

Lord of the Rings, Carl Sagan, and the Hiddenness of God

Patrick Reany

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Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. – Carl Sagan

More than this, I know it in my heart. – Faramir to Frodo Baggins

The following comes from a scene from *Lord of the Rings, Return of the King*

Aragorn: No news of Frodo?

Gandalf: No word. Nothing.

Aragorn: We have time. Every day Frodo moves closer to Mordor.

Gandalf: Do we know that?

Aragorn: What does your *heart* tell you?

Gandalf: That Frodo is alive. Yes. Yes, he's alive.

Well, Dr. Sagan, I – the Christian – believe you! And it has always been so! But just *what* is allowed to pass as 'evidence' these days? Intuition? Gut feelings? Or only the cold, hard facts? Did you only follow the cold, hard facts when making decisions for your own life?

Jesus is not hidden to those who seek Him passionately!

Seek and ye shall find – Jesus (Matthew 7:7)

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. – Jesus (Luke 13:24)

If you don't have your heart right with God and you try to find Him, you will probably fail to find Him. But even if you do succumb to Christian social pressure or the fear of damnation to claim to be a real Christian, you will probably not follow Jesus well at all and just end up in hell anyway.

If you want to penetrate the superficial 'hiddenness' of God and follow Him, you must have a pure heart.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. – Jesus (Matthew 5:8)

And to do that successfully, you are going to have to be all-in, caring much more about what Jesus thinks than what people think. And if you are being a 'Christian' just to join a social group or to gain political power, expect to end up in hell – to have your portion with the hypocrites.

How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? – Jesus (John 5:44)

Can a person come to God initially out of fear? Yes, but one should not remain in that spiritually anemic state. God expects us to progress in our walk with Him. We are supposed to end up loving God and our neighbors sincerely, not just for show for the approval of others.

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

– Jesus (Mark 12:30)

Think about this verse, folks! Jesus just told us that there are four modes by which people are to worship God: Heart, Mind, soul, and strength. But these are also four modes of ‘communication’ between us and God!

To love God and our neighbors, we must do so through our hearts. With our minds we use the cold, hard facts of the world to make rational decisions about our lives and circumstances, and about Scripture to learn of God, and of history, and to discern right from wrong. Through the soul we have access to intuition, by which comes conscience, directions for our lives from God, and more discernment. And, as for strength, God communicates with us through our strength mode by supplying the grace we need to do the job He has given us to do.

As Paul told us:

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Corinthians 12:7-9)

And by use of strength (diligent effort) we prove to God our sincerity, by being a doer of the word and not a hearer only (James 1:22):

And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

– Luke 22:41-43

So, even Jesus, the Son of God and God in the flesh of a man, needed the Father to strengthen Him. If you are never in need of being strengthened by God in your life, are you really going about doing His will fervently enough?

If we are to do the will of God in our lives, to seek truth and avoid lies, we need a sound mind. God is able to give us a sound mind, if we let Him. If you should ever attain a sound mind, do whatever it takes to hang on to it. Believing lies and yielding to sexual sins weaken the soundness of mind.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. – 2 Timothy 1:7

So, are we allowed to find evidence by the intuition of our souls? Yes, but only in a religious context? Or is it, yes, but in a secular context too?

I have long heard self-defense experts tell us to protect ourselves by ‘trusting our intuition’. What does that mean exactly? When we feel a bad intuition about something (located in our souls), we are using that part of ourselves that is parallel to and in addition to our rational minds --- not to the exclusion to it.

God is not the enemy of the rational mind!

But if all you choose to use to find God is your rational mind applied to the cold, hard facts, you will probably miss God -- forever.

So, say you’re in a situation that, on the surface does not appear to the rational mind as dangerous, but deep inside you feel a danger you can’t explain, that is from your intuition. That exact source of that intuition might be God.

In the mid-1990s, I was driving home from work on a street that was posted 45 mph. I was in the right-hand lane. Traffic was light at that time. As I approached the driveway to a business area, I noticed a car on its way out to ingress the street I was on. Suddenly, with only a moment of time to decide what that car would do, I had a strong feeling in my soul that the car was not going to yield to me, but was about to enter the street right in front of me. Immediately, I moved to my left, without even looking for cars that might be in that lane. There was no time for that. There was also not enough time to observe the situation long enough to collect those cold, hard atheistic facts on which to base my rational decision what to do. Sure enough, that car did enter the street just ahead of me, and if I had not moved to the left when I did, there would have been a terrible accident.

If you believe that mathematicians and scientists (even secular ones) never use intuition, then you are mistaken. (They also are moved by such fluffy esthetics as beauty.) Is it true that the ‘rational’ atheists never use intuition? Let’s try an experiment right now: Based on what you, whoever you are, know about the world, tell me if the last novel musical tune has been created by humans, or not. I don’t know about you, but my intuition immediately screams that it has not, and my logical mind agrees. Nevertheless, I can’t prove that conclusion, and no amount of gathering of the cold, hard facts will provide a basis to prove or disprove my conclusion. Yet, I think it would be irrational to deny my conclusion. Do we have the logical excluded middle here? By avoiding the irrational, I was being rational, right, folks?

I’ll tell you something else, you cold, hard atheists. I consider it axiomatic and rational to claim that, that which cannot be disproved must be allowed for. So put *that* in your pipe and smoke it.

We hear God's voice in our consciences. We may on rare occasions hear His voice speak quite clearly to us in our minds. But God can also give us discernment about people or situations through intuitive feelings in which we can have strong confidence. I don't even know the mechanics of that confidence, but if you have ever experienced it (like I did in the car incident), you know what I mean. Nevertheless, we must test our intuitions, if we have the time. For it is not the case that all intuitions are of God, but some of them might well be.

This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

– James 3:15

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

– 1 John 4:1

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

-- Hebrews 5:14

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

-- 2 Corinthians 10:5

To make decisions in our lives, we use reason in our minds, using those cold, hard facts; we also use our intuitions, which live within our souls (at least that's how I'm stipulating it).

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

– John 6:66-68

I think that Simon Peter was completely sincere in his affirmation of Jesus. But how did he come to this conclusion? Was it strictly by a rational thought process? I doubt it, just as it isn't for me. Peter drew heavily upon his intuition of truth, which can come with great confidence.

What about this so-called hiddenness of God?

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

– 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

The light of the gospel is supposed to shine in our hearts, not just in our minds, though that too. But your heart must be ready to receive it! The heart is the spiritual seat of love and the two greatest things the godly, or would be godly, person needs to love is one's neighbor and the truth.

If there is anything in the Bible that causes you to not like God because of how He has treated people in the past, then you don't have a chance to see God if you refuse to balance those negatives out by loving those qualities of God that are highest. You see, God's vision for this world is that we all should be kind to each other and never lie to each other. If you can agree deeply with those two values, you have a chance to love God and thus see Him when He reveals Himself to you.

There is no hiddenness of God to His own true disciples! If you are a true, all-in follower of Jesus, and not just a modern evangelical demonic, political nutcase hypocrite, then God will manifest Himself to you!!

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

-- John 14:12

Every morning I wake up and don't feel the desire for sex or pornography (which is true for me daily since mid-June 2008), I consider that a manifestation of God in my life through the Holy Spirit in me, working sanctification in me, while I continually submit to His lordship over me. (I do not believe in once-save-always-saved.) God is not hidden to me in my day-to-day life, folks.

It's ironic indeed that those who hate the image of the God of the Bible do so because of the picture it paints of Him. Why? Because if God wanted to make it easy for us to love Him, He could have hidden all those prior negative aspects of His interactions with mankind. Ironically, its Gods lack of hiddenness, His openness about His 'negative PR' deeds of the past, that causes the angry atheists and Christian deconstructionists to leave God. I'm going to clue you in, folks, it has never been God's goal or plan to make serving Him easy. For if it were, what would that ever prove about our sincerity. Jesus said to His own:

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

– John 16:33

Jesus never preached the modern heretical prosperity gospel, so-called. Folks, you don't need to 'endure' prosperity. Just what did Jesus promise His own?

All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

– Matthew 24:8-13

So, this is the pattern of falling away from Jesus: You don't like the image the Bible portrays of God, especially in the Old Testament. You don't like the way He treats women or that he once destroyed the earth with a flood, or once said that slavery was okay. So, I will pose it to you this way: What's liking God got to do with anything? We *have* the God that we *have*. Deal with it!

Most of, or maybe all of, what you don't like about the God of the Bible, has been revealed in the Bible because God wants it that way! It's not His hiddenness, but His openness, that you really dislike.

If you do not hate lies and lying, you have a demonic relationship with the truth. Wherever the truth is, Jesus is. Wherever a lie is, the Devil is. And every lie that you believe, especially willingly, damages the soundness of your mind. The Devil is the god of political and defamatory conspiracy theories. The Devil invented a conspiracy theory against God to lure Adam and Eve away from obeying God. The religious leaders of Jesus's day invented a conspiracy theory that Jesus was only able to cast out demons by being in league with the Devil. Jesus is the way the truth and the life, not the way, the conspiracy theory, and the life. Deal with it, folks.

Maybe the real reason you don't want to believe in and follow Jesus Christ is more about the fact that you only value the truth when it's convenient to you; you only obey God when it's not embarrassing in front of others to do so or not burdensome to your finances; you only would worship God when you can find a moment in your busy life to do so. If you make no room for God in your life, how do you expect to even notice His manifestations to you, when they come?

I believe that God reveals Himself even to unbelievers through the contrivance of insightful or beneficial coincidences in your lives. If you hold it axiomatic in your life that there cannot be any spiritual significance or meaning to any rare or odd coincidence in your life, then you will rule out your ability to ever recognize God's attempt to reach you (to manifest Himself to you) while you're still alive. That's your bad, not God's.

Jesus will probably never manifest Himself to the indifferent, the greedy, the uncharitable, the untruthful, the lovers of the things of this world, rather than the lovers of the values God has told us will inhabit the new world in which He will reign.

So, quit blaming the false hiddenness of God, and learn to love His values of neighborly charity and truthfulness in all your ways, and seek God early and you shall find Him and receive His manifestations in your life.

This is my testimony; it can be yours too.

Afterthoughts

God has called each of us to love Him in spite of those qualities about Him which we don't like. Jesus never said that His gospel is an easy pill to swallow, but swallow it we must:

Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

– Matthew 11:4-6

The main qualities a true believer needs to be successful as a follower of Jesus are represented by the acronym MATCH:

M – for morality (as defined in the New Testament).

A – for being all-in.

T – for loving the truth and hating lies and dubious conspiracy theories.

C – for being charitable to strangers, orphans, widows in need, the needy etc.

H – for being humble.

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

– James 4:6

If you do not have the intuition that you inhabit a moral universe, then, of course, you will see no need to explain the existence of moral intuitions by the existence of a moral God. And if that's true, who needs God at all in one's worldview? This is a hard stumbling stone to skeptics and atheists, who might otherwise be moved by the gospel message.

Where should the religious place philosophy in the Christian world view: Primary to belief in Christ, or secondary to it? I argue that it is primary. For one's philosophy will set the 'acceptable' boundaries by which one will consider metaphysical possibilities and logical or hypothetical arguments. I'll show you exactly what I mean: Do you believe yet that, that which cannot be disproved must be allowed for? If not, why not? What are you waiting for? Is your philosophy getting in your way?