

### **Chapter 3: Fact and Faith**

Our mind, personality, and beliefs can be shaped by our experiences. We constantly absorb information and opinions from people, places, and forms of media. Some of these are not always the most helpful or informative. One of the most influential factors, which had previously shaped my own thought process was the opinions of my peers.

We previously considered that during my school days it was a considerably unpopular activity to consider any religious, spiritual or philosophical matters. This may seem strange considering the fact that I attended both Church of England and Catholic schools. My classmates were always concerned with more physical matters. Religious Education classes always created good debates regarding religious practices, and moral issues, but the daily emphasis was always aimed towards education and success from the teachers, and sex and popularity from my classmates. I am sure that this sounds familiar to most people. However, looking back to those days I now understand that this lifestyle had shaped my thought process. It has caused me to sidetrack a very large part of my life by ignoring spiritual matters simply to be accepted by my peers.

Therefore from my own experiences I can demonstrate that its not just the teachings of science which we absorb, but also other peoples opinions, and perceptions of socially accepted behaviour. Could you imagine being a teenager, and rather than enjoying yourself you decided to spend your time questioning your existence or even the existence of a God? I sure you would have been very unpopular. So it seems that we have trained each other to disregard spiritual matters, even to forsake the inquisitive nature, which would allow us to explore the validity of any information that is presented to us. Why should we question people's opinions? Are they not entitled to them? Who are we to question the morality of someone else's actions? Why should we question science? Are we smarter than the scientists? Once we begin to accept these questions and thought processes into our moral framework we lose the ability and desire to distinguish the truth from a lie. This is achieved by developing a sense of guilt regarding the process of questioning or even disagreeing with another person regarding matters of religion, spirituality, and morality.

Of course these statements are generalisations. But it is true that most people have at least witnessed these events taking place, or have personally partaken in them. A real life example is the teaching of multi-faith acceptance. Do not misunderstand. I do not agree with persecuting people who have a different faith or set of beliefs than yourself. However there are a few problems with accepting the ideologies of all faiths. Consider this. Most religions teach similar moral standards, but this is where the similarity ends. The established church is striving to accommodate teachings from other religions by claiming that all of their teachings are basically the same. This view is only superficial. If they were to study the texts of each faith they would understand that each one has distinct and profound differences.

Is it therefore possible to consider that the established church and people in general are unsure as to what they should believe? Quite possibly. It may be more accurate to claim that some individuals only aspire to gain a superficial knowledge of different religions and teachings, but they are reluctant to wholly embrace one fully. There is a general consensus that one persons truth is not acceptable to someone else therefore people think in terms of "your truth is not my truth, but I accept your truth for being true to you therefore to you it is truth". This does not sound very objective. There can only

be one truth, and many lies. It may be true to assume that superficial study of faiths and religious practices provide little understanding unless they are properly studied. Therefore it may also be true to say that ignorance demands tolerance, because the uneducated person demands acceptance for their thoughts and actions without judgement.

Consider the mindset of the average person. We are provided with plenty of information to make choices as to what we could believe in. Opinions, facts, texts and statements of faith are available to us but the most influential information, which we as people tend to assimilate, is opinion. Consider the fact that during our day-to-day lives we receive more negative comments about God than positive statements. Try asking some friends about whether they believe in God and gauge their responses. Again and again you will hear familiar statements to contradict God's existence and these will mostly be uninformed regurgitated opinions.

Let us now consider the difference between fact and faith. The dictionary definition of a fact is as follows:

- "1. Knowledge or information based on real occurrences: an account based on fact; a blur of fact and fancy.*
- 2. a. Something demonstrated to exist or known to have existed: Genetic engineering is now a fact. That Chaucer was a real person is an undisputed fact.*
- b. A real occurrence; an event: had to prove the facts of the case.*
- c. Something believed to be true or real: a document laced with mistaken facts.*
- 3. A thing that has been done, especially a crime: an accessory before the fact.*
- 4. Law. The aspect of a case at law comprising events determined by evidence: The jury made a finding of fact."* Miffin (2000)

Therefore we as fact-finders endeavour to discover proof for the existence and mechanics of what we experience within our lives. Science as a philosophy is based upon interpreting events, which can be considered "*real occurrences*". The dictionary further classifies science as "*the observation, identification, description, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanation of phenomena.*" Miffin (2000) Therefore the pursuit of facts and the scientific approach to understanding the world around us is a philosophy, which wholly depends on what we can see, understand, and test. Science therefore does not ask us to have faith, to believe in something we cannot see or comprehend, to believe without evidence, does it? A simple dictionary definition has provided information to us that science itself is capable of providing a "*theoretical explanation of phenomena*" A theoretical explanation is defined as follows:

- "1. Of, relating to, or based on theory.*
- 2. Restricted to theory; not practical: theoretical physics.*
- 3. Given to theorizing; speculative."* Miffin (2000)

Therefore a theory is something that is derived from speculation. It is not a solid provable fact. It is an educated guess as to why a phenomenon exists, how it functions or its purpose. This is not something that is wholly provable or definitely certain to be true. Consider the Theory of Evolution, which we have all superficially learned during our time at school. We are told in the manner of being presented with facts that all life on earth was not created but evolved. In Charles Darwin's book, *The Origin of the Species* he states the following:

*“In considering the Origin of Species, it is quite conceivable that a naturalist, reflecting on the mutual affinities of organic beings, on their embryological relations, their geographical distribution, geological succession, and other such facts, might come to the conclusion that each species had not been independently created, but had descended, like varieties, from other species.” Darwin (1859)*

Darwin also states:

*“Nevertheless, such a conclusion, even if well founded, would be unsatisfactory, until it could be shown how the innumerable species inhabiting this world have been modified so as to acquire that perfection of structure and co-adaptation which most justly excites our admiration.” Darwin (1859)*

Despite the fact that the Theory of Evolution is now referred to as “Evolution” in most schools and the media. (note the difference, it is being assumed as fact, not a theory) Darwin himself in the introduction of his book understood the need to prove his work.

You may recall learning or the mention of something called the missing link. This relates to the Theory of Evolution and ensures that it remains a theory, not a fact. A quick encyclopedia search informs us that there are many missing links, which prevent the Theory of Evolution from being proven as fact. Wikipedia defines the missing link as *“a term for a transitional form from the fossil record that connects an earlier species to a later one, or which connects two different species to an earlier ancestor. The missing link may have features common to both species; for example an early avian fossil could have feathers much like a modern bird but still retain the bony tail and teeth of a dinosaur. This would be considered a missing link between dinosaurs and birds.”* Therefore there is a lack of evidence to completely support The Theory of Evolution. Not all of the required fossils have been found which would provide a complete map of the theorized transitions between species. Of course this is hardly mentioned in the mainstream media.

Schools also present creation as a theory. (or in some cases as mythology) However we are more likely to consider the words of an educated science teacher as being more truthful than those of a teacher of Humanities or Religious Education. The people in white lab coats are the most listened to and respected members of our society. Therefore if they can present an explanation of the origin of life on earth, which does not include the possibility of creation by an almighty creator, why would people choose to believe something that would oppose these teachings? We could only disagree with these assumptions if we considered them to be speculation. However it is preferable for science to assume its most established teachings are correct. In essence scientists are asking us to believe that some of their theories are true by assuming that they are fact without providing definite proof. May I be so bold as to suggest that they are requiring faith from us? Faith being a philosophy that is in contradiction to scientific proof and the search for fact. Something seems a little strange when considering this argument. If science expects us to have faith in some of its theories, then why should we not consider faith in the existence of a creator?

Faith by definition is *“belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence.”* Miffin (2000) It would be impossible with current knowledge to definitely prove the existence of God whom we cannot see. Also it would be impossible to disprove the existence of such a creator. However some

scientists prefer us to have faith in their theories that do not consider the existence of God. Faith requires belief in something that cannot be completely proven. Whether this is the Theory of Evolution or Creation as described in The Bible. It is important to consider the facts of both, as belief requires individuals to make a decision as to which one is the truth.

We now understand that science is claiming speculation as facts and are asking us to have faith in their theories. Christianity requires faith in their teachings that God exists and created the universe itself and everything within it. Therefore we have two opposing arguments. In any debate it is crucial to consider both sides. However during most of our lives we have been fed information, which supports the non-existence of God, and the accidental formation of life following theorized principles of Evolution and The Big Bang. It is now up to us as individuals to consider the existence of God and the creation of life itself. This requires non-standard thought processes. This requires us to assess the plausibility of creation.