

Welcome back, seekers.

Let us start with our attunement, a simple invocation or prayer to focus us on the task at hand:

Thank you, Creator, for all that is possible and your abundant gifts.

Thank you, Nature, for the forces that formed us and shape our reality.

Thank you, Science, for the path and the tools we use to explore and understand both nature and the divine.

Thank you, friends and fellow humans, for choosing to walk this path.

We've been talking about the pursuit of the divine and our belief that it is within our power to have a direct experience of the Creator using the methods and practice of science. That leads immediately to an interesting path of inquiry: What method would the Creator choose to communicate with us and what would a conversation entail? There are many conflicting ideas about the Creator and what comprises "divine transmission."

*Words* are surprisingly messy things, prone to misunderstanding. I could tell you that my favorite color is blue, but you wouldn't know which paint sample to pick at the store. Did I mean the pale hue of a sky blue, the deep vibrancy of a cobalt, or the more violet periwinkle blue?

If I said I had a couple of fantastic dates last week, am I talking about people or fruit? Words can have multiple meanings, so clarity is key and context is crucial.

Aside from multiple meanings, words have different emotional contexts, which can pull us in or drive us away, depending on how the heart responds. Does the thought of a *family reunion* fill you with joyous anticipation or deep dread? If I say, "you're doing a *heckofa job*," am I congratulating or mocking you? Your emotional interpretation will certainly have an impact on your ability to understand the information of the moment, and it will influence how you experience it and what you will do with it.

A third potential for confusion lies in the metaphor frame that surrounds a word or an idea. In today's politically charged world, if I say I support *freedom*, will you know what I mean? If I say, "go to the table and help yourself to some *food*," would you consider crickets or dog should you see them there? That would depend on the individual. But what about dietary taboos that add sin to the equation? And if I labeled someone a sinner, wouldn't you first need to know the system of belief to decide if you agree with that label?

When you contemplate and seek the "word" of the Creator, it's important to realize our personal bias to think we're discussing symbols written by people, especially considering the many contradictions within and among holy books. We need to consider things that are not prone to misunderstanding, since the Creator would understand the limitation of words and offer something far clearer. The methods and practice of science can be used to see those things.

There must be, of necessity, a language that is beyond our capacity to misinterpret. The Church of Inquiry believes that only in nature can one find the pure word of the Creator, so we look to nature and the natural sciences to find the guidance that will allow us to decode the language of the Creator. Just as a child learns the language of its parents, we must learn the language of the Heavenly Father. It is only through that divine language — and *not* through the words of men — that we will find pure, unadulterated guidance.

To me that seems self-evident. Every parent, aunt and uncle, and many a person has *goo-goo ga-gaeed* at a baby at some point in their lives. There isn't a single person who has ever learned gibberish as a means of instruction for that child's growing mind. Why would we expect the biblical divine Father to "goo goo" to us...? Haven't we grown up enough?

The Creator wouldn't leave our instruction to chance. Language is an imprecise and unreliable mode of communication, prone to misunderstanding. The Creator would have to speak in a "language" where meaning was fixed relative to form, such as with math or molecules. These *immutable*s, so to speak, would form the alphabet and words and rules of syntax. The divine language would have to be something that could be discovered independently by anyone seeking the Creator in earnest. The ostensible "Heavenly Father" is not hiding from us; the Creator's work is everywhere.

I watched a truly wonderful NOVA documentary called *Secrets of the Sun*. Fusion within the Sun's core emits the equivalent energy of 10 *billion* hydrogen bombs each second, which is an astounding explosive force. Yet the Sun's mass is so great — a million Earths could fit within it — that its gravitational force downward holds the outward force in balance. That perfect, beautiful balance of forces has kept the sun shining for billions of years.

I meditate on processes like the sun. I contemplate what orchestrates a single fertilized egg to become the 40 *trillion* cells that comprise us. I think about the infinite interconnections of nature. The moment I attribute all of that to the Creator, I realize the absurdity of suggesting that such a being makes mistakes, especially with things as mundane as communication.

In monotheism, the Creator is considered "all-knowing," which would mean, at our level of perception, that God doesn't make mistakes. That thought gives me comfort, given how wildly complicated nature is and what needs to go right *at any given moment* for us even to exist. So why do the holy books claiming to be the word of God contain so many contradictions? A heavenly Father wouldn't instruct its children with conflicting realities, my friends, yet that's what the three monotheistic religions have.

I'm taking a moment to discuss Scripture and not science regarding divine transmission because many religious people believe their divine transmission, their holy writing, is "inerrant," God's perfect word, having been "God-breathed" into the writers who merely transcribed the revelation. The revelation, of necessity, must be infallible, since that all-knowing Creator doesn't make mistakes. This is problematic because of the many inconsistencies we find in the Bible.

A transmission from the Creator 2,000 years ago should have maintained integrity and not changed over time. Yet we can easily go online to biblegateway.com and see the differences in the 55 different bibles to choose from in English alone. How is that possible if the Bible is without error? By definition they'd be identical. How do you imagine the Bible's 72 different languages and 207 versions compare?

For those who are interested, there's a wonderful book called *The Bible from Cover to Cover: How Modern-Day Scholars Read the Scriptures*. In it, professor Peter Brancazio thoroughly explores the many differences in Scripture. Brancazio notes that there are more than 5,000 manuscript copies of the New Testament books in the original Greek available for study — and no two of them are exactly alike. Some of the differences are minor copying errors, however consider that among the earliest known copies of the Gospel of Mark, which chronicles the pivotal reappearance of Jesus after his crucifixion, scholars have found at least *nine different versions*.

The Creator doesn't make mistakes. Since different versions of scripture are far from identical, then it's in those books that man reveals his imperfection. It was the man St. Jerome who first translated the Old Testament directly from biblical Hebrew into Latin late in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, *he* made mistakes. One in particular caused both the official Latin and English Bibles of the Catholic Church to facilitate centuries of anti-Semitism.

EX 34:30 proclaims: “And Aaron and the children of Israel seeing the face of Moses **horned**, were afraid to come near.” The combination of the Hebrew letters *qof, res,* and *nun* [pronounced: kuf, resh, nuhn] could be read as either “to have horns” or “to shine” depending on the inserted vowels. Saint Jerome chose the wrong one.

Go online and do an image search for “Moses with horns” and you'll see many examples. From stained glass windows in France to Michelangelo's famous sculpture in Rome, commissioned by Pope Julius II for his tomb, images of Moses with horns abound. Replica statues are easily available for purchase. Due to St. Jerome's 1,600-year-old error, a Christian tradition developed that Jews had horns or were somehow demonic — a belief that persists to this day. How many other mistakes are there? Who do you think made them...?

Expectation can interfere with understanding, and we'll explore that fact more. If you seek only in holy books, you will miss the magnificent things being revealed by science. There are extraordinary and beautiful patterns of order, function, and balance in the universe. We've been learning to read the Creator's recipe for humans, written in DNA, and are just starting to understand. Words don't have the precision of molecules.

DNA, our genetic code, is more than just a recipe for human replication, it is a blueprint of creation over time. It is the hand and mind of the watchmaker and a pathway to the Creator. It is a molecular instruction manual for building every organism on the planet and it forms humans, one cell at a time, molecule by molecule. It is both a guarantee of similarity — every single one of us expressing the same genotype — and a guarantee of individuality: each of us with a unique expression of that genome, our phenotype. We

have maintained our basic human form for hundreds of thousands of years. How's *that* for fidelity of transmission?

My friends, I'm not saying to toss away the Bible, but we need to look at the metaphors being employed with more learned eyes. Remember, our question is how would the Creator communicate with us? If we believe there is something inspired in holy books, then we should use our scientific thinking, seek to correct for the mistakes of people, and see if something is revealed in the central metaphors.

Throughout the Bible, the Creator is referred to as Father, the person who guides us. When you instruct your children, you don't give each of them a conflicting understanding. Nor do you purposely set them against each other — and the children of the Creator have quite a history of conflict.

Words have different meanings, different contexts, and different emotional impacts. Going from one language to another is always going to open us to mistranslation and mistake. Strange that according to the Tower of Babel story in Genesis, the entire purpose of different languages was to confuse, confound, and separate us.<sup>1</sup> How can that be? That's not a proper method of instruction! Some religious people may be content to say, "God works in mysterious ways," but the scientific mind will never be content to do so.

We seek the Creator. We seek a divine language in which we'll find guidance and explanation. It is up to us to be mindful, to be malleable, and, as we walk our path of inquiry, always to consider what we refer to as the Four Questions:

- What do we know?
- How do we know what we know?
- What does it mean?
- How do we apply it?

When considering the language of the divine, we must factor ourselves into the equation, as well. What is our capacity to hear? How does expectation limit us as seekers? As we seek the word of the Creator, we need to remember not to lead with our expectations. If the Creator doesn't make mistakes, then our search must continue beyond things that contain them and promote discord or disunity. Let us take our modern toolkit of science and technology, attune our beings with the attitude of seekers, realize the magnificence of our search, and follow the path of evidence.

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<sup>1</sup> It troubles me that a parent would do this. Genesis 11:5-9 says:

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

To be continued. Keep seeking, my friends.

Honor the Creator, honor the creation.