

There is a way by which you can establish actual direct PERSONAL CONTACT with God, so that He will become absolutely REAL.

But what is the source of the religions of this world? Beliefs and religious practices have come from this source.

### **Two-Dimensional Minds**

So now stop and think! The natural human mind is conscious actively of only two of the three dimensions – the WITHIN and the AROUND. Knowledge comes from WITHOUT – and, naturally, is confined to the AROUND, since knowledge of the ABOVE is not naturally transmitted through any of the five senses. So knowledge comes from the AROUND – from people and things.

Within is the process of reasoning, from that knowledge. And also within, guiding and influencing that reasoning, is the invisible influence of Satan the devil.

Satan is revealed in the Bible as "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4), who has deceived the whole world – all nations (Rev. 12:9). He is revealed as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

He works in people by broadcasting. Satan actually goes on the air. The spirit that is in every human (Job 12:8; 1 Cor. 2:9, 10) is in tune with Satan's wavelength. Satan does not broadcast in words or in any language; he does not broadcast in sounds. He broadcasts in attitudes, impulses, and moods. He broadcasts in attitudes of selfishness, criticism, envy, unhappiness, etc. These, in the human mind, we have called human nature.

So what has been termed "human nature" is nothing more than Satan the devil's influence, which expresses itself in many ways: covetousness, greed, selfishness, jealousy, envy, resentment, hatred.

But what we have called "human nature" is also suffering from a sense of inferiority, and it desires desperately to be relieved of this painful feeling. This basic inferiority manifests itself in a desire to belong to a group, club, society, church, faction, or a nation. In order to avoid feeling inferior, the self instinctively desires to be accepted by

other people. This leads to a spirit of rivalry, party spirit, and consequently loyalty to the particular party, club, faction, church, group, or nation to which one belongs. One would fear to be disloyal, lest the others in this factional group consider him as a traitor, and therefore as evil – and he feels inferior, which is a painful feeling.

This particular element in the human mind is often called the "sheep instinct."

People just naturally follow – go along with – **other people**. Consequently they fear other people. That is, they fear to disagree – they fear to act or perform or believe contrary to the other people of whatever **society** they feel affiliated with.

If you can get a fad or a style or a custom started in any society, or nation, or group to which people adhere, all the people attached to it will usually follow like blind, dumb sheep.

### **Discovering the Unrealized Source**

This society, then, the pattern or system which is of human origin, is the actual *source* of nearly all of the beliefs and the practices of nearly all the people on earth today – *and that includes religious beliefs and practices*.

People believe what they do, usually, because the society with which they are connected believes that way. They practice whatever customs they follow because the *people* with whom they feel connected dictate these practices.

Most people the world over have accepted the religion of those people with whom they were most closely connected from infancy to adulthood – their parents. And by the time they grow up, they find themselves surrounded by a larger group than their immediate family – a religious group or church or society or nation – all of which accept the same religious beliefs, and follow the same religious practices. And, if ever such a person is in any manner tempted to question these beliefs and practices, the fear of what all the others with whom he is attached might think and say dissuades him – usually!

Yes, it is human to fear the society to which we have become attached in the way that **we should fear the Creator God!** But this immediate society around us is near - it is real – we see and hear these people – we want to be *accepted* by them – and God seems so far away – so unreal!

It ought to begin to dawn on our minds that the actual source of the religious beliefs and practices of nearly all individuals is – **society** – other **people** – and this society of other people is what the Bible calls this world!

### **How Religions Originated**

A few times, in the history of this world, in one nation or another, a man of higher-than-average intellect has dared to think for himself – to think and to reason within himself independent of, and contrary to the society around him. As he has meditated upon some of the deeper things of life, he has dared to come to conclusions different from those of the accepted religion of his people. Such a man has been confined, in this reasoning, to whatever factual knowledge he has gained from WITHOUT – and he has been confined

to the AROUND – to this material world of people, plant and animal life, and things. He has been unable to see, or to hear, or in any way to know about *spiritual* things.

And since the real principles of life – the very PURPOSE of life, the WAY to peace, to happiness, to joy; the meaning of life, of death, or whether there is life after death, and of its nature – since all these fundamental **principles of life** are not to be seen, or heard, or knowledge of them transmitted through the five senses; and since this basic knowledge can come only from **above**, from the Creator Himself; and since these leaders were utterly cut off from this true source of knowledge about life, then their reasoning and philosophic and religious conclusions have been of necessity in error.

Yet they have seemed plausible. In nearly every case these men who have founded some new religion have found very few sympathizers at first, or even during their lifetimes. Only a few have ever been willing to break away from the established ideas and customs of their immediate society. All others have avoided them or persecuted them. But in some cases their few followers themselves became leaders, and gradually, very slowly at first, new converts were added, until in time these new ideas became an established religion with many followers – often numbering many millions.

That is why there are different religions in different countries – that is how it all came about.

### **The Source of This World's "Christianity"**

But – marvel of marvels – the actual source of what is commonly accepted as "Christianity" today is altogether different from what professing Christians call the heathen religions. Yet almost no one knows what it is.

It is a new thing in the earth; and it originated, not from the philosophies of a human mind apart from the truth of God and of Christ, but in actually seizing onto the true religion of Christ and counterfeiting it in order to exalt and deify a human man.

The Prophet Daniel foretold it. In the longest prophecy in the Bible – Dan. 10, 11, and 12 - it is recorded: "And the king shall do according to his will [not God's]; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods [the true God] ... Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers [heathen gods] ... and a god whom his fathers [pagans] knew not shall he honour ..." (Dan. 11:36-38).

Differing totally from all previous pagan religions, the true Christianity was counterfeited, with a former pagan belief or practice substituted for almost everything vital in the true belief and practice which came from God, and yet seizing on the **name** of Christ, and the **name** of God, and labeling this religion "Christianity." Vehemently it professed to abolish idolatry, by substituting the **names** of God and of Christ for pagan gods, while substituting pagan beliefs and practices for those of Jesus Christ! And the entire world is deceived!

### **Does God Exist?**

But – if there be a true FIRST CAUSE – a Supreme Personal Being who had wisdom and

power to actually create this earth and life upon it – I say that IF there be such an intelligent Supreme Personal God, it is not reasonable that He should have failed to make Himself known to mankind – and to communicate to mankind the knowledge of the truth, the knowledge of the **purpose** of life, **the spiritual laws that govern life and all relationships** – and of the hereafter!

Is there such a God? Does that God exist?

Did He ever communicate such a revelation of essential knowledge to mankind? – and if so, I ask you, **why is the world today groping so helplessly in the darkness of confusion** – with actually hundreds of different and conflicting religious teachings?

More than fifty years ago I was led by this very God to ask these same questions – and to seek their rational - and - absolute PROOF, one way or the other.

### **The PROOF**

Since I could not see this Supreme God, I turned to what could be seen, or heard – measured and examined and absolutely proved.

Matter itself is not the great **first cause**, as some seem to think – for there was a time, long, long ago, when matter came into existence. Something could not bring itself into existence **out of nothing**. There was, then, **a creating power** that is apart from, and independent of matter. Next, was this First Cause – the Creating Power that created matter - intelligent? I found accurate and absolute proof, unanswerable, that this Creator was a Supreme Intelligence – an intelligence infinitely higher than that in man. The reader can have this same proof by reading for our free booklet, [\*Does God Exist?\*](#), on this website.

But what was this Creator like? Ah, I could not prove that by the laws of Science. I could prove only that there is a Creator, who is **intelligent**.

But, regardless of whether the Creator be a **personal** God, IF He is intelligent, it would be an insult to intelligence if He had not revealed Himself and His **purpose** in creating humanity on this earth – and all the fundamental knowledge about life that mankind seems to lack.

I began to look into the religious writings – the Sacred Scriptures – and the works of the religions of the world. Being an American, reared in what I was told was Christianity – but now doubting it, and demanding proof, I first set out to prove whether or not the Holy Bible could be such an inspired revelation.

### **The Proof of Inspiration**

In this Book I found one actually quoted, saying He was **God Almighty** – a Personal Being who had created everything that exists. This God is quoted directly as speaking, and as delivering decrees and sentences on the greatest of the ancient city-states, on the greatest of ancient nations and empires – and foretelling what He was going to cause to happen to those cities, nations, and empires a very few years later or a thousand years later or several thousand years later – and throughout eternity!

Now no mortal man could put such colossal pronouncements in writing, and bring them to pass. No man could cause such results. No man could know the future!

The only One that could inspire such writing – IF events actually happened as written in advance – is the Most High Creator who actually controls all the forces and powers that exist, who is also Supreme Ruler over the entire universe!

I found such prophecies respecting not merely one, not merely two, not merely four, but concerning most all of the existing great cities of the world at the time the words were written.

SIDON was to be reduced to a very small city, continually attacked, with continual bloodshed in her streets – yet continuing to be rebuilt, and to exist. That has happened, precisely as written 2,500 years ago, down to this very day!

ASHDOD was to continue to exist as a small city, until all surrounding territory was to be occupied by the Jewish people in this 20th century A.D. – **and that happened!** But her sister city of the ancient Philistines, ASHKELON, was to be destroyed and never rebuilt – and that happened!

Egypt, one of the greatest nations on earth, was prophesied to be conquered by the Chaldeans, reduced to a minor nation – always to exist, but never again as a major nation – and never again ruled by a native prince. And that happened; exactly as the One quoted saying "I AM THE ETERNAL GOD!" said it would!

After defeating Egypt, the Chaldean Empire became a world-ruling empire. This God of the Bible, 2,500 years ago, inspired the prophets to write that Egypt was to be conquered by the Persian Empire. It, in turn, by a great general from Greece – who turned out to be Alexander the Great; and he was to be cut off from life at an early age, and his kingdom divided into **four** divisions – and they, in turn, were to be absorbed by a rising Empire from the West, to be the most powerful of all empires. This same God inspired the writing, 2,500 years ago, that this great Empire, which was the Roman Empire, was to be overthrown, but to be resurrected seven times! Nine of those resurrections have already come and gone, and that same God wrote in those same prophecies, 2,500 years ago (some of them 1,900 years ago), that yet in our time, there would be another resurrection of that empire.

And these are only a few of the scores and scores of prophecies in this remarkable Book – many of them already startlingly fulfilled – the others right now on the verge of being fulfilled in our time!

Yes, I found that prophecy has absolutely proved that the Scriptures called the Holy Bible were directly inspired by the very CREATOR GOD!

### **God Answers Prayers**

Then I found other proof. I found that this same God, in this same Bible, had hundreds of promises written down for you and for me, saying that under certain terms and conditions, He would actually cause certain things to happen for us – **if we would ask him in believing prayer!** I found promises to deliver us from trouble when we get into it,

to supply our every need when we really need it, to fight our personal battles for us, to heal us when we are sick – yes, even to prosper us financially. These were promises of outside supernatural help I saw that every person often needs. Time after time came when I actually needed some of these things – and by this time I had come to **believe** what God had written and promised – I followed His instructions: I prayed. I asked for what he had promised, I set myself to yield to, and to **obey** this God of the Bible – to **believe** what He said in the Bible. And, believe it or not, the answers came – yes, miracles were performed! I learned that there was really Someone there when I prayed to this God – there was Someone who actually **heard**, and who actually **answered**!

(Review the reprint [Answer to Unanswered Prayer](#) on this website.)

And I found other proofs. I knew, then, that the Bible is the very revelation of vital knowledge without which this world lives in darkness and in religious confusion – and in unhappiness, wretchedness, and suffering. I had found the one and Only true source of truth – of the only true belief and practice – the only TRUE WAY OF LIFE!

And I found the source of this world's religious belief – a source that I was dumbfounded to learn is at total variance with what is commonly believed and taught and practiced today in the Western world under the name of Christianity! Astounding though it was, I found that the Christianity of this world is NOT the teaching or the practice, of the Holy Bible!

That discovery sent my head to spinning! That discovery was the most shocking truth of my life!

### **"Christianity" Not Founded on the Bible**

I found that there is absolutely NO organized religion on the face of the earth that has **as its source of faith and practice the Holy Bible**.

I found that every one has as its source **the precepts of human men**, derived from error-filled human reason based on limited knowledge from the around, and reasoned out within, as directed by the vanity of human nature!

But how could such a preposterous state of affairs come about? The Bible itself plainly reveals the answer. Its history tells how the very first man, Adam, rejected the knowledge of God, and was influenced solely by the **within** and the **around**.

It tells how, after the flood the descendants of Adam - Nimrod and Semiramis, and others - rebelled against the revelation, the knowledge, and the rule of God and began organizing human cities and governments, and a human-devised religion which was the actual parent of all the religions of the world today.

It tells how, even in the nation God chose as His own, the people rejected His knowledge and His rule. They stoned the prophets through whom He offered them the TRUE knowledge that man needs and lacks.

It tells how God sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, born as a mortal human, with His message for mankind – and how men crucified him. Then, later, rejecting His Message



from God and His way of life and His rule over them, men appropriated Jesus' name, and called their own religion "Christianity." The prophecies of this same Bible foretold that this **whole world would be deceived** – that they would turn away their ears from the real truth, and accept fables, and the traditions of men.

### **The Source of Religious Confusion**

Many religions today teach nothing about the One Supreme personal Creating God. Most professing Christian denominations use the names of God and of Christ. They teach ABOUT God and ABOUT Christ, but they have embraced a mixture of a part of the truth of the Message of Christ and the revelation of the Bible with ancient pagan superstitions and false philosophies, and their own comparatively recent ideas of men. The real source of their practice and their belief is **not the above** – it is the **around**, it is society, it is this world! Even as the Bible says – **all nations are deceived** (Rev. 12:9).

They **profess** to accept the Bible. They profess God and the name of Christ as Saviour. But most of their beliefs are at total variance from those of God as revealed in the Holy Bible.

Most professing Christians today do not look into the Bible to learn what to do in life, in business, in society, in government. No, God is unreal – far off to them. They have heard **about** Christ. They think they follow the Bible, because the actual source of their religion – society – has caused them to believe that its teachings and practices came from the Bible. They merely read the Bible superficially **for inspiration**. It is not their one infallible authority – their constant daily guide in belief and in practice.

And this very same Bible inspired by the living God foretells precisely what God is going to do about it all – yes, and in our time!

It reveals that God made man a free moral agent – that God decreed from the beginning that man must choose whether to believe and obey God, or to reject God and set up on earth his own systems of religion, government, and society; and that God set apart a duration of 6,000 years for man to cut himself off from the very real God, and to learn his lesson by writing it in cruel human experience.

God reveals His great purpose in all this – and He reveals that, in our time, God Almighty is going to intervene in human affairs before organized powers of humanity finally blast human life from off this planet – by – the engines of destruction invented by misguided human brains!

God Almighty is going to intervene with all the power and fury of the Supreme Creator and Ruler of the Universe, and stop this hellish trend of organized mass destruction of man by man! He is going to send the very same Jesus Christ, once again to this earth – this time in all the colossal POWER and GLORY of the Great ETERNAL GOD – to set up on earth the RULE of GOD ALMIGHTY over ALL NATIONS!

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