

A non-believer's open letter to God



Highland Views

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Guest columnist

Why on earth (or anywhere else) would a non-believing humanist free-thinking secular person write a letter to a Being they don't believe exists? Great question. I'm not sure.

Two things before I begin. My intent is not to mock sincere beliefs; I hope readers will hear more humor than sarcasm. Also, I need to assure readers that quoting ancient books in response will not be helpful (or guessing at a divine response).

Here with my open letter.

Dear Creator of the Universe (or Dear Universe?),

Since the world has been divided over belief in You for ... well, forever, I thought I might dare to ask You some nagging questions (though, honestly, I don't expect a reply except from those who are confident they speak for You).

So, "God" (or should I call you Adonai, Jesus, Allah, Krishna, Buddha or Goddess?), I hesitate to address You as "dear" since that implies a personal intimacy and familiarity — can anyone be so audacious to claim that?

I don't want to try Your infinite patience, so here goes:

1-Where did You come from? Some say Science makes no sense when it says the evidence points to a Big Bang; they say there had to be Someone to light the fuse. Well, if You were the one who flipped the switch, where did You come from? Were You just sitting around doing nothing for zillions of years before deciding to create a "universe"? I have to say, that's harder to believe than scientific theory.



In-between the questions PHOTO BY CAROL HOVIS

2-I'm jumping around here but why so many Religions? Why are there all these different stories and scriptures, teachers and traditions that don't agree on who You are? I understand culture, language, geography, different viewpoints. But did You intend to confuse us? If you "revealed" Yourself to people in different places and times, why isn't the story essentially the same? Are You aware that people have been killing each other over You and Your Name for centuries? Just thought You should know.

3-If You really wanted everyone on the planet to believe in You, then why didn't You wait to send Your prophets in the 21st Century when they could use the internet to reach the world in all languages 24/7? Non-stop miracles on YouTube would leave little doubt. And, I

wonder, why stay invisible except to the "eyes of faith"?

4-I have one Jesus question, since billions say they follow him and say he's You. If he was Your only child and You were so unhappy with all of us that You sent him here and had him killed so You would feel better about us ... excuse me, but I don't get it. He taught some very good things about compassion and justice, but the old stories and rituals proclaiming his "miraculous life" and "sacrificial death" seem to distract many from living his message. Wouldn't it have made more sense to have him appear on all channels to teach loving-kindness and then just forgive anyone You were so angry with?

5-I'm not going to ask why there is so much suffering and "evil" in Your uni-

verse because I know the answer—suffering is a part of nature; it's just the way things are. But many of Your believers say You have "lessons" and "tests" for us. A disaster happens and hundreds are killed, while some thank You for "miraculously" saving them. Do you have favorites?

6-Billions believe You own two magnificent real estate properties called "heaven" and "hell." From what I hear, heaven is with You and hell is without You. The way many describe it, heaven sounds like an eternal mega-church service in a gated community where You sit on a throne pleased to hear joyful praise to You for eternity. Pardon me, but that sounds like it's all about Your Divine Ego. Then I'm told that hell is a place of torturous punishment for not believing in You, but could I live a very unethical life and with my last breath say I was sorry and still get a free pass?

7-Last question for now (You must be very busy). A lot of Your people say You are a "God of Love" or even Love itself. That sounds nice, but I guess I don't understand why we need faith, religion, church or (sorry) even God, to be loving, kind and good. Many who say You are dear to them don't seem to show love and compassion any more than those who think You're imaginary.

If You are Love (Goodness? Nature itself?), perhaps we could live the best way we know to live as human beings, and whether we believe in You or not we'd be considered Your friends.

Thanks for listening (?).

Chris Highland served as a Protestant minister and interfaith chaplain for many years. He is a teacher, writer, freethinker and humanist celebrant. Chris and his wife Carol, a Presbyterian minister, live in Asheville. Learn more at chighland.com.