

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

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. What-

ever 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 Is 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.

WELL, THEN. 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 natu-

rally 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 HUMAN NATURE!

What Human Nature Is

Human nature in its basic principle is VANITY, which expresses itself in many ways. It expresses itself in covetousness, greed, selfishness, jealousy, envy, resentment, hatred. But this human nature is suffering from a sense of *inferiority*, and it desires desperately to be relieved of this painful feeling.

This basic ingredient of human nature, VANITY, also expresses itself in a desire to *belong* to a group, a club, a society, a church, a faction, or a NATION. In order to avoid feeling inferior, the *self* instinctively desires to be *accepted* by other people. This ingredient in human nature produces a spirit of rivalry, party-spirit, and consequently *loyalty* to the party, the club, the faction, the church, the group, the nation to which it *belongs*. It would fear to be disloyal, lest the others in this factional group consider him as a traitor, and therefore as evil — and HE feel *inferior*, which is a painful feeling.

This element in human nature 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.

WHY do so many teen-agers — both boys and girls — smoke cigarettes today? There are just two motivating reasons — the *vanity* of feeling more adult — and the sheep instinct. That is, because others they associate with — and wish to be accepted by — do it, they are *afraid* they will not be well-thought-of if they don’t. It is a *practice* they follow in order to *conform* to whatever

code or belief is laid down by the *society* in which they travel.

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 reasonings 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 marvellous 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 all the 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?

Over forty 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 — the laws and the facts of SCIENCE. And I found that what is observed and *known* about radioactivity *proves* there has been *no past eternity of matter*.

Matter itself, then, 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 writing for our free booklet, *Does God Exist?*

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 — 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.

Ancient TYRE was to be utterly destroyed, in a certain specific manner — and NEVER rebuilt. That happened, in the EXACT MANNER written down centuries BEFORE THE EVENT — and in nearly 2,500 years IT HAS NEVER BEEN REBUILT!

Her sister city, 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!

Ancient proud *Babylon* was to be totally DESTROYED, and NEVER AGAIN was any MAN to be allowed to LIVE THERE. I visited all these sites — and it has HAPPENED as prophesied. No man has lived at the site of ancient Babylon for many centuries — none lives there today!

Egypt was then, when this prophecy was written, one of the greatest NATIONS on earth. It was 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!

When these prophecies were written the Chaldean Empire was rising to become the world's first *world-ruling* empire. This GOD of the Bible, 2,500 years ago, inspired the prophets to write that it 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 *ten 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 — all the others right NOW in almost IMMEDIATE IMMINENCE 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!

You can prove it too, if you have not already done so. Request our free booklet, *The Proof of the Bible*.

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!

One time I was in immediate and desperate need of a very small amount of money — the need was so urgent I had to ask this invisible God whom I could not SEE, to SEND this small piece of money to my home IMMEDIATELY. The need was so immediate I had no time for a long prayer — only some 20 or 30 seconds. But as I rose from that prayer, a man was even then in front of my house, on the way in with that EXACT AMOUNT of money! It was brought to me in less than one minute's time!

I have had such petitions to that Great Invisible GOD answered HUNDREDS UPON HUNDREDS OF TIMES! And SO CAN YOU — if you can ever get to really KNOW this Great Universe-Ruling CREATOR — if you will unconditionally OBEY HIM as He commands IN THIS VERY BIBLE — and IF you will implicitly and unswervingly BELIEVE what He has promised there! (Request our free reprint, "The Answer to Unanswered Prayer.")

And I found other PROOFS. I KNEW, then, that the BIBLE is that 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 with only eight souls left alive on earth — and those eight possessing a true knowledge of the true God, the great grandson of Noah, NIMROD, and his wife SEMIRAMIS, 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, born as a mortal HUMAN, with HIS MESSAGE FOR MANKIND — and how men CRUCIFIED the very SON of God, Jesus Christ. 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.

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!

If you want to know more about the great events coming in the next few years, be sure to request our free booklet *The Wonderful World Tomorrow — What it Will be Like* and your free subscription to TOMORROW'S WORLD, a magazine of Biblical understanding published by the Graduate School of Theology of Ambassador College. □